

1987

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Noreen Golfman

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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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THE POETRY OF A.M. KLEIN

VOLUME I

by

Noreen Golfman

Department of English

Submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario
October 1986

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Abstract

This thesis is devoted to a full explication of the poetry of A.M. Klein. Klein's unpublished and uncollected work, almost all of it located in the Public Archives of Canada, as well as his published poetry volumes (Hath Not a Jew ..., Poems (1944), The Hitleriad, The Rocking Chair, and Other Poems), are discussed in detail. The thesis begins with Klein's earliest unpublished efforts in the mid to late 'twenties and advances chronologically through to 1948 and the Governor General Award-winning Rocking Chair volume.

It is the author's thesis that Klein's poetry consistently and masterfully represents the central conflict of modernism: the struggle to find order in a fragmented universe. Klein's quest for meaning assumes special resonance in the light of the Jewish burden of identity, isolation, and assimilation in the twentieth century. In the rich Talmudic and Kabbalistic traditions of his Jewish inheritance, with its insistence on the ordering properties of language, Klein finds a nourishing source of moral and aesthetic inspiration. The poet's challenge--and Klein's accomplishment--is to accommodate himself as a contemporary spokesman to the demands of the age without losing sight of the valuable traditions of the past. Klein's steady reliance on his Jewish culture and history, especially in his first three volumes of poetry, together with his intellectual and often witty use of literary giants from Dante to Eliot mark the degree to which he

strives for a new creativity in familiar terms. Especially notable is Klein's brilliant manipulation of traditional verse forms to support the underlying order in life and art so obviously undetected in the modern age. Considerable attention is, therefore, devoted to Klein's innovatively expressive use of formal poetic devices.

The thesis also relies on Klein's editorial work (for the Judean and the Canadian Jewish Chronicle) and on an unfinished, unpublished prose manuscript, The Golem, to illuminate Klein's central moral-aesthetic considerations, particularly the poet's relationship to a creative God. In Klein's romantic view of his craft, the poet imitates the first act of creation every time that he puts pen to paper. The act of writing is a necessary act of ordering. That the poet's creative accomplishments may go undeeded and unnoticed in his own age is a sign of both the limitations of that age and the inevitable consequence of the poet's condition. This theme finds its fullest expression in the splendid "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," the concluding poem of both The Rocking Chair volume and this thesis. As a whole, The Rocking Chair and Other Poems represents Klein at his most elegant and accomplished. The poems of that volume are distinguished by a fitting and graceful suspension of tensions, such as subject and object, form and content, poet and landscape, past and present, interior and exterior space. The Rocking Chair and Other Poems endures as one of the

finest representations of modern poetry in Canada, and it
confirms Klein's achievement as a major Canadian poet.

Acknowledgements

My greatest debt is to the staff of the Public Archives of Canada who encouraged my research and furnished me with copies of manuscript material and letters. The staff members of the Jewish Public Library of Montréal, where a sizable amount of Klein material is located, also deserve mention for their kindly assistance.

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For the help of many kinds, my gratitude is due to members of the Department of English at the University of Western Ontario, professors and fellow graduate students, secretaries and administrators. Life as a graduate student at Western was stimulating and challenging largely because of the knowledgeable assistance and generous friendships offered by these people.

The work of my colleagues on the A.M. Klein Research and Publication Committee greatly facilitated research on

this thesis and particular mention needs to be made of such assistance.

Finally, I take special pleasure in acknowledging the immeasurable patience and unflagging support of my husband, Ronald Rompkey, without whom this thesis would not have been completed. It is to him that "The Poetry of A.M. Klein" is dedicated.

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Abbreviations

- 22S = XXII Sonnets (1931)
- GH = Gestures Hebraic (1932)
- GHP = Gestures Hebraic and Poems (1932)
- P32 = Poems (1932)
- R34 = Poems (1934)
- SP = Selected Poems [1954-1955]

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Introduction

One of the first things one must realize about A.M. Klein's writings is that there is much more to them than meets the eye. The same may be said for any writer of substance, but with Klein there is no apparent end to an investigation of his work. This dissertation began innocently enough as a study of Klein's published writings in the light of the unpublished and uncollected material placed in the Public Archives of Canada in 1974, two years after Klein's death. Initially tentative encounters with this archival material, grew into absorbing confrontations with arguably the most scrupulously intellectual modern poet in Canada. The more closely that I examined the mass of manuscripts, letters, prose fragments, diaries, notebooks, journalistic essays, and so on, the more obviously ordered, difficult, and cosmopolitan Klein's published work revealed itself to be. Even the most apparently simple lyric proved, upon examination in the context of the archival papers, to contain allusive subtleties and formal considerations pointing up a rich and delightfully complex sensibility--the sensibility of an indisputably major Canadian poet.

Klein's published works reflect the end of a long, dedicated process of elegant refinement. Indeed, the more one reads Klein; the more one's appreciation of his often difficult philosophically vital poetry grows in confidence.

It takes a degree of faith at first, perhaps, to admit to Klein's almost intimidating erudition. So much is expected from the reader that one might be tempted to question the value of the reading effort. But the reward is participation in a stimulating and necessary debate between the poet--the man of creative intuition--and the world into which he was born. For Klein, that world is at once Jewish, European, urban, Canadian, and modern. No wonder that such a varied cultural inheritance generated such a culturally complex poetry. Neither exclusively a poet of feelings nor an Imagist, Klein is a modern poet in the critical tradition of Eliot and, of course, Joyce. Like his mentors, it is obvious that Klein loves to entertain ideas bred by the agent of the reasoned imagination--language. Thus his poetry aims at transcending the disintegration of value in the post-First World War era through an always systematic and playful unfolding of word-orders. In Klein, one can easily see the romantic urge to make universal forms confronting the modernist's perception of contemporary fragmentation. Continuously resolving this radical conflict, Klein's poetry, from his early love lyrics to the mature Rocking Chair poems, requires a determined leap into the dialectical terrain of form and content, subject and object, past and present. Committed to reasserting the value of the Judeo-Christian humanist tradition of Dante, Shakespeare, Spenser, the Romantic poets, Eliot, Auden, Thomas, Hopkins, and Shapiro, Klein's poetry is

testimony to the possibility of finding old meanings in new times.

To read Klein is, in several ways, to read the modern moment. What began as a study of all of his written work led to a necessarily curtailed discussion of his poetry. A line of continuity could be firmly drawn, however, between the poetic achievements and both The Second Scroll and Klein's Joyce criticism, especially in view of the influence of Kabbalistic symbol-systems on the later prose work, but such a treatment would demand almost twice the space already devoted here to his poems. Even after such a detailed examination as this thesis is, I know that there is even more to be said about Klein's poetry--more to discover and more to be led towards. Nonetheless, the five chapters that follow are devoted to as comprehensive a study of the poetry as possible. It has been my particular wish to illuminate the potential of Klein's early, unpublished poetry. The first chapter concentrates on some surprisingly youthful manuscripts which reveal an already firmly grounded moral-aesthetic direction. The second chapter is devoted to an extended discussion of Hath Not a Jew ... and an incomplete, unpublished prose manuscript, The Golem, which throws considerable light on Klein's Jewish themes and poetic preoccupations. The third chapter aims at revealing the remarkably complex and relatively neglected radical poems of the 'thirties--six often brilliant experiments with a form

of narrative poetry that looks directly ahead to "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape." The fourth chapter studies the Klein of Poems and The Hitleriad, two poetic works of 1944 that mark a maturing struggle to emphasize underlying order in life and art in the face of social breakdown. The fifth and final chapter is devoted to a full appreciation of Klein's Rocking Chair and Other Poems, which endures as one of the most accomplished collections of poems in Canada. Where appropriate, I have relied on Klein's journalism and other prose examples to intensify the light shed by discussion of the poetry.

As long and detailed as this dissertation on Klein's poetry is, I take much comfort in the belief that Klein himself would have been delighted with the sheer amount of space devoted to explicating his difficult, learned, demanding word-orders. There is, of course, no substitute for the poetry itself, but Klein wholeheartedly approved of the tradition of commentary--a Talmudic tradition from which he often borrowed--as a means of both cultivating and reaching the life of the mind. Indeed, Klein's poetry is an open invitation to such commentary. In another sense, the commentary continues in the poetry of Irving Layton, Leonard Cohen, and Eli Mandel, just to name three obvious examples. That contemporary poets still reflect on Klein makes him worthy of our attention, but, as this dissertation tries to show, his poetry is rich and challenging enough in its own right.

Inspiration for this commentary rises out of a recognition of the thematic possibilities in specific forms and subjects in Klein's work, possibilities which affirm the value of the creative life itself.

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Chapter One
The Writing Begins

David Lewis, Abraham Moses Klein's life-long friend, recalls that in 1925, when he and Klein were walking home from Baron Byng High School in Montreal, Klein removed from his shirt-pocket a folded piece of paper on which was written a poem in celebration of the approaching Jewish New Year.¹ Thus, at sixteen years old, Klein first announced his intention to be a poet. In 1925 this Montreal boy was already familiar with the intimate requirements of Talmudic exegesis and with several of the mystical interpretations of the Torah that form the basis of Kabbalistic literature, for he was in fact being groomed for rabbinical life. In 1925 The Waste Land and Ulysses were three years old, silent movies were flourishing, the world had been altered by a great war, and the city of Montreal was coming to a view of itself as a relaxed cosmopolitan centre in which various European immigrant groups were finding a home. Between study of the Torah and contemplation of the Talmud, Klein was voraciously devouring Vergil, Ovid, Spenser, Milton, Shakespeare, and, especially, seventeenth-century poetry and the works of the Romantic poets. The lure of a burgeoning post-war cultural world and the demands of rabbinical scholarship were not mutually exclusive spheres

¹As told to David Kaufman in his film, A.M. Klein: The Poet as Landscape, 1979.

of influence on young Klein; rather, he seemed to possess the peculiar kind of sensibility which absorbed the various influences of his early life into a comfortable whole. Nor is it that Klein turned his back on his religious inheritance; his interests, his work, his major preoccupations were shaped by such a legacy, and almost all of the written work in the Klein canon indicates what Northrop Frye once recognized as "an elaborate Rabbinical apparatus."²

The period of his life between 1925 and 1935 was an exceptionally active time for Klein. During these years he wrote most of the poems that first came to public attention in 1940 with the publication of his first volume of poetry, Hath Not a Jew.... He also wrote a kind of private poetry--private because so much of it was an experimental testing of his own creative abilities and because so much of it still remains inaccessible to the reading public. That Klein considered these poems to be more than rough juvenilia is partly evidenced by the excessive care with which he preserved them. Beautiful hard-bound volumes include all the known unpublished poems, the lyrical experiments with form and language of the 1925-35 period, in addition to those that were later selected for published collections. To each volume Klein assigned a title and a date: XXII Sonnets (1931), Poems (1932), Gestures Hebraic (1932), Gestures

²Northrop Frye, The Bush Garden: Essays in the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971) 136.

Hebraic and Poems (1932), and Poems (1934). In addition to these bound volumes, there survive several early manuscript poems, most notably Auto-da-fé (1926) and a one-act drama, Escape (1927). Why Klein never submitted these early works for publication or whether he did and the record of such an attempt no longer exists remains in doubt;³ however, that he not only preserved them but that he also reworked some of the poems long after he had written them suggests that he continued to consider them worthy of his attention.

This chapter concentrates on these early collections, specifically on the unpublished material contained therein. Of course, it is always exciting to mine an established poet's early unexamined material in the hope of exposing a rich vein of poetic ore. In this case, the expectation of discovery is intensified because of Klein's unhappy and mysteriously silent latter years. One approaches the archival material with the thought that an early manuscript might contain subtle clues, the explication of which would reveal some truth about Klein's eventual withdrawal from life and art. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Klein's earliest written work, if at times maudlin or immature,

³See W.E. Collin, "The Spirit's Palestine," in his The White Savannah 1936, intro. Germaine Warkentine (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975) 205-231. It is interesting and ironic that in 1936, when White Savannah first appeared, Collin spoke directly of Klein's unpublished manuscripts as if readers of his essay would be familiar with the material. Probably Collin considered it to be merely a matter of time before Klein's manuscripts would be published.

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is consistently enthusiastic in both its themes and its formal concerns. There is nothing here to suggest that Klein would become a recluse, nothing to suggest a particularly morbid temperament or a tortured soul. But there are rich offerings for students of the Klein who went on to achieve Hath Not a Jew..., Poems 1944, The Rocking Chair Poems, and The Second Scroll.

The early manuscripts of the 1925-35 period offer the chance to see Klein's most important allegiances taking shape and his poetic persona gathering strength. The first thing to strike a reader is the way in which many of the unpublished poems stand in marked contrast, in tone and theme, to the published efforts of this period, when Klein was a student at McGill. That this should be the case at all is interesting enough. But that this observation can be traced further towards a new and fuller appreciation of Klein's mature published work is especially rewarding. The first section of this chapter establishes the nature of the difference between Klein's published and unpublished material of the 1925-35 period. It shall be demonstrated that Klein's "private" (unpublished) work faithfully acknowledges the tradition of the English Romantic poets while the "public" (published) work more obviously bears the influence of seventeenth-century poetry. This distinction is explored in the second section of the chapter in view of the unpublished manuscript Auto-da-fé, an exuberant, long romance poem. Not

only does Auto-da-fé affirm Klein's allegiance to a Romantic tradition but it also establishes the principles of Klein's mature moral and aesthetic commitments for the first time. The third section of the chapter extends the discussion to several of Klein's unpublished poems and to one of his lesser known essays. From this latter item especially it may be gleaned how attentive Klein was to questions concerning the relation both between the poet and his audience and between the poet and his god. The fourth section of this chapter examines another early manuscript, the curious dramatic poem Escape, in the light of the preceding discussions. Like Auto-da-fé, Escape is interesting for the degree to which Klein openly, and youthfully, writes about love. More to the point, Escape shows a young Klein engaged in the joyous interplay of love and poetry. The same self-conscious delight in both love and the language of love characterizes XXII Sonnets, the subject of the fifth and last section of this chapter. This collection is relevant to any full discussion of Klein's work for several reasons. First, the sonnets--loosely arranged as a sequence--offer a useful commentary on the challenge of writing about the depth and passion of love in a fourteen-line form. How, the poet-speaker asks himself, is it possible to write well on such a subject--to speak of one's emotions poetically? The question is associated with another reason for studying the sonnets--namely, that the speaker is more easily distracted by the

formal considerations of poetry than he is by the object of his love. This point makes for a playful, imaginative tension as the sequence develops. If the sonnets are sometimes embarrassingly sentimental, overreaching, or immaturely imagined, then it is also true that they dare to meet the challenge facing all sonneteers of love. A young Klein deliberately places himself in the same company as Sydney and Shakespeare to see whether or not such a time-honoured form can accommodate a modern sensibility.

This last point touches on one of the consistent themes of Klein's early work (and, as shall be seen, of all Klein's work) and, indeed, of this chapter: Klein's continuing investigation of the relation between tradition--whether formal literary, religious, cultural--and the present evolving, changing moment. The ways in which Klein answers and works through this investigation indicate the extent to which he is a reluctant modernist--bound both to the realities of the moment and to the memories of the past. While at first glance this chapter has the appearance of a miscellany, a closer look reveals that the early works under consideration are threaded by Klein's struggle to realize a happy fusion of past and present perspectives.

I. Early Published Poetry

An examination of both the private and the public poetry of the 1925-35 period gives rise to the speculation that the young Klein held a double vision of his poetic persona. Put another way, it might be said that Klein was writing for two different audiences. He first introduced himself through such publications as the McGill Daily, the McGilliad (or the "McGill Yid," as he was accustomed to naming that more literary periodical), the Canadian Forum, Opinion, and the Chicago-based Poetry. In addition to these more general and literary periodicals, Klein submitted several poems to the Menorah Journal, a New York-based publication with a decidedly Jewish readership. The poems that appear here have Jewish culture as their themes. The poems published in such places as the Canadian Forum or the McGilliad present quite a different emphasis of subject. More often than not, these suggest the modernist concerns of Klein's association with that coterie of self-styled intellectuals and artists that later came to be known as the McGill School. Klein, and such university associates as Leon Edel, F.R. Scott, Leo Kennedy, and A.J.M. Smith, determined to find an appropriate setting for their own creative accomplishments and through various little magazines they helped to point a new direction in Canadian letters. Fashioning themselves as young Eliots and Pounds, they subscribed to a

new poetry that would mirror contemporary concerns, that would break with a rather choked Canadian literary tradition, and that would adhere to Eliot's admiration of seventeenth-century poetry while being faithful to his flat dismissal of Romantic poetry as irrelevant, ornate, and devoid of intellectual wit. Consequently, their poetry was often marked by a self-delighting wordplay, a special brand of humorous and detached intelligence, and an always certain satiric or ironic treatment of its subject matter.

Klein was, for a time, no exception to this growing shift in literary perspectives. For example, one of his earliest published poems, which appeared in the McGill Daily in 1927, was entitled "La Belle Dame Sans Merci."⁴ Here Klein transmutes Keats's haunting romantic ballad into a parodic lament. It will be recalled that in Keats's poem, the "Knight-at-arms" is lulled into a dreamscape of sensual gratification by his mysterious lady--a Muse figure or a femme fatale, depending on one's interpretation--and awakens at the end of the poem to find his vision fled in a withered natural landscape. In Klein's parody the knight becomes a

⁴"La Belle Dame Sans Merci," McGill Daily 19 November 1927: 2; A.M. Klein: The Collected Poems, ed. Miriam Waddington (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974) 6-7. All subsequent references to published poems are to this edition and are noted in parentheses. Readers should also consult Zailig Pollock's "Errors in The Collected Poems of A.M. Klein," Canadian Poetry 10 (Spring/Summer 1982): 91-99. For a list of the poems in the order that they appear in Klein's unpublished manuscript volumes see the appendices at the conclusion of this thesis.

"flashy sheik" whose Muse is a prostitute, whose dream is sexual gratification, and whose awakening is made rude by the realization that he lacks money for the carfare home. By reducing Keats's elegant statement concerning, at one level, the nature of aesthetic longing, dreaming, and loss of vision to a whimsical travesty, Klein creates a witty display of worldliness and emotional sophistication for the public gaze, while mocking the seriousness of Keats's example. It is a mark of Klein's double vision that privately he could safely confess his admiration of Keats, to whom he addressed an elegy. This unpublished sonnet (April 1926) is an unembarrassed paean to Keats:

Thou wast not born to live thy life on earth--
 E'en font baptismal was thy swan-song lake,
 For not life's length but dole of death didst take
 From lung-gnawed mother; death began in birth.
 Thy twin-branched lungs burned red--was drought and
 dearth--
 Thy breast was thy funeral pyre--from ache
 A geyser of warm song upwards did break;
 Snatched off, Olympus recognized thy worth.
 Like single note that hums,--dies--ne'er forgot...
 Like full-song'd bird that in the clouds doth dart...
 Like blood-spurt sunk in Bluebird's key--live'spot...
 Like fragrance e'er remembered of dead nard
 Thy life was short--long life thine art begot,
 Though was not born for death, immortal Bard!⁵

In addition to this effusive and overwritten sonnet "To Keats," there survive equally laudatory tributes to Shelley which never reached public attention. Such is this "Fragment on the Death of Shelley:"

⁵"To Keats," MS 002672.

Oh Autumn will come all too soon this year,
 And trees will bud gay birds--oh nevermore...
 And flowers will slowly die and disappear,
 And even the sun, a spent and empty core,
 Will burn her morning fever, and be cold...
 For he is dead, who, singing, left the shore
 Who never could be old...
 What glory is there now in being a rose?
 And why should sky-larks still desire to soar,
 Singing, and he not hear, he who loved Beauty, and whom
 Beauty chose?...⁶

To be sure, such fulsome examples of Klein's early admiration for Keats and Shelley were radically different from the public parodies, such as "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." Klein might have been especially sensitive to the critical disfavour into which Romantic poetry had fallen by the late 'twenties and thus kept his private declarations to himself.

Again, writing for possible publication in the McGill Daily, Opinion, and Poetry, Klein avoided identifying himself with the Romantics, evidencing in these early published poems an irony and economy of style more in keeping with the writings of Eliot and of Auden and Spender. Evidence of this impulse can be found in "Obituary Notices" (4-5), "Anguish" (33), and "The Lay of the Lady" (3-4). Since these poems employ showy displays of metaphor, clever verbal conceits inspired by the fashion of seventeenth-century poetry (encouraged by Eliot), it might be said about Klein at this time that it was "as if Dr. John Donne were speaking out of the corner of his mouth," a charge that he later

⁶"Fragment on the Death of Shelley," P32 001641; GHP32 001943.

playfully levelled against A.J.M. Smith.⁷ In the published "Boredom," for example, the speaker of the sonnet admits that the writing of poetry relieves the tedium of ordinary experience and then proceeds to demonstrate this in the sestet, where the concluding reminted cliché dramatically heightens the tone of the preceding thirteen lines:

I will contrive to fill days with strange words: v
 I will contrive to strangely masquerade
 My fantasies in gay fantastic hordes ...
 But only then, when I, in coffin laid,
 Will listen to the clods clap on the boards,
 Then, only then, will I call a spade a spade.

(2)

Similarly, "Wood Notes Wild" (46-7), published in the Canadian Forum, and A Sequence of Songs (25-7), published in Poetry, imitate the linguistic playfulness characteristic of seventeenth-century metaphysical style. "Divine Titillation" (48) calls attention to the extravagance which is the poet's licence through wilful indulgence:

O, what human chaff!
 Trying to tickle my feet
 With spires ... what conceit!
 Indeed you make me laugh!

Such examples demonstrate just how much Klein adopted the hallmarks of metaphysical style: unusual metaphors and learned--if forced--wit.

⁷"The Poetry of A.J.M. Smith," rev. of News of the Phoenix by A.J.M. Smith, Canadian Forum 23 (February 1944): 257-58.

There are unpublished poems in the private collections that indicate a similar enthusiasm for displaying poetic ingenuity. One of these is "Symbols," in which the poet interprets classical iconography as the displaced expression of phallic desire:

Magic and strife and crapulence
The trident of concupiscence ...

Thus Hermes seeks to hoodwink us
And calls his wand Caduceus.

L'Epée de Joi de Charlemagne--
Can that fool aphrodisiac man?

Thus Bacchus on a drunken spree
Shakes his Thyrsus, meaningly ...

All euphemisms of desire,
Celestial with pregnant fire ...⁸

"Advice to the Young Virgins" obviously borrows its subject from such cavalier pieces as Herrick's "To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time:"

If you would snare your lover, mesh
Him in the tangles of your flesh ...

Encumber him with all your beauty;
Have him as one weighed down by booty.

If you would keep him, you must dole
Him out small portions of your sole ...

Even though you give, still keep the essence.
So that love, dead, may find renaissance ...

If these things fail, then let him be
Shackled and chained by jealousy.⁹

⁸"Symbols," P32 001719; GHP32 001931.

⁹"Advice to the Young Virgins," P32 001652; GHP32 001882.

These examples may look, at first glance, like the inconsequential results of youthful experimentation, but they also demonstrate the significant point that Klein attended to the critical trend of his time--to honour seventeenth-century poetry--with much seriousness. Not surprisingly, these imitative experiments reveal the limitations of adopting to a style not yet earned, or, in Klein's case, not fully his own.

A more central place in Klein's unpublished work of this early period is occupied by a poetic voice which attends more authentically to its themes. Instead of forced verbal irony or youthful wit, a naturally relaxed and convincingly comfortable tone pervades the poetry. It seems that when Klein was free from the demands of rewriting seventeenth-century poetry, he could breathe more of himself into his work. Much of Poems (1932) and almost all of Gestures Hebraic and Poems abandon deliberate urbanity for immediate and at times urgent expression of personal interests--love, religious doubt, Judaism, cultural assimilation. A major concern of much of this early unpublished poetry raises the question of the poet's role in society and reiterates the Romantics' claim that language--poetic language--has the power to reshape the world. From these earliest efforts, it becomes clear that Klein was more sympathetic to his private mentors, Keats and Shelley, than to his public ones, the seventeenth-century poets and their twentieth-century defenders.

II. Auto-da-fé

Perhaps no work better illustrates the nature of Klein's private voice and the degree to which it differs from the early published work than Auto-da-fé.¹⁰ This manuscript is remarkable, not merely as a precocious treatment of poetic form but also as an example of an early indication of the direction Klein's work was to take. In one interpretation, Auto-da-fé reads as a suggestively autobiographical tribute to Keats. Dated August 30, 1926, and dedicated to Klein's future bride, Bessie Koslov, Auto-da-fé is essentially a long romance composed in the manner of Keats's "Eve of St. Agnes." Not only does Auto-da-fé imitate the rich, sensual concreteness of Keat's poem but it also derives its subject matter, the celebration of humanistic hedonism, from the "Eve of St. Agnes." The narrative direction of Auto-da-fé is straightforward enough and may be briefly drawn. The hero, Pascal, sheltered from the arena of experience by the rigors of religious study, resolves in pubescent youth to seek knowledge in the study of nature. Beloved by one Flora, to whom he is indifferent, Pascal is introduced to her friend Bessie. Overwhelmed with desire for each other, Bessie and Pascal inevitably abandon all restraint and submit to their passions in an apocalyptic moment in which the

¹⁰Auto-da-fé, MS 001304-66. All subsequent references to the poem are noted in the chapter in parentheses with the stanza division followed by the archival locating number.

house that shelters them from a raging storm bursts into flames. Flora, incensed with jealousy, has been watching the lovers' amorous embraces through a window of the mansion. The poem then concludes with a rhetorical flourish:

Whence rose the flames, girl's love or lightning fate?
Whence sprang the fire, Flora's love or Flora's hate?

(61.001366)

Klein, emulating Keats's use of Spenser, dramatically unfolds through the intricate patterning of the Spenserian stanza a world intoxicated by language, a world redolent with sounds and images. As in Keat's poem, the wealth of concrete details, the sheer weight of the world of objects so extravagantly described, underlines an acknowledgement of the irresistible lure of sexual enchantment in this earthly paradise.

Appropriate to its romance structure, the seasonal round in Auto-da-fé parallels the growth and development of the hero, Pascal. The poem begins with an elaborate description of encroaching Spring as Pascal experiences a growing uneasiness with his own confinement. Weaned on religious study, he is surprised to discover himself dreaming exotic images inspired by the words of the Old Testament:

For he had been taught
To lie pent in the Pentateuch: to doze
The Talmud as his pillow, and with naught
With prophets who have passed to guide his present thought.

(4.001309)

The language of the Bible determines the limits of the dreamer's world:

Fleet visions of Esther, and the balm
Of her bed chambers ...

(5.001310)

or

Through Rahab's rooms he roam'd, on carpets thick
And plushy woven moss, which brought him belief
He walked on air ...

(7.001312)

Pascal even dares to dream of Lilith, the wanton demoness who figures in the Talmud and, most especially, in esoteric commentaries: "lovely Lilith playing lips to please / First man" (8.001313). Like a voyeur denied entrance into the world of experience, the poet-dreamer is advised to find sustenance in a "sheath" of the Torah. But as the warming winds of summer animate the barren landscape, blood begins to charge through the dreamer's veins and, nurtured on ecstatic visions of Old Testament concubines and priestesses, "a demigod he grew." In an appropriately romantic gesture he violently relinquishes the trappings of enforced asceticism, tears "the holy fringes, his heart's bonds" and declares "Enough" (12.001307). The action of the poem accelerates as the dreamer wanders through pastoral terrain in search of "unknown want." Rambling through this lush environment in the heat of Summer he becomes a key-hole observer of entangled lovers, of the sweet consummations thus far denied him. He is, in turn, watched by the dotting Flora, whose love for him

remains unrequited. Melancholy Autumn brings Bessie and Pascal together. Realizing the object of his love-quest Pascal feels "the rise / Of love, a passion play." He grows "above / From demigod to god" (21.001326). The long numbing winter forces the lovers to communicate at a distance from each other. While Pascal's passion for Bessie swells, Flora's jealousy intensifies. At the centre of the poem the return of Spring occasions the renewed intensity of love. In the verdant luxury of Summer the three companions are found separated in thick woods after an exhaustive day of berry picking. A Summer storm suddenly blackens the landscape, and Pascal frantically searches in the coming darkness for his Bessie. Lured by a "humming music," the sweet murmurings of his beloved, Pascal separates the foliage to uncover her.

As already observed, the poem is faithful to the conventions of romance patterning in organizing the natural world so that it sympathizes with the progress of the hero. The movement of the seasons consistently forecasts the action of the narrative, thus establishing a pattern of inviting predictability. In the still centre of the storm, which is conveniently the centre of the poem, Pascal--like Theseus emerging from a forest labyrinth of confusing signals--discovers Bessie protected by a natural arbor. This hortus conclusus functions in a traditional manner as a symbolic manifestation of the female sexual centre; Pascal's discovery of Bessie presages her deflowering. In this protected arbor

they seal their love with a passionate kiss. The action then shifts at this dramatic moment to Flora, awkwardly scrambling in the storm in search of her companions and chancing upon her own discovery. Picking "up a letter from a dewed chalice ... / Which Bessie dropped when on the flower she dropped a kiss," she is stung by the confirmation that Pascal is entirely devoted to her friend, and experiences "the triple flame of fate / Green-fired envy, red-flamed love, red-hate" (37.001342). The poem then returns to Bessie and Pascal who are guided further by nature when a flash of lightning illuminates an abandoned mansion in the woods. Like the two wanderer-lovers in Klein's early "Haunted House" (22-23),¹¹ they seek refuge from the storm in a house that survives as a monument from a bygone age: "This is a house of youth in guise / Of age. Youth enters it to snatch off the disguise" (44.001349). Bewitched by the lushness of décor, tapestries, statuary and provocative paintings, the lovers prepare for their love-making, the climax to which the entire poem has been moving. In no other work does Klein so graphically conceive eroticism, so indulgently linger on the intimate gestures of sexual pleasure as in the concluding stanzas of Auto-da-fé. With deliberate and measured force the poem slowly unveils through almost twenty stanzas a love scene in the intoxicated language of desire.

¹¹"Haunted House," Canadian Mercury 1.2 (January 1929): 35; P32 001644-48; GHP 001875-78.

Obviously, this is a special kind of private poetry, a verse fantasy modelled on the pictorial extravagance, the lush imagery, and the dreamy vision of Keat's "Eve of St. Agnes." Like the narrator in The Faerie Queen or the lugubrious story-teller in "Eve of St. Agnes," the speaker of Auto-da-fé peeps over the shoulder of his hero to share his voyeuristic perspective:

And then she doffs her silken rose chemise
Which like long petals her blush-form embrace
And from her mauve brassiere she doth release
Her breasts ... as she doth for the mirror grace
Herself, her breasts from mauve brassiere of lace
Peep out like doves which in the storm had hid,
Wink with their pink-eyed nipples, whilse her face
Smiles at the mirror which smiles back to bid
To Pascal; scene like opiate eye-drops melt 'neath lid...

(51.001356)

As the lovers embrace to gratify their desire, Flora happens by in time to witness the love scene. Locked out of such happiness, the fulfilment of love, she is driven near to madness. The poem continues to linger on the rapture of the lovers, but now with Flora as observer of the delirious couple. The house erupts in flames at the moment of ecstasy; love's consummation corresponds with a moment of destruction. This, too, follows the conventions of romantic love. As in "Eve of St. Agnes," where as Harold Bloom notes, "the lovers leave behind an inferno, and carry their heaven with them,"¹² so too in Auto-da-fé Pascal and Bessie exit the

¹²Harold Bloom, The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry (New York: Anchor, 1963) 402.

flames and the chaos of the evening storm in the ultimate triumph of sexual union. Presumably their bodies burn in the flames while their souls are carried to some blissful realm beyond earth.

The title of the poem seems to imply that a sentence has been passed on the lovers. But if so, who has decreed it? The rhetorical questions at the end of the poem ("Whence rose the flames, girl's love or lightning fate? / Whence sprung the fire, Flora's love or Flora's hate?" (61.001366) invite speculation on Pascal's fate. The hero who turns his back on the safety of contemplative love in favour of experience suffers loss of life. Moreover, the double-edged presentation of love as a force easily transmutable to hate is implicit in the poem. Flora, who has associations with the goddess of love and whose name ties her to the Roman goddess of gardens and flowers, represents, perhaps, the dark side of Nature and of Love. Thus, her presence continually reminds the reader of the tragic consequences of passionate experience. Ultimately, however, the case rests in favour of Pascal's choice and the right of the lovers to surrender themselves to the world of objects. Not to be overlooked is the fact that Pascal's love instincts are nourished on images from the Old Testament and related commentaries. Interestingly, the elaborate descriptions of the seasonal cycle which signify an organic, natural process of change, decay, death, and rebirth (or resurrection), are mirrored by Pascal's

progress--his spiritual and emotional development which advances in tune with the turning of the seasons. Pascal's impulse to abandon his ascetic life, his vicarious experience of love, is initiated by his attention to the rich language that he studies. Entrance into the realm of action does not necessarily preclude the vocabulary of religious study so much as translate it into a secular and erotic context.

At the outset of the poem the vehicle of several metaphors is clearly biblical. Witness an early stanza in which the poet asks, "To what may such an heart that is brimful / Of longing, empty to the sound, of that / Unknown, be likened?" and answers, "To vat / In Holy Land a-gaping for the pat / Of pray'd for rain" (11.001316). Further illustrations are to be seen in "whence he caught the speech / He could not understand; strange sounds did strike / Him like the tower babel to impeach" (12.001317), and in

Not only berries pick, but flowers pluck
To garland girls with fillets of the hue
And Joseph-coated petals, on which suck
The Joseph-coated butterflies bright brood....

(28.001333)

Eventually, biblical allusions are superseded by analogies to natural phenomena or to pagan mythology. The abandoned mansion survives like some Elizabethan memory of the classical period with Venus as the central figure in place of the Shunnamite. It is interesting to note, in this context, that Klein probably borrowed the idea of the bucolic home from his readings of seventeenth-century poetry, especially

the so-called house poems such as Jonson's "To Penshurst" and Marvell's "Upon Appleton House, To My Lord Fairfax," that play upon the beata vir theme, on the happy life to be gained upon retirement from tensions in the city. Indeed, as already mentioned, Klein's "A Haunted House" echoes a similar theme. Unlike the published poetry of this early period, however, with its self-consciously witty trappings, Auto-da-fé subordinates a common seventeenth-century theme to an obviously Romantic structure.

Auto-da-fé is noteworthy because it indicates the extent of Klein's familiarity with a particular poetic tradition--Romanticism--from which he borrows, if not always successfully. Dissonant passages sound when the poet attempts to modernize the context of the poem. During the long winter, for instance, Bessie and Pascal are restricted to contact by telephone and the unexpected reference to a modern communications device set in the elaborate style of Spenserian verse forces an uncomfortable incongruity. No doubt, such a practice indicates Klein's strained attempt to fuse contemporary language with time-honoured verse forms. He would be far more effective at this in later work. For the most part, however, Auto-da-fé shows Klein's control of his material, his ability to harness the equipment of the Spenserian stanza, the requirements of its rhyme scheme and the order of its elevated language. An intensity of mood is achieved through an accumulated wealth of sensual detail.

Moreover, Klein demonstrates his enthusiasm for verbal opsis, "an ability to catch visualization through sound."¹³

Thus in

The fountain still shot up its argent stems
Which melted, fell in round pearl diadems

(20.001325)

the first line has a number of monosyllabic words that connote the motion and force of the surging spray while the caesura in the next line marks the still instant before the water falls. The effect of "round pearl diadems" slows the pace of the verse, and the enriched masculine end rhyme conveys the delicacy of the falling water. Such strict attention to the visual and aural texture of word patterning would become the trademark of Klein's craftsmanship.

No doubt, Auto-da-fé was written when Klein was in an enthusiastic mood, and the poem is a sincere expression of youthful love. In addition to this lengthy declaration of his passion for his future wife, Klein wrote a short erotic poem, "A Kiss," for Bessie, dated May 30, 1926,¹⁴ and "Ballade of the Poet," from "Abbie to his Bessie," dated November 28, 1927.¹⁵ Both are conceived in the same exuberant spirit as Auto-da-fé. While Klein never wrote anything as openly

¹³Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957) 259. Hereafter cited as Anatomy of Criticism.

¹⁴"A Kiss," MS 002632-63.

¹⁵"Ballade of the Poet," MS 001402-07.

personal and blatantly erotic as Auto-da-fé again; he did retain the fundamental concept of the relationship between the poet and his work of creation--for use in later works. In fact, this vital notion would become the central principle of virtually all of Klein's written work.

Most interesting to note in this connection is the way in which Klein establishes at the outset of Auto-da-fé a relationship between the poet-hero and his creation in an analogy with God and His creation of the universe. Such a relationship not only defines the role of the poet but also serves to provide a useful context for Klein's working aesthetic. Auto-da-fé begins with the phrase "And all was void." The speaker then develops an association between the writing of the poem--the creation of a world formed by words--and the first act of creation. Here, for instance, is the second stanza, which appropriately fixes Spring as the season where he would begin his story:

And when wind whispered in the tree-girl's ear,
 The tree would sigh and whistle wistfully,
 Would long for warmth of Summer to appear
 To make her a green carpet of the leaf ...
 The birds, exiled by cool cruel breath, sadly
 Returned, and sang words tree could only sigh ...
 An emptiness fill'd full the air; and He,
 World's God, impressed the moon, his thumb-print, high,
 The seal of authorship upon the scroll of sky.

(2.001307)

Compare these lines with "Preface," an early unpublished poem:

When you will read this then-archaic rune
 And think me dead, who am not doomed to die

I will have set my thumb-print on the moon
 And stamped my foot-print on the starry sky.¹⁶

In Auto-da-fé God writes the Book of Nature, and the poet imitates Him by filling the white spaces of his page, the void of worldlessness, with his Book of Words. "Preface" illuminates the notion that the poet imitates the First Creator. The poem's particular mode of expression, which employs an analogy between God's unfolding of the universe as a scroll or text, recurs in Klein's early poetry, particularly in the unpublished matter, like a series of linguistic tics. Klein is trying to do precisely what a long hermetic tradition has always proposed: to read the signs and symbols of the earth as a means of finding a gnosis. In Auto-da-fé the poet-hero is nourished on rabbinical scholarship and Talmudic exegesis which conceives of the Torah as the perfect statement of God's will. In fact, it is commonly held in Jewish belief, in particular in Jewish mystical belief, that the Torah is not only a text made up of the names of God but is also, as a whole, one perfect statement, the one great Name of God. In other words, the secret life of the godhead is projected into the text of the Torah: its order is the order of creation. The central purpose both of exegetical and of Kabbalistic, or mystical, speculation is to crack the code wherein is contained the secrets of God's mysterious ways. As Harold Bloom notes in his Kabbalah and Criticism,

¹⁶"Preface," P32 001697; GHP32 001920.

"even Kabbalah [traditionally the sphere of Jewish mystics] is more of an interpretive and mythical tradition than a mystical one ... more a mode of intellectual speculation than a way of union with God."¹⁷ Students of the Talmud and Kabbalists may differ on almost everything else--or as Klein once noted, "the only thing on which two Jews will agree is what the third should give to charity"¹⁸--but they are at one in regarding language as something more precious than an inadequate instrument for contact between human beings. All creation is, from the point of view of God, nothing but an expression of His hidden self that begins and ends by giving itself a name.

The extent of Klein's interest in both mystical and orthodox scriptural speculation is evidenced everywhere in his writings. Such an interest was profoundly congenial to the spirit of literary criticism, the history of which he inherited alongside his Jewish education. When Coleridge wrote that "the primary imagination is a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation,"¹⁹ he was stating what has been a recurring idea of literary criticism since the Elizabethan age. Poetry is sanctified in Klein's personal

¹⁷Harold Bloom, Kabbalah and Criticism (New York: Seabury, 1975) 47.

¹⁸"Of Jewish Humour," Judaean 7.5 (February 1934): 36, 39; MS 005136.

¹⁹Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965) ch. 15: 202.

mythology because it is obedient to the religious tradition of interpreting the world through language. For him, the ordering of words, which is poetry's chief preoccupation, is analogous to the process of scriptural exegesis. The two traditions, one religious, the other literary, are conjoined in Klein's poetry, so that in this context his unpublished tribute to Shelley is particularly notable:

For him to write a poem was to parse
 The world--to punctuate each line with stars ...
 He spoke;
 He made the music of the spheres
 A fatal cadence swooning in the ears;
 An assonance of pain; an un-timed time;
 A couplet still expectant of its rhyme.
 His every syllable mere counterpart:
 The onomatopoeia of the heart ...
 Within a golden-branched cage of words
 He caught the never-ending sound of birds,
 Yet all of this was but inspired fraud:
 He plagiarized the very words of God ...²⁰

In another unpublished poem, entitled "Astrologer," the speaker establishes the nature of his relationship to God, proffering a semiotics of the heavens:

The sun goes down, and slowly there appears
 the writing on the wall of the horizon;
 and only I can understand this blazon
 of banners pendant from celestial spheres....
 I dote on the calligraphy of spheres;
 so with the universe have made liaison;
 bold-faced and fleet and eager-eyed to brazen
 my way among the sieges of the Pears.
 Behind the wall there is the unknown Clerk:
 the stars are all his alphabetic discs;
 The moon marks periods; lightnings in the dark
 whirl exclamation points; and comet whisks

²⁰"Shelley," P32 001720; GHP 001942.

Shoot dashes. Only, I, the hierarch,
can know the reference of the asterisks.²¹

This poem is particularly noteworthy because it looks ahead to Klein's poem on the painter Cornelius Krieghoff, "Kriehoff: Calligrammes,"²² in which the landscape of Krieghoff's paintings is read as an alphabet of signs, so that a ladder becomes an H, an Indian woman with a papoose a Q, a crucifix a Y, a plump farmwife a B, and so on--letters that stand against the blankness, the void of snow (305).

In the unpublished "Request" the poet-speaker defines his task of appropriating the signs of nature to a poetic alphabet:

I will thumb the stars, and read them
In each nook.
They will be the dots within a
Blindman's book.²³

And in "Lost Fame," an unpublished, lighthearted appeal to Solomon, the biblical king of legendary poetic vision, this theme is developed further:

Ah, Solomon, you sage who knew the language
of all the birds, I have a certain quarrel
With you - why did you not compile me
A lexicon of all their feathered notes?...
For then, with every melody they sang which

²¹"Astrologer," P32 001727; GHP 001949.

²²"Kriehoff: Calligrammes," The Rocking Chair and Other Poems (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1948), 13.

²³"Request," P32 001724; GHP 001946.

I'd interpret, I would win me laurel
 Upon laurel, all the world would style me

(Mere translator) poet of all poets!²⁴

So in the sonnet "The Poet to the Big Business Man," the speaker is capable of victory over a Philistine from the business world because his weapons are the words/worlds of his own powerful vocabulary:

I do hereby
 Warn you that when irritated, I'll
 Prick you with my star-points, I will pry
 Your navel with sharp comets, grin the while --
 Or with a moon I'll sock you in the eye.²⁵

As can be observed, these poems found in the early private volumes frequently draw attention to themselves as artifacts, as verbal arrangements constituting an order to be known in themselves. The reader is forced into the posture of cracking the code of the poetry, in much the same way that the Talmudic scholar must quarry the levels of meaning contained in each scriptural word. So the successful poet, like God, unfolds a mysterious language that invites participation in the process of unweaving the fabric of the text in order to appreciate it as a whole. "The mind of the reader, at the conclusion of the poem," wrote Klein in an essay on the aesthetics of poetry, "is sucked back into the poem's vortex.

²⁴"Lost Fame," GM 001516; GHP 001753.

²⁵"The Poet to the Big Business Man," P32 001710; GHP 001932.

The compulsion is to burrow, to seek."²⁶ Such a process of reintegration, and thus of recreation, is congenial to the romantic ideal that establishes the value of human consciousness as the source of meaning and to the religious tradition that establishes the centrality of interpretation.

For all of its youthful limitations, Auto-da-fé and the private lyrical poetry of this period reveal much of what readers recognize as the mature Klein. His reliance on the traditional verse forms of this poetry only intensified, his mixing of archaisms and modern speech grew more pronounced, and his interest in the ordering possibilities of poetic discourse deepened. In its relentlessly accumulating Spenserian stanzas, Auto-da-fé shows Klein's passion for poetic design—a design of associative imagery, strict rhyme, and rhythmic parallelism. In the early romantic sonnets and the private experimental lyrics, a remarkably familiar Klein sounds as firm in his enthusiasm for hidden patterns, linguistic codes, and natural signs as the Klein of The Rocking Chair and Other Poems. Of course, the older Klein accomplished his craft with much more skill and sophistication, but the younger Klein was no less certain of his interests. Finally, Auto-da-fé reveals Klein's early inclination towards his Romantic literary mentors with whom he was probably more comfortable--temperamentally, aesthetically, and philosophically.

²⁶"Marginalia," Canadian Jewish Chronicle 24 December 1948: 6; MS 005228.

--than with his contemporaries. The Klein of Auto-da-fé would not have corresponded with the Klein of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci."

III. God and the Poet

So much of Klein's published poetry, particularly the three volumes before The Rocking Chair and Other Poems (and even his lyrical novel The Second Scroll), still remain obscure to a frustrated reading public. Earle Birney once complained: "who but a Talmudic scholar can know all the references?"²⁷ Yet this is somehow the point. So rich and esoteric are the allusions to Jewish culture, legend, and language in the published material that Klein seemed determined to deny his reader any easy access; little concession is made on his behalf. Thus the reader, either Jewish or otherwise, is forced to furnish some philosophical or practical context in order to make sense of the poetry. The concrete realities of Klein's work--symbols, names, obscure allusions to the Old Testament, Kabbalah, and to Jewish folk-lore--are what the concrete world, the world of words, is for either the mystic or the scholar: a system of symbols, a series of

²⁷Earle Birney, "Canadian Jewish Poet," rev. of Hath Not a Jew... by A.M. Klein, Canadian Forum 20 (1941): 354-55.

linguistic patterns to remind us, as Bloom notes, "of what we may never have known, yet need to believe we have known."²⁸

The analogy between God as the First Creator and the poet as His imitator, liaison, and interlocutor that is repeated in variation in the early unpublished volumes goes a long way towards explaining Klein's working method. Particularly illuminating in this connection is an essay that Klein published in the Chronicle in the 'forties, which states in prose what his early poetry implies. Titled "Towards an Aesthetic" as part of a longer Chronicle piece ("Marginalia"), the essay sets forth the notion that the first chapter of Genesis is an original blueprint and a first formula for the writing and justification of poetry:

- (1) The establishment of two lights, one for day and one for night. This is to teach us that all created things are worthy of their Creator only if they can be appreciated on two levels; if in a poem, everything is as clear as daylight, it might as well have been written in prose; if, on the other hand its moonlight radiance, shrouded in shadows, threatens to remain so forever, it is a light again unsatisfying; it thwarts the natural desire for clear and complete vision. The compromise consists in the alternation of two kinds of light; one mystical, the other apocalyptic.
- (2) The division of the waters: Divine grammar and syntax.
- (3) The making of grass, herb, yielding seeds, and fruit-trees bearing fruit. The world's vocabulary, which does not live unless it comes alive, unless it reproduces itself, unless it connotes.
- (4) The declaration of the seasons: In art, in law, time is of the essence.

²⁸Bloom, Kabbalah and Criticism, 86.

- (5) Let the waters swarm with living creatures, and let fowl fly above the earth: Art dynamic, not static; protean, not uniform, self-multiplying, not sterile.
- (6) The making of man in God's image: This is the poet's signature. In his creation, it is He who must be seen. The artist is a creator completely surrounded by mirrors.²⁹

This artful exercise in divine parsing appropriates to a literary aesthetic not only Klein's scriptural training but also his reading of Kabbalistic speculation, which follows so similar a procedure of interpretation. Implicit in the idea of the first creative fiat whereby all things came into being by the Word, and whereby the classification of objects was established, is man as the reader and word-maker who would come to read Nature as a book. Earth, and man in it, are linguistic signs, artifacts of God's handwriting. The poet's signature is his poetry, which Klein believed similarly stands for and reveals the consciousness of the poet-creator. The discipline of finding rhymes and arranging words in patterns is consistent with the pursuit of truth. And poetry, Klein held, even more so than prose, was capable of demanding more from the reader because it best approximates the form of the puzzle which the Torah is traditionally conceived as--a puzzle containing near infinite possibilities of interpretation. "Prose is concerned with denotation," he

²⁹"Marginalia," Canadian Jewish Chronicle 11 June (1948): 8-9; MS 005226-27.

once wrote, "poetry with detonation."³⁰ He would shake up his readers if they would accept the challenge of unravelling the arcana of the poetry. Even Klein's major prose work, The Second Scroll, assumes the role of a puzzle, for the narrative imitates the structure of the Torah, with each chapter corresponding to one of the Five Books of Moses and with a commentary on each chapter contained at the conclusion of the narrative as a form of exegesis.

No wonder, then, that the Bible and the Kabbalistic writings which he studied throughout his life occupy so central a place in Klein's personal mythology. More than merely frames of reference for him, both the scriptures and subsequent mystical commentaries offer a precise way of viewing the function of language as the key to knowledge. In his essays for the Chronicle in the 'thirties and 'forties, Klein continually returned to this subject, always implicitly setting forth the intimate relationship between the poet and God. "The Bible as Literature," "The Bible's Archetypical Poet," and "Thirty Plots and Holy Writ" are just a sample of the titles of such essays which demonstrate this principle. Scribbled in his lecture notes on poetry when a visiting lecturer at McGill in the 'forties is the salient observation that "When Keats wished to define poetry, he pointed to the Canticum Canticorum."³¹

³⁰MS 005240.

³¹MS 005011.

No doubt Klein found poetry to be a superior medium of expression because it harmonized with his view of his social function. As Frye notes in The Anatomy of Criticism, "the poet who sings about gods is often considered to be singing as one--or as an instrument of one."³² The audible voice in Klein's early unpublished material and, indeed, in his later published poetry and prose sounds a recognition of the poet's duty "to reveal the gods for whom he speaks."³³ Often that voice presents itself as an inspired oracle. The very forms in which Klein chose to cast his poetic expressions testify to his commitment to bridge the gap between the gods for whom he speaks and the community of readers who, presumably, lack the poet's special gifts. For instance, Klein experiments as much with what Frye terms "the public religious lyric" or the Hebrew psalms, in which the speaker represents the "visible community of worshippers,"³⁴ as with such popular lyrical expression as nursery-rhymes, sing-songs, and childrens' verse and with time-honoured verse forms such as the sonnet and even the sestina, which impart the sense of "participation mystique," the involvement of the reader into a community of shared experience. Certainly, Klein's frequent use of archaisms borrowed from Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton in his poetry of the 'thirties and 'forties testify to his

³²Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 55.

³³Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 294.

³⁴Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 295.

desire to infuse his modern works with an implicit perspective of the past. If, to paraphrase Frye, creation is essentially a recreating of memory, the reordering of our verbal history, then the spirit of the past is recollected in a language which is cast in an earlier verse form.³⁵ Klein's habit of choosing conventional forms and genres of poetry rather than the free verse forms with which his contemporaries were experimenting indicates both his interest in showing the present in terms of the past and his desire to identify himself with an established literary tradition. Considering his sympathy for established verse forms it is not surprising that Klein wrote the following "Composition" in 1927:

I must write my love a poem.
 Her lips
 And her eyes
 In the paleness of her face
 Are as roses
 And forget-me-nots
 Thrown in a heap of lilies ...
 Alas, this is free verse ...
 I must write my love a poem ...³⁶

In effect, "Composition" dismisses free verse, imagist poetry, and modern attempts to rewrite the language of love all at once. Here Klein playfully sets forth a principle of poetry --that it must have rhyme and meter to be poetry--that he would maintain throughout his writing career.

³⁵See Northrop Frye, Creation and Recreation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

³⁶"Composition," P32 001705; GHP 001927.

IV. Escape

In the same year that Klein wrote "Composition," and only a year later than Auto-da-fé, he wrote another private love piece dedicated to Bessie, an unpublished manuscript entitled Escape,³⁷ which reflects his concerns with the nature of poetic language at this time. In fact, the theme of this closet drama is the language of love. Like Auto-da-fé, Escape conveys the youthful enthusiasm of desire. But instead of expressing that desire in the romantic luxuriousness of Spenserian verse, Escape expresses it in terms of a combination of literary forms, so that the whole manuscript resembles a pastiche of lyrical conventions. Moreover, unlike Auto-da-fé, Escape fractures continuity and disrupts narrative expectation. Such a strategy is appropriate to the theme of this work--that love is a kind of madness and the language of love irrefutable evidence of this. Whereas the movement of Auto-da-fé ascends to an apocalyptic pitch of sexual gratification, the direction of Escape progresses uncertainly until the whole work suddenly drops the two lovers featured in the narrative into the bathetic. The dramatic poem, as Escape may conveniently be called, is predicated upon the assumption that the process of association --the habit of analogical thought, or the achievement of

³⁷Escape, MS 00Y367-1463. All subsequent references to the poem are noted in parentheses.

metaphor--is essentially unamenable to reason. The poet-lover-hero glories in the process of metaphor because it shows the mind as creative and carries him over from sensation into value; solidly reinforced, however, is the recognition in Escape of the logical groundlessness of the method. Thus, the poem playfully explores both the theme of poetic language and the hazards of free association.

The title of this early, curious work refers to the escape of two nameless lovers from the limitations of rationality through the very condition of their being madly in love. A secondary meaning involves the fact that the two manage to escape temporarily their confinement in an insane asylum. The lovers seem to be committed to the asylum, in fact, because they are in love. The language that they speak continually betrays their confused states of mind. More often than not, they construct verse that connects them to the Petrarchan love tradition; that is to say that they speak in paradoxes and strained metaphors which reflect their distraught conditions. It is thus appropriate that the dramatic poem is set at Easter, the holiday which celebrates the Christian divine paradox of death and resurrection. The heroine's opening song is rich in oxymoron and characteristic of her confusion:

All trees, like gypsies, wave leaf-castanets
Over the coffin-cradles of the violets
Casting sad gladness out....

"Sweet is the pain of my heart," she murmurs later, expressing the familiar, bittersweet lament of the distracted lover. To love is both to be confined and to be free of confinement, to be mad and yet to celebrate madness.

The introductory "Ballade" depicts the poet-speaker as a diminutive, rather ~~unromantic~~ figure, a common enough self-portrait drawn throughout much of Klein's later poetry. Here he is a "spectacled ... little Jew" who steps into the role of imitator of God's handiwork again:

He dared to meddle with God's first debut,
 To mouth that all was good and naught amiss;
 Smugly he commanded parvenus
 Stars; he praised a crescent moon gratis ...
 His tongue never did know paralysis ...

(001465)

Made bold by love, or more accurately, by "a pair of legs, a pair of comely lips," he commits himself to its enterprise. In the combined role of lunatic, poet, and lover, he becomes a first explorer, first namer: "t'was he discovered sky / He vowed ... he fashioned rhymes with which to pry / Into a heart." His obedience to rhyme implies a belief in the connectedness of objects. Words harmonize to suggest a relationship between things. For him, the world is a text which can therefore be read by analogy:

He found the beauty of a rose a clue
 To understand the beauty of a kiss ...
 He knew that mouths were not for food; he knew
 That lips were made for passion-emphasis ...

(001406)

Responding to the delicate singing of his mistress, the poet-lover declares his intoxication with her. Again, his expression echoes a major chord in Klein's poetic vocabulary:

The moon is like a golden note a-tremble
 My love reads music from the scroll of sky,
 In which stars are quavers quivering ...

(001422)

The nature of this mad vision is to see wholeness, connectedness and unity in Nature. Answering Keats's vexing query concerning the nature of his identification with the nightingale's song ("Was it a vision or a waking dream? / Fled is that music:-- do I wake or sleep?"),³⁸ the poet-lover of Escape affirms the reality of his own waking vision:

I am an urn embracing many dews;
 I listen, and I am a part of song ...
 O nightingales would surely perish now,
 Would perish with a rival's jealousy,
 And wiser birds are feigning sleep, so that
 They be not taunted by comparisons.

(001423)

In the inspired, rapturous swoon of love there are no unresolved contraries. The lover is confident that his music presides over the realm of Beauty, thereby turning Keats's inviting question into unquestionable fact.

In the sensual intensity of the experience of love, the lovers are able to overhear each other's soliloquies so that they end up singing the same song as "souls which echo but the voice of God." The heroine and the hero inevitably

³⁸John Keats: Complete Poems, ed. Jack Stillinger (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982) 281.

stand face to face, having inched closer to each other through their shared music. She relates that she was able to escape from the asylum by speaking poetry to her guard; by "showing him there was a moon," she transformed him into "a mooning calf." Lacking the opportunity to charm in like manner, the hero relates that he had to pummel his guard, who now "carries full moon upon / His head." Their ensuing conversation, which constitutes the rest of Escape, is marked by an abandoned, imaginative interplay of suggestion, a sprightly parody of the language of love. Her laughter invites him to associate freely on the sounds such laughter evokes; consequently, his catalogue of similes entangles him in strained metaphors. The poem moves forward through a series of similar verbal games. For example, the lover decides that he must win a kiss from his beloved. To accomplish this it is necessary for him to convince her with an extravagant exercise in verbal sorcery similar to the argument set forth by the speaker of Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress." But the poet-lover of Escape is no match for Marvell's clever seducer. In Klein's poem, the speaker's indelicate treatment of a similar line of argument renders his speech ridiculous.

He: Tulips were not made to be punned upon. They were fashioned for--(Kisses her)--To proceed. (Eloquently). France where vintage is cornucopia ... Spain in which a rose in a girl's hair and a pair of eyes gleaming in the moon-light produce lunacy of the most commendable type ... Italy where peasants hide their fortune in the sun ... Germany where one's happiness comes in bottles ... Greece which exists because of its wines ... Persia--

She: But why this pot-pourri of races?

He: (exasperated) There you have confused me. I have forgotten ... but I remember there was a kiss at the end of it ...

She: You will twist your tongue for the satisfaction of your lips ...

He: Another kiss, my love, another kiss;
 Kiss me till our lips will be so numb
 They will not know if they be mine or yours ...
 Kiss me till your lips will be red wounds
 And I will balsam them with my one kiss ...
 Kiss me till your lips will be a flame
 You wish to smother in my lips--O kiss
 Me till your lips will be so dry, and parched
 Your heart's blood will bead slow upon your lips ...
 And I will kiss and I will taste your heart ...
 --All my secrets I will tell you, Love
 And with but one vocabulary--kiss ...
 Your lips are molten rubies--Love, your lips
 Are as the eighty words which Arab girls
 Use to make a mention of sweet honey ...
 The reason for creation are your lips
 You--

(001444-46)

The hero spends so much time arguing his case in this mock-elevated style that he tends to forget the objective of love-making.³⁹ Not surprisingly, his beloved tends to grow impatient with waiting. Cautious of her lover's sophistry, she continually reproves his rhetorical waywardness. Of course, she is equally mad with desire and, if somewhat more skeptical of verbal excess, remains a willing partner in

³⁹This exchange, like so much of *Escape*, strongly recalls the Shakespearean banter of such self-conscious lovers as Lysander and Hermia (*Midsummer Night's Dream*) and Berowne and Rosaline (*Love's Labour's Lost*). More directly, the two lovers of *Escape* recall the two speakers of Eliot's "Conversation Galante," *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963) 35. Klein's early attention to Eliot is notable and will be discussed in chapter iii of this thesis.

debate. When simile becomes hyperbole and when extravagance is uncontrolled, lunacy is verified.

In the middle of the hero's speech on kissing, the moon suddenly makes its appearance. As the emblem (and, traditionally, the cause) of lunacy, the moon threatens to push the lovers even further into mad metaphorical entrapment:

Stare: not too inquisitive
 Your brain may turn made curds ...
 For none can see her face and live
 The same man afterwards.

(001451)

The appearance of the moon, however, prompts wild analogy. To the lovers, the moon is "God's monocle" and a natural sign of the madness of love.⁴⁰ Since, the moon waits all evening to be caressed by the warmth of her lover rising in the east and since his rising gradually effaces her, she reflects the cold light of frustrated love. No wonder she initiates madness. No wonder the heroine is uneasy with the thought that she is being spied upon by a jealous moon:

A sullen moon regards us! hush!
 She stares at us and seems to blush
 At every red-grape kiss we crush ...

(001447)

At first described as "heart-oath's glove," the moon becomes the subject of tortuous verbal shuffling. The mistress-

⁴⁰The banter of Klein's lovers here directly invokes the work of a French poet recommended by Eliot, Jules Lafargue. Lafargue's L'imitation de Notre-Dame la Lune not only stands behind Eliot's "Conversation Gallante," mentioned above, but also behind Klein's Escape. See Oeuvres Complètes de Jules Lafargue (Paris: Mercure de France, 1951) 207-274.

heroine proclaims it a "crescent moon whose pale / -round curve is god's own finger-nail" and then parallels its crescent shape to "the Spanish lady's / Golden comb." Puncturing his beloved's conceit, and not unmindful of the pressures under which his words are placed, the poet-lover responds:

And if to pull the teeth from out
 A metaphor's confusing mouth
 Is just and fair and justly fair --
 The stars were hair-pins in her hair.

(001455),

Her list of similes continues to have as its tenor the crescent moon which she likens to a "scimitar" and a "golden sling." His list compares the full moon to a "magic-looking glass," an "orange," a "divine omelette," a "golden egg," a "yellow dandelion," and a "ball of flame." Waking suddenly from this dizzying barrage of strained comparisons, she arrests the accelerating pace of his argument:

I do not like your similes
 For if the moon is like my face
 And if an orange, as you please
 Is as a moon, then equal case
 makes an orange of my face!

(001460)

Quick to appease her, the poet-lover adds, "An orange whose sweet juice I squeeze."

Such glib repartee invites the final curtain. At this instant, the insane asylum guards rush in to claim the mad duo. The closet drama has sunk from the pretended formality of Elizabethan love poetry to the absurd and comical nonsense

verse of Lewis Carroll. From above, a guard drops what the lovers had always imagined to be the moon, a giant egg, while reciting the verses of Humpty Dumpty. The popular egg in Carroll's dreamscape is fundamental to Alice's education because it challenges her presumptions concerning the absolute meaning of words and it breaks down her fixed verbal expectations:

"When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be Master--that's all."⁴¹

Indeed, this is precisely the question to which Escape itself attends. Since the lovers are finally ushered out of the frame, so to say, and returned to confinement, it may be supposed that their attempts to break through the formal boundaries of words have failed. But they carry their insane world with them; the moon, previously compared to a divine omelette, is, in fact, an egg which they urge each other to swallow in the concluding lines of Escape. From the point of view of the rational guards who adhere to a recognized verbal code of fixed meanings, the post-lovers are certifiably insane. On the one hand, it might be said that the lovers are trapped by their confinement in an illusion of harmony entirely of their own design. On the other hand it might also be said that they are liberated

⁴¹Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, ed. Donald J. Gray (New York: Norton, 1971) 163.

from the limitations of predictability and ordinariness through the composition of poetry. The moon becomes, after all, what they imagined it to be. Escape challenges the notion that words embody sense, and it acknowledges that faith in analogy is itself a kind of madness. Yet the poem celebrates the necessity of such faith as the informing principle of poetry and the way of vision. Auto-da-fé invites the question --is it better to exist without love than to burn in its passion? Escape elaborates the query in terms of the poetic process: why is it better to profess common sense, to be out of love, than to be mad, creative, and in love?

In his collection of notes on the aesthetics of poetry, Klein entered the following lines from A Midsummer Night's Dream:

The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.⁴²

The quotation could serve as an epigraph to Escape, alerting the reader to the realization that Klein's closet drama is a commentary on one of the central themes of Shakespeare's marvelous comedy. The subject of A Midsummer Night's Dream, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, is the subject of both Auto-da-fé and Escape. In the former poem, Pascal and Bessie are directly compared with the classical lovers, and in the latter the two lovers share the same moonlit night as Shakespeare's love-drunk characters. These three imaginative types--lunatic, lover, and poet--inhabit the same arena; each

⁴²MS 005242. See A Midsummer Night's Dream 5.1.7.

is riddled by the demon of association which mangles logic and intensifies experience. But that experience is granted particular poignancy in Shakespeare's play and in Klein's poems by the understanding that it is as desirable as it is unavoidable. The exaggerated speech and posture of the lover is rendered both ridiculous and ennobling. Further, to be in love--that is, to speak poetry--allows entrance into a special theatre: one shares the same gestures and verbal utterances as Antony and Cleopatra, Paris and Helen, Pyramus and Thisbe. Klein's unpublished "This is no myth," collected in his private volumes, reinforces this theme:

O what is Helen, what is Guinevere
 Or Cleopatra or the Shulamite
 To me who hold you loveliest, most dear?
 These are but names, or making it more true,
 Not even names these are, but only slight
 And fragile adjectives for you.⁴³

Likewise, Klein's "Dark Cleopatra on a Gilded Couch," another unpublished sonnet, echoes a similar idea:

Dark Cleopatra on a gilded couch
 Staring at Antony, and Antony
 Kneeling upon a none-too servile knee
 A-fingering her oriental brooch;
 And Helen musing on her love's reproach;
 And Juliet lorn; and pale Penelope
 Weaving the warp and woof of misery; --
 These are the themes, dear, that I will not broach ...
 Useless it is, and most superfluous
 That love should take dead garlands, and should bind
 Them on hot brows; useless it is for us
 To mouth of passions some have left behind.

⁴³"This is no Myth," P32 001623; GHP 001856.

For we ourselves, ghosts pale and curious,
 May some night hear our names upon the wind ...⁴⁴

These examples, maudlin as they may be, clearly underline the special history of love to which the speaker and his beloved belong.

Approximately two thirds of the way through Escape, a voice on the balcony, presumably one of the guards of the asylum, soliloquizes in sonnet form on the theme of the poem, unaware that the two lovers below can hear him:

If ever I should love, I would not pine
 In metaphors as poetasters do ...
 And strong hyperboles I would not hew
 Merely to typsify a wench-divine ...
 Must all creation be an amorous sign?
 Must grasses gossip of my rendez-vous?
 Must roses and must stars be privy to
 Affairs which are particularly mine?
 I would not lisp in/wise-and-foolish fashion,
 (An oxymoron is the lover's self.)
 I would not wrap my heart in a cocoon
 Of similes and trust it to an elf ...
 Too jealous would I be of my own passion
 To share it with an ever-grinning moon.

(001450)

The poem, which Klein collected separately as "Protest" in the early volumes,⁴⁵ is rendered ironic in the context of Escape since the mad vision of the lovers insists on creation as an "amorous sign" and because the speaker, in choosing the Perarchan sonnet as his expression, selects the traditional form of the lover's discourse in spite of himself. Analogical

⁴⁴"Dark Cleopatra on a Gilded Couch," P32 001627; GHP 001860.

⁴⁵"protest," P32 001704; GHP 001926.

thought might be logically indefensible, but it is one of the ways of making sense of experience. Moreover, the speaker's protest is not directed so much against metaphor as it is against sharing his passion with nature. As the lovers in Escape rightly point out, the guard seems to be suffering from egomania and selfishness. Without an object of his desire he is compelled to focus on himself. In Klein's early unpublished "Letters to One Absent," the speaker is incomplete without his loved one, finds no meaning in his actions and fails to connect himself to experience or the objects around him:

I eat; the ladle does not leave the bowl.
 I sleep; say that I lie upon a bed;
 I drink; the cup is tilted but still full,
 I rise and labour for my butterless bread.
 The sun sets. I turn pages in a book.
 I shuffle cards. I lay them on a board.
 I choose a point on the wall, and look, and look,
 Sometimes I unclove lips and say a word.
 O empty, empty without you, love, a void
 When the sun threatens to burn into ash.
 Already the stars are flaming cinders, buoyed
 By desolate winds. The world will go in a flash.
 Only do you return: cinders are curled
 To stars; the sun is sun; the world is world.⁴⁶

In the despair of the beloved's absence, the speaker cannot recognize connectedness; there is no occasion for metaphor without her and without metaphor he is estranged from the world. Only her return will guarantee the vision of poetry.

⁴⁶"Letters to One Absent," P32 001653-54; GHP 001883.

V. XXII Sonnets (1931)

The themes of both love and of poetry were very much on Klein's mind in the early 'thirties, as can be seen from the examples of Auto-da-fé, Escape, and the private lyrics collected in Poems (1932), Gestures Hebraic (1932), and Gestures Hebraic and Poems (1932). In addition to these unpublished manuscripts, Klein was working on a sonnet sequence which he entitled simply XXII Sonnets (1931).⁴⁷ That Klein faithfully repeated the order of the poems in his poetry volumes indicates that he intended a specific principle of design to be at work. Indeed, XXII Sonnets is conceived with a loose but noticeable narrative direction. Here he explores further the nature of the love relationship which is illuminated in Auto-da-fé and playfully parodied in Escape. The poet-lover persona of the twenty-two sonnets is consistent with the voice of the other manuscripts; he adopts the modest and often self-deprecating posture of the youthful courtly lover:

Why do you love me as you say you do,
 Me above all? Surely you see that I am
 No handsome Greek nor even wealthy Jew,
 But only a poor scribbling Abraham.

(001468)

But Klein's model is not the dependant wooer of the Petrarchan sonnet tradition. Klein is not as concerned with describing the paradoxical symptoms of love which the Petrarchan sonneteer

⁴⁷MS 001468-1449. See Appendix A,

declains as he is with describing a more serious use of metaphor as the reflection of actual life, not the stiff and outworn situation of the distant lady and the suffering lover. Perhaps Klein preferred the Shakespearean model in which all twenty-two sonnets are written because it afforded him the opportunity to develop an argument of experience in a way that the Petrarchan model would not. Certainly XXII Sonnets draws less on the ornate characteristics of courtly love discourse in the Petrarchan tradition than on the elegant simplicity of Shakespeare's sonnets. This ensures, perhaps, that the lover's seriousness of purpose is never questioned.

Klein also borrows some of the central themes of Shakespeare's sonnets: the inevitability of Time's corrosiveness, the ineffability of the beauty of the beloved, and the potential for poetry to fix and eternalize love in words. In the opening sonnets, the poet-lover conveys the limitations of the courtly love repertoire. .. Echoing the theme of Shakespeare's Sonnet 76 ("Why is my verse so barren of new pride?"), he complains that the formulaic utterance, "three brief words; once rare and frail," has become "mildewed crumb / stale elocution." The poet-lover insists, though, on the integrity of his emotional commitment: "Not I the man / To wait until the sewing circle hoves / In sight, to love according to a plan." Clearly, he wishes to express the sincerity of his intentions without slipping into the

cliches of his role. This is a major challenge for him: to write poetry that would both convince her of his love and sound original:

The prince to the princess in the fairy-tale,
 And eke the scullion to the chimneysweep,
 All mouth these three brief words, once rare and frail,
 But withered now and stiff, and bargain-cheap--
 Mellifluous "I love you!" phrase with which
 Incest ensanguines the too-perfumed sheets,
 The virgin gives her to the dotard rich,
 And the seducer paws his trollop's teats.
 Shall I, too, have these three knaves in my pay?
 O, find me some Etruscan speech unknown,
 Some tongue Phoenician of another day,
 That I may take it as our very own!
 Else, rather than spue out this mildewed crumb,
 This stale locution, I stay sagely dumb.

(001469)

Yet he cannot stand mute in the face of his love; indeed, every sonnet that laments the limitations of language to express his feeling still communicates the intensity that he wishes to convey. Having chosen to express such intensity in the sonnet form, he is inexorably bound to its conventions:

Betray me not. Treat me as scurvily
 As you may please. Tie my heart in a knot.
 Make me a spaniel fawning at your knee.
 Hold me meaner than ashes. But betray me not.
 For I am an Othello. I fear guile;
 Stand jealous of the flower in your hair;
 You sigh, and I suspect a swain; you smile
 And I look north and south for someone there.
 Betray me not, but if you do, I use
 No sombre cape to play the tragic part:
 I shall not leap a bridge, or fit a noose,
 And leave a will explicit of my heart.
 Not that, but in some paper you may meet
 A note of one run over in a street.

(001474)

While the poet-lover here dismisses the affected histrionics of the courtly lover, he admits that he does stand resolutely in the lover's spotlight. Like Othello, Shakespeare's prototype for the noble but jealous lover, he too experiences the extremes of love's passion. Of course, all of his protests manage to flatter the object of his love. He cannot escape, for instance, the traditionally apologetic voice of the poet-lover:

Were I to talk until the crack o' doom,
 Impeccably maintain you in debate
 The loveliest guise that beauty can assume;
 Were I to split my heart, a pomegranate,
 Showing the unambiguous blood; were I
 To scour the se'en seas, scale the mountainous moon,
 Forage the archipelago of the sky,
 Hoping to bring some eloquent gems as boon,
 Still would my largess shame the worth of you,
 My mighty words still turn to paltriness.
 I shall but say: Your eyes, though grey, seem blue;
 Your laugh is joy in blossom; your caress
 Sweet to the touch; your lips are soft. In fine,
 You are my heart's desire. You are mine.

(001489)

This is the last sonnet in the collection and a final statement on the absolute beauty of the beloved which words can scarcely express. Interestingly enough, Klein--as if making public his private persona--published this sonnet with three others in Opinion in 1932 under the heading of Four Sonnets.⁴⁸ In XXII Sonnets, though, the poem assumes a somewhat ironic

⁴⁸Four Sonnets, Opinion 2.8 (25 July 1932): 16. The four sonnets are: "Were I to talk until the crack o' doom," "My literati friends in restaurants," "Once upon a time there lived a dwarf, a Jew," and "I shall not bear such burden when I cross."

edge since the poet-lover has been expressing his admiration of his beloved in twenty-one preceding sonnets. In fact, one sonnet in particular acknowledges the "miracle" of poetry that his loved one has inspired:

Consider, then, the miracle you wrought.
 My father is a man who twists no words.
 Bullocks are hide to him, and feathers birds,
 A spade's a spade, and seven stars are not
 A dipper. His is an uncoated tongue.
 The moon, he says, is moon, no more, no less.
 A sparrow is a bird that pecks at dung.
 The threat was made for truth, not fine excess.
 Sprung from such loins, by such a father sired,
 Behold his son, whom you have so inflamed
 His speech betrays the constellations, hired
 To phrase his heart, the beauteous wild things tamed.
 So to bespeak him, tethered to his thought . . .
 Consider this the miracle you wrought.

(001484)

Unlike his father, the poet-lover, inspired as he is by the love in his life, discovers that he has the ability to wring metaphor from nature. Thus, while he often laments his inability to communicate his feeling or the virtues of his beloved, more often than not, his language seems to be intensified by his experience:

Within my iron days, my nights of stone,
 Whose only redolent dew is gasoline,
 Before my time-clock Sun, my trade-mark Moon,
 Symbolic of the cycle of machine,
 The thought of you is as an April breeze,
 Evocative of beauties casually
 Adventured; flowers in blossom; budding trees;
 The athlete grasshopper, the brigand bee;
 The bright gendarmerie of tulips; brooks
 Loquacious; shy birds chirping from wet eaves;
 Hyacinths bursting from smooth pebbly nooks;
 So do these memories grow, then grow forlorn,
 Hearing the factory hound, the factory horn.

(001482)

While the speaker is compelled to work at a tedious factory job, he still manages to escape through memory, recreating the joy of experience in the rhymes of his verse. With such love, metaphor becomes possible, and all objects in the world belong to a co-operative universe. Without love, nothing but chaos, discontinuity, and fragmentation exist:

Without your love, without your love for me,
 The flame's not worth the candle; and the fruit
 Unworthy of the ladder at the tree.
 Water is poison; bread is poisonous soot;
 Fumes in the nostrils, air. Your love being cold,
 Ambition is a paunchy hollow cask,
 Fortune a counterfeit, and friendship gold
 Of gold teeth grinning from behind a mask.
 Nothing I do, is done, nor utter, said
 If your kiss is a single kiss less warm.
 I might as well have stayed among the dead.
 Fame is a gnat's sneeze in a thunderstorm.
 Love me: the brightest constellation bends
 Before me; they are mine--fame, fortune, friends.

(001483)

And with the confidence of love, the speaker carries his vision of unity over from dreams to waking experience:

From beautiful dreams I rise; I rise from dreams
 Of you beside me on a garden lawn,
 And pace my floor to where the sunrise gleams
 And lift my windows to invoke the dawn:
 Now shall I hear the aube of jubilant birds,
 Now see the upraised banner of the sun,
 Envoy and flourish to the dream's soft words:
 I lift my window, and invoke the dawn:
 The gawky night-clothes dance upon the line;
 A cat pursues a bird upon the roof,
 The old man next door, waking, scratches his spine;
 Two gossips bandy insult for reproof;
 Upon the fire-escape there stand and rot
 Pickles in barrels, flowers in a pot.

(001486)

In a still-life of randomly assorted objects which have been brought together in harmonious interplay by the frame of the window, the poem manages to convey the mood of serenity and quietness which the speaker imparts to the world. It is the sonnet which functions like the window frame to bring all the disparate things into relation with each other. The lover is not blind; he sees everything clearly. Objects are charmed by such vision; everything is animated in peaceful co-existence. Through the consciousness of the poet-lover who rhymes nature in verse, objects lose their independence and become interdependent.

In marked contrast to the protestations of the earlier sonnets in XXII Sonnets, in which the poet-lover expresses his frustration with language, the concluding sonnets in the collection assert the value of metaphor:

Let them pronounce me sentimental. I
 Confess my love for little children, boys
 Who dangle on your knees and ask you why
 And when and how, and make your features toys;
 And little girls who take you by the hand
 And dub you father in their own doll's house.
 Boys who will plot against a robber-band;
 Youngsters inquisitive about milch-cows . . .
 Young Robin-Hoods, philosophers in fun,
 For whom the moon is certain, the stars sure,
 Whose speech is bright, a shower in the sun,
 And innocent their minds, and crystal-pure.
 Wherefore I say: Blessed be the nurseries:
 A sonnet is sufficient to the wise.

(001485)

Children share the clarity of the poet-lover's vision. These "philosophers in fun" possess the imaginative freedom to understand and to accept the intrinsic value of objects

in nature without qualification. Moreover, they intuitively grasp the metaphorical principle of interconnectedness. Poetry, particularly the sonnet, is a "sufficient vehicle" for the wise because its issue is unity, its order is harmony and resolution.

Although XXII Sonnets is one of the first and certainly the last sustained poetic expression of Klein's love of a woman, it belongs to a long list of sonnets in Klein's repertoire. It is easy to see why such a traditional and demanding verse form would appeal to Klein's imagination. In the 'thirties poetry--both the private and eventually the public poems--Klein favoured the Petrarchan sonnet form, although his public subject was rarely love. Probably the two-part structure of the Petrarchan sonnet offered Klein the best opportunity to exercise his passion for dialectic inquiry--the "rabbinical apparatus" of which Frye speaks. Notable is Klein's summary of the virtues of the Petrarchan form:

Sonnets--neat, compact, residential--like self-contained cottages. Standard Petrarchan specifications: ground floor--an octave, topped by the sleeping quarters of the sestet. 14 rooms 14. Note the southern exposure of the climactic line. Apply Poetry's suburbia.

It is no wonder that my contemporaries sneer at the sonnet. It is part of their general antipathy to the bourgeois. To them the sonneteer is the last degradation --a man of property: a promoter of real estate developments. How much goodlier, O Vers Libre, are thy tents? One must admit that too many sonnets, because of the very needs of their architecture, are conspicuous more by their cloacal gadgets than by their livableness. Nonetheless,

even the nomads must concede that there are sonnets which, like good addresses....⁴⁹

Klein's fanciful use of an architectural metaphor to explain the structure of the Petrarchan sonnet prefigures his preoccupation with spatial arrangement in later work, especially in The Rocking Chair poems. It is also notable that here Klein distinguishes himself from his "contemporaries" by his allegiance to time-honoured verse forms. In later work, this distinction would become more pronounced. Consistent with the view that the poet, like God, unfolds a universe of pattern, a world of words, is the view that the sonneteer, like an architect, recreates an established blueprint in order to illuminate the principle of order and unity. True to his view of the sonnet, Klein once noted in paraphrase of Eliot that it "is not our feelings but the pattern that we make of our feelings that is the centre of value."⁵⁰

Looking back on the early and unpublished poetry of the 1925-1935 period, it is clear that a young Klein was eager to be identified publicly as a modern poet, one in tune with the rhythms of the age and with its current endorsement of seventeenth-century poetry over nineteenth-century Romantic poetry. Encouraged by his McGill cohort, eager to experiment with his creative potential, delighted at having an audience, Klein answered the age's call to produce a modern-sounding

⁴⁹MS 005246.

⁵⁰MS 006327.

poetry. Many of his early published efforts attain a self-consciously witty, urban impersonality. The modernist tendency towards authorial self-effacement marks both the strong ("La Belle Dame Sans Merci," "Haunted House") and the weak ("Obituary Notices") publications of this time.

The same cannot be said of Klein's early private poetry. Although much of it is embarrassingly maudlin, obviously youthful, and unreservedly ornate, this poetry gives voice to Klein's most pressing concerns. Moreover, it is safe to say that much of the poetry from the early private collections sounds authentically familiar: here one can recognize--from the seriousness of purpose, the extravagant formality, the weighty rhetorical sincerity--the voice of the mature Klein struggling, as it were, to hear himself. It is curious, even mildly disturbing at times, to hear the young Klein as forcefully earnest and as unflinchingly committed to the idea of tradition, the power of language, and the exalted role of the poet as the older Klein. Clearly, as early as the 'twenties--and with the Romantic poets beside him and his religious education still in front of him--Klein was forging his role as an oracular bard, connected but not necessarily wholly sympathetic to the modern age. In this poetry--the private worlds of words created during the 1925-35 period--Klein repeatedly returns to the notion that the poet is privileged. He contains both the gift to see a larger life beyond the world of appearances and the capacity

to wonder at such a gift itself. Thus, in the early poetry as in the latter published material, Klein is resolutely distanced from the fragmented manners and the self-conscious cynicism of modernity. What is disturbing in the recognition of Klein's youthful high seriousness and his traditional loyalties is the awareness that such emotional and intellectual idealism should eventually yield to despair and surrender.

Chapter Two

Hath Not a Jew . . . and The Golem

Estranged everywhere, an alien and a foreigner, the Jew has felt himself but kin to deity. His familiarity is both a compliment and a satire. Prays a Jew: God, in their business you help perfect strangers, why not help me? It was probably the same tradesman, who, taking four weeks to mend a pair of trousers, was reprimanded by his customer in the following language: "Why take so long with so simple a job: God made the world in seven days and you take a month to make a seam." "Ah," replied the tailor, "look at the world, and look at these pants."¹

The joke of the tradesman and his customer points to two common features of what Klein called "the Jewish mentality": a familiarity with God that both frustrates and comforts the worshipper and an almost obsessive interest in the subject of creation. So it is that one recognizes in the work of A.M. Klein a continuing preoccupation with man's relationship to God in a world increasingly burdened by religious and cultural assimilation as well as a profound interest in the topic of creation. In light of these preoccupations, this chapter will closely examine Klein's major achievement of the 'twenties and 'thirties, Hath Not a Jew . . .,² a collection of poetry that Desmond Pacey asserted was "one of the most diverse and

¹"Jewish Humour," Judaean 7.5 (February 1934): 36.

²Hath Not a Jew . . . (Behrman's Jewish Book House, 1940). Hereafter cited as Hath Not a Jew.

exciting that a Canadian has ever published."³ Hath Not a Jew established Klein as a uniquely modern, remarkably diversified, and richly allusive poet. In his now famous "Foreword" to the volume, Ludwig Lewisohn wrote that

Abraham Klein, the most Jewish poet who has ever used the English tongue, is the only Jew who has ever contributed a new note of style, of expression, of creative enlargement to the poetry of that tongue.⁴

Lewisohn appreciated Klein's "authentic" mix of Jewish and English speech as well as his expression of "passionate meaning." What Lewisohn, Pacey, and others since then have recognized about Hath Not a Jew is its successful play of formal speech, archaisms, and modern idiom, its range of poetic forms, and its often savage satirical wit.⁵ But a full appreciation of the collection's investigation of poetic form--as a response to modern fragmentation--has not yet been accomplished. This chapter explores Hath Not a Jew as a remarkably ordered argument in favour of the power of both poetic form and language. The discussion will also illuminate some of the Jewish themes alluded to in chapter one, and it will consider various poems in light of Klein's

³Desmond Pacey, Ten Canadian Poets (Toronto: Ryerson, 1958) 282.

⁴Ludwig Lewisohn, "Foreword to Hath Not a Jew," in A.M. Klein, ed. and with an intro. by Tom Marshall, Critical Views on Canadian Writers (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970) 13.

⁵See Waddington, Fischer, et al. Notable is Leon Edel's qualified appreciation of the work which to him "is not sufficiently representative of Klein's remarkable gifts," "Poetry and the Jewish Tradition" in A.M. Klein (Marshall) 17.

manuscript revisions, most of which confirm Klein's scrupulous attention to matters of form.

Of course, Hath Not a Jew reflects only a selection of Klein's 'twenties and 'thirties work. As readers all know, Klein was unflaggingly energetic during this period. The second section of this chapter will discuss several poems that did not find their way into Hath Not a Jew but that, nonetheless, reflect Klein's continuing thematic preoccupations (and his successful experimenting with poetic form, particularly with traditional verse forms. For someone so interested in the arrangement of the world through language it is not surprising, perhaps, that traditional verse forms like the sonnet and the ballad answered Klein's search for order. Some of these poems, such as "Murals for a House of God," remain as fine examples of Klein's special talents.

The third section of this chapter reveals the nature of one of Klein's unfinished and unpublished manuscripts, a prose novel entitled The Golem. What little manuscript material fortunately survives is fascinating both for its subject matter and for what it reveals of the direction in which Klein's interests were turning during this period. The Golem is also worth considering in the context of Klein's published short fiction, "The Seventh Scroll," a story which when read with The Golem opens up Klein's richly associative world of wonders. (That world partakes of Jewish mystical texts in a way that anticipates Klein's achievement in The

Second Scroll.) That Klein attended so closely to the compelling linguistic systems of the Kabbalah and to the sacred traditions of the scribe--which both The Golem and "The Seventh Scroll" are about--goes a long way to explaining his moral-aesthetic concerns. The written work of the late 'twenties and of the 'thirties testifies to the profound nature of Klein's commitment to language as an agent of imaginative reason. The complex network of associations drawn throughout The Second Scroll of 1949 was already being elaborated in his earlier work, often with brilliant results.

I. Hath Not a Jew...

As chapter one shows, Klein was writing love poetry in sonnets and exploring secular themes in the unpublished experiments of the 'thirties. In addition to this material, Klein was writing poems and essays that reflected his solid identification with his religious background. At the same time that he was, as an undergraduate, publishing witty satirical lyrics in the McGill Daily and the Canadian Forum, Klein was editing the Judaean, a small monthly magazine published in Montreal and circulated across Canada. In this publication Klein could concentrate on themes which defined his identity in terms of his Jewishness. Here he was able to exercise his talents in editing a newspaper, thus preparing himself, as it happens, for the task of editing the prestigious

Canadian Jewish Chronicle later on. In the Judaean, Klein also found an arena in which to experiment with short stories and non-fiction on specific Jewish subjects. To be sure, as an editor Klein could comfortably foster his role as a public spokesman, attending to the concerns of modern-day Judaism on behalf of his people. That this was a role more congenial to his sensibilities than the worldly-wise persona of the early lyrics is evidenced by the fact that Klein chose in his later years to publish the so-called Jewish poems, not the love poems or nature poems of his unpublished volumes. Almost half the poems written in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties were selected for publication in Klein's first, and decidedly Jewish, volume of poetry, Hath Not a Jew, which appeared in 1940. From the privately-bound volumes, Klein either reworked or reorganized lyrics from Gestures Hebraic (1932), Gestures Hebraic and Poems (1932), and Poems (1934) for publication in Hath Not a Jew. By comparison, only four poems were published from the XXII Sonnets volume and a relatively small number of lyrics from the Poems (1932) collection. For that matter, even the early poems which are secular in theme would be reworked to form a particularly Jewish context of expression when they appeared in print. Moreover, the direction of Klein's mind at this time was sustained by a voracious appetite for Jewish literature, and in that literature he discovered the philosophical themes that most engaged his imagination--the

mystery of creation, the symbolic weight of language, and man's place in Nature.

The number of essays that Klein published on Jewish topics in the early 'thirties certainly reflects the extent of his interest in his culture and in the great figures of the past who helped shape Jewish thought. "Canadian Jewish Youth--Whither?" for instance, published in the Chronicle in 1930,⁶ raises the issue of belief for the contemporary Jewish youth. "The Jew and His Proverb,"⁷ "Jewish Humour,"⁸ and "Jewish Folk Songs,"⁹ all published in the Judaean during this period, explore Jewish traditions and cultural distinctions with an astonishing command of religious history and language. "Theodor Herzl"¹⁰ indicates Klein's early attraction to the founder of the Zionism (and one of the great Jewish leaders of the twentieth century), a figure who would appear in Klein's later work. "Zionism--Our National

⁶"Canadian Jewish Youth--Whither?" Canadian Jewish Chronicle 19 September 1930: 19, 30.

⁷"The Jew and His Proverb." Canadian Jewish Chronicle 23 September 1932: 5, 8; Judaean 7.4 (January 1934): 28-9.

⁸"Jewish Humour," Judaean 7.5 (February 1934): 36, 39; MS 005133-37.

⁹"Jewish Folk Songs," Judaean 5.9 (June 1932): 2, 5-6; Canadian Jewish Chronicle 7 April 1934: 9-10.

¹⁰Beyond Sabbath: Selected Essays and Editorials 1928-1955, eds. M.W. Steinberg and Usher Caplan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 14-20. Hereafter cited as Beyond Sabbath.

Will to Live"¹¹ also celebrates Herzl's dream of a national homeland for Jews and does so almost two decades before the establishment of the state of Israel. These essays are written with a surprising degree of authority for such a young man. Klein's voice of self-confident commitment helped to establish him as a creditable spokesman for the Canadian Jewish community. In fact, there is every reason to believe that Klein saw fit to strengthen the authoritative quality of his early public persona in his poetry since it seemed to reach such a willing audience.

An example of the way in which Klein reshaped his early poems to accommodate a specific Jewish context can be seen in Sonnets Semitic,¹² a short sequence of sonnets published in Hath Not a Jew. The four sonnets were taken from his XXII Sonnets collection and reworked. Whereas XXII Sonnets explores the poet's role in the various postures of the love

¹¹Beyond Sabbath, 20-26.

¹²Sonnets Semitic in Hath Not a Jew: 68-70. These sonnets are: "Would that three centuries had seen us born"; "These northern stars are scarabs in my eyes"; "Upon a time there lived a dwarf, a Jew"; "I shall not bear much burden when I cross"; and "Now we will suffer loss of memory." For a complete listing of the publication information for each of the sonnets, see Usher Caplan, "A.M. Klein: A Bibliography and Index to Manuscripts," in The A.M. Klein Symposium, ed. and with an intro. by Seymour Mayne (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1975) 87-112. Sonnets Semitic can most easily be found in The Collected Poems of A.M. Klein, ed. and with an intro. by Miriam Waddington (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974) 152-54. All further references noted in parentheses are to The Collected Poems. Readers should also consult Zellig Pollock's, "Errors in The Collected Poems of A.M. Klein," Canadian Poetry 10 (Spring/Summer, 1982): 91-99.

experience, Sonnets Semitic explores his role within a distinctively Jewish context. The sequence is carefully designed to express alternating visions of past, present, and future Jewish life. Sonnets i and iii, "Would that three centuries had seen us born!" and "Upon a time there lived a dwarf, a Jew," are complimentary, imaginative renderings of the past into which the poet-lover projects himself. In sonnet i, he is a "humble-thin, voiced Jew;" in sonnet iii, he is a "dwarf, a Jew." The subject of these poems is drawn both from the sphere of Jewish folk-lore and from medieval legend. Memory transforms the past into an uncomplicated and idealized experience, imbuing it in the process with a sense of harmony and heroicism. In the first sonnet, the poet remembers himself as a chivalrous knight gallantly accomplishing great deeds and easily winning the hand of his mistress. In the third sonnet, he is a dwarf in the kingdom of faerie performing magical tasks, such as gathering the stars for his bride. Sonnets ii and iv envision equally glorious pictures of future life. The mistress will have become the wife. Even nature will conspire to bless the Hebrew couple: "Sleep on the hills, and in the trees, my love," says the speaker, "There will be sparrows twittering Mazel Toy." In sonnet iv, the couple comfort each other in old age with the "mementos" of their shared Jewish experience --prayer-shawl, phylacteries, Bible, Talmud, poetry, and psalter-book. The four sonnets are celebrations of Jewish

life, wonderful dreams of love's fulfilment in a harmonious universe marked by the preservation of tradition and a sense of Jewish well-being.

By contrast with the first four sonnets in Sonnets Semetic, the fifth and final sonnet, however, describes Jewish experience in the uncomfortable present. The poem functions as a serious statement concerning the modern dilemma confronting the poet and his bride and thereby sets the preceding four sonnets in ironic relief with its calculated warning: "Now we will suffer loss of memory." When first published in Opinion, in fact, the sonnet was entitled "Satirical." To forget the past, one's history and rich tradition, is to suffer. Memory, the process by which one recreates experience and enriches the present, threatens to disappear. Its loss signals the loss of language: "We will forget the tongue our mothers knew." Consequently, Jewish culture itself is in danger of annihilation. In the complicated present, the urge to be relieved of the burden of isolation (which is a characteristic of Jewish identity) and the impulse to be swallowed up by a dominant non-Jewish culture are informed by the illusion of easy assimilation, ironically described in the sonnet as "emancipation day." But such a dream is ill-advised. Instead of the freedom that forgetfulness might bring it is more likely that Jews will be patronized as quaint anomalies. Furthermore, the voluntary abandonment of Jewish identity and language, which Klein sensed was

increasing in the modern world, encourages a new form of disguised discrimination. The Gentiles "anecdote us," painfully reminding Jews that complete integration is impossible: "Mr. and Mrs. Klein--the Jews, you know. . . ." The poem cautions not only that loss of cultural memory is undesirable but also that it is impracticable. Thus, the effort to remember one's culture and language, to affirm a difference and distinctiveness of ethnicity with assured self-respect, would seem to secure a more honest and comfortable Jewish identity. The disappearance of language would make such sweet visions as are offered in the first four sonnets impossible to achieve. Memory of culture assures such visions. Sonnets Semitic thus affirms the necessity of preserving Jewish culture, language, and art. For Klein that affirmation was expressed through his own writings--writings which so consistently call attention to his Jewish identity. It is as if he were attempting to fix that identity in words and, by so doing, to guarantee its survival; into the future which sonnet iv imagines he would carry "verse / Scribbled in rhymes that memory condones." Klein conceived it to be a duty both as a writer and as a Jew to remember on behalf of his people. Indeed, this is the duty to which Hath Not a Jew testifies.

The first poem in Hath Not a Jew announces Klein's allegiance to his past. In fact, the Latin title of this opening poem instantly signifies a relation with former

times. "Ave atque Vale" (112-13) was first published in the Menorah Journal in 1935 and is collected in the early private manuscripts.¹³ In the poem, Klein simultaneously bids farewell to his friends at the "Mermaid Tavern" and hails "that parfait jolly company" of men who belong to Jewish life and culture. Klein's list of Talmudic scholars, the "sages of Sura" and of "Pumbeditha," is so obscure that even the educated Jewish reader must research the names to discover that they all have something in common: these men, rabbis, biblical scholars, and codifiers, represent the achievements of scriptural exegesis.¹⁴ They loom large in the speaker's imagination as men who through exuberant devotion and steady commitment to a life richly lived survive as models for Klein's own experience. Unlike the "gloomier sages, / The fasters, mortifiers of the flesh, / Who wept for the sins of past and future ages," the great Talmudic scholars like Rabbi Akiva and Abba Saul embraced life and their scholarly tasks with unmatched enthusiasm. So it is that Klein loves the "gloomier sages" but "at distances" and chooses "sodality with the sprightlier few."

¹³"Ave atque Vale," Menorah Journal 23.1 (Spring 1935): 44-45 ("Heirlooms"); Hath Not a Jew 3-5; GH 001590-92; GHP 001840-42; MS 002145-55, 002744 (3-5).

¹⁴For details of these men see Solomon J. Spiro, Tapestry for Designs: Judaic Allusions in the Poetry and the Second Scroll of A.M. Klein (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984) 46-50. Hereafter cited as Tapestry for Designs.

The epigraph to the poem from Launcelot's speech in Two Gentlemen of Verona is deliberately provoking (2.5.42):

If thou comest with me to an alehouse, so.
If not thou are an Hebrew and a Jew, and not
worthy the name of Christian.

(112)

The rest of the poem effectively renders the epigraph ironic. Launcelot voices a deeply entrenched prejudice--that Jews are a gloomy lot, unworthy of alehouse frivolity. But Klein's argument redresses such an unfortunate excuse for anti-semitism by calling attention to the lively men who, although engaged in scholarly pursuits, lived heartily. These "brawny men"--a "glutton" a "liar," an "uncouth" rabbi--make a mockery of Launcelot's dismissive comments.

Klein's playful use of archaisms in "Ave atque Vale," archaisms which connect him to the time of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Jonson, contributes to the cheery alehouse tone of the poem, and thus his point--that Jews are capable of good fun--is obviously demonstrated. It is also true to say, however, that a poem listing obscure historical figures who need to be researched might inhibit reading pleasure. Characteristically, Klein's notion of fun here is research, or the pursuit of knowledge, which "Ave atque Vale" requires in order to be understood fully. As an introduction to Hath Not a Jew, "Ave atque Vale" fittingly establishes a central theme of the volume: anti-semitism can be challenged with knowledge, especially knowledge of Jewish history. The poem

and its deliberately Shakespearean manner of address is the first to answer the Shakespearean title of the volume--Hath Not a Jew. Shylock's rhetorical question in The Merchant of Venice finds a complementary answer in each poem asserting the truth that Jews are people capable of fun and of suffering like all other people.¹⁵ An added consideration of Hath Not a Jew, is that Jews represent a special history and culture which, when remembered, might contribute to the store of modern knowledge and possibly offset the modern trend toward general cultural forgetfulness. Thus Klein raises Shylock's question almost four centuries after it was first uttered. Its once obvious answer seems to have been forgotten through time.

The repeated end stops which conclude "Ave atque Vale" appropriately carry the reader over into the next poem of the volume. "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" (113-18) was actually first published in Opinion in 1938¹⁶ and then strategically placed as the second poem of Klein's Hath Not a Jew. This long poem recounting the history of Central-European Jewry through sixteen stanzas of varying lengths is somewhat of a tour de force. Klein begins with the language of Old English but abruptly abandons archaisms so that his speaker, Childe Harold, may be instantly identified as a

¹⁵Merchant of Venice 3.1.63.

¹⁶"Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," Opinion 8.8 (September 1938): 15-16; Canadian Jewish Chronicle 18 November 1938: 6; Hath Not a Jew 6-13; MS 002248-51, 002744 (6-13).

modern Jew who is none other than the Wandering Jew, the exiled archetype of the race, still wandering after all these years. Moreover, he is Klein himself, speaking as a modern incarnation of his medieval ancestor:

Always and ever,
 Whether in caftan robed, or in tuxedo slicked,
 Whether of bearded chin, or of the jowls shaved blue,
 Always and ever have I been the Jew
 Bewildered, and a man who has been tricked,
 Examining
 A passport of a polyglot decision--
 To Esperanto from the earliest rune--
 Where cancellation frowns away permission,
 And turning in despair
 To seek an audience with the consul of the moon.

(114)

Only the veneer of dress and the shifted patterns of speech distinguish now from then.

The title of the poem, borrowed of course from Lord Byron's poem of the same name, links Klein's wanderer with Byron's quester who endeavours to escape his romantic alienation in search of some unknown good. But unlike Byron's poem, where the posture of pilgrimage is itself a value worth affirming, Klein's poem undercuts the traditional romantic theme by asserting that enforced pilgrimage, whether by persecution or by homelessness, is a catastrophe that no Jew would value. A history of wandering has been, a history of suffering. To illustrate his point, Klein's Childe Harold catalogues the indignities of historical circumstances, leaping from the horrible days of the Pharaohs in one stanza to the wretched days of the Nazis in the next:

O mummied Pharaoh in thy pyramid,
 Consider now the schemes thy wizards schemed
 Against those shrewd proliferous Israelites!
 Son of Hamdatha, though the witless Mede
 Did gibbet thee, behold thy inventions deemed
 Wisdom itself by many worthy wights.
 Rejoice, Judeophobes,
 The brew you brewed and callared is not flat!
 See, in the air, mad Antiochus, the
 Inimitate image of thy frenzy, and
 Lean Torquemada, look about thee, and grow fat.

Seig heil!

Behold, against the sun, familiar blot:
 A cross with claws!

(114-15)

Klein is obviously striving here, through Childe Harold, to produce a noisy cacophony. Words are forced into repetition ("scheme," "brew"), and consonants make strong demands on the reader's sensibility ("worthy wights," "Inimitate image"). Indeed, the texture of Childe Harold's speech is harsh and unsettling as it rises to the pitch of "frenzy" itself. And just as it does so, it yields to the singularly hideous image of the swastika, all the more forcibly realized because it remains unnamed--a black "blot" boldly figured "against the sun." Childe Harold's speech then advances with a degree of exuberant relish. He pauses just long enough to catch his breath, then proceeds in his diatribe, marshalling historical evidence and denouncing the sins of persecution as his voice strengthens again. Directing his audience with imperatives ("Behold," "Hearken," "So sound the trumpet"), and scarcely capable of containing his sarcasm--

My head is short, wherefore I am too long
By a head!

(115)

--Childe Harold begins to sound more like a Shakespearean tragic victim and less like a Byronic hero as the poem sweeps towards its conclusion.

In a sense, Klein's hero is Shylock, insisting that he too is a man like the men that persecute him:

Perhaps I am a man of surly manners,
Lacking in grace, aloof, impolitic,
To wit, an alien? And that is false.
For on occasion and in diverse lands
I have sojourned, set up abode with you,
Drank the same drinks, partook of the same food.

(116)

And he is Macbeth, or at least Childe Harold's proud defense directly echoes Macbeth in a critical and temporarily defenseless moment:

My blood, my blood! Shall I, then, sever a vein,
Drain off an artery, open the valves
Of my much too-Semitic heart, and be
That blond cadaver pleasing to your eye?
Have I not well conjectured? Is not your mind
Now laid on the table, pointed, like a dagger?

(116-17)

The last question, addressed to Childe Harold's would-be murderers, alludes ironically to Macbeth's troubled question concerning the dagger that he thinks he sees in front of him before he murders Duncan: ". . . art thou but / A dagger of the mind?"¹⁷ If Childe Harold's foes have minds like daggers,

¹⁷Macbeth 2.1.33.

then his death is as certain as Duncan's and as inevitable as Macbeth's.

At this point in the poem, however, Childe Harold/Wandering Jew/Klein turns to consider the immediate question of how best to react to religious persecution in the modern age. The dramatic Shakespearean railing and frenzied rhetorical indignation give way to a calmer, plainer speech as the speaker searches for an appropriate response. His father faced "such sad plight" with his faith, a faith no longer available to his son, "a beggar in piety." The revenge morality of the Old Testament, which his "kinsman" Esau practiced, must be dismissed because "there sounds" for Childe Harold/Klein "the sixth thunder of Sinai:" Thou shalt not kill. And so he asks:

What, now, for me to do?
Gulp down some poisoned brew?
Or from some twentieth story take
My ignominious exit? Make,
Above this disappearing Jew,
Three bubbles burst upon the lake?

(117)

In the concluding stanza of the poem, he resolves to accept his destiny calmly and patiently, resolved, at least for now, that the rhythms of history will carry him through and beyond tragedy:

This only is mine wherewith to face the horde:
The frozen patience waiting for its day,
The stance long-suffering, the stoic word,
The bright empirics that knows well that the
Night of the cauchemar comes and goes away,--

A baleful wind, a baneful nebula, over
A saecular imperturbability.

(118)

This is not so much faith as it is a defiant stoicism born out of helplessness. Whereas Byron's Childe Harold accomplishes his search, coming to rest before the beauty of Rome and its art, Klein's Childe Harold is left wandering without end in sight because history continues to banish him from his fellow men. Yet it is true that Klein's hero finds a qualified peace in "frozen patience." The poem concludes with a remarkably steady elegance, especially after its emotionally charged preceding lines. Indeed, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" abandons--or bids hail and farewell to--both archaisms and Shakespearean speech as it gives way to the plainer, more direct language of the present. Childe Harold is still on a pilgrimage in search of a haven from religious and cultural persecution.

The poem is, in many ways, a fine example of Klein's penchant for sonic emphasis, verbal ironies, literary allusions, and rhetorical games, all of which work to create a densely textured expression of modern unsettledness. It is also true that the allusive, even mannerist style of "Childe Harold" is characteristic of many of Klein's longer pieces--prose as well as poetry. Here, as elsewhere, his effort is aimed at synthesizing various linguistic and historical tensions in order to stress the recurring, interminable nightmare of persecution. The approach is, of course,

resolutely modern in its fusion of widely disparate historical periods, its deliberate allusiveness, and its energetic wordplay--as modern as Eliot and Joyce. But Klein's achievement lies in his ability to appropriate his idiosyncratic expression and his Jewishness to a modern aesthetic. Thus, by directly associating himself in "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" with Byron and indirectly with Shakespeare, Klein reminds the reader that even as a modern Jewish writer he has a place in the largely Christian English literary tradition.

Klein's Childe Harold is, then, the eternally Wandering Jew, but that Jew has many voices and much to say. Furthermore, that Jew can be found not only throughout history but also through the entire social sphere. The third poem in Hath Not a Jew introduces the reader to a gallery of figures who constitute a wide portrait of Jewish identity. "Portraits of a Minyan" (118-123), written as early as 1929,¹⁸ is the first of several poems in the volume to display Klein's fondness for caricaturing Jewish cultural types in verbal sketches. These pieces, such as "Reb Levi Yitschok Talks to God," "Design for Medieval Tapestry," and the vivid portraits drawn in the final sections of Hath Not a Jew, are marked by satire and gentle irony. Klein manages to achieve an appropriate distance between himself and his portraits, a distance that

¹⁸"Portraits of a Minyan," Menorah Journal 17.1 (October 1929): 86-88; Hath Not a Jew 14-21; GH 001528-93; GHP 001766-73; SP 002957 (one section only: "Sophist"); MS 002651 (one section only: "Sophist"); MS 002744 (18-19, 21).

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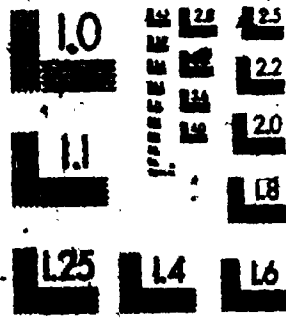
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allows him both affectionate identification and critical dissatisfaction at the same time. This subtle, even complex relation between Klein and his characters can be easily misunderstood as bitterness or contempt. In her study of Klein's religious and ethical themes, In Search of Jerusalem, G.K. Fischer presents "Portraits of a Minyan" as "an open admission that orthodox faith was no longer accepted" by Klein in 1929.¹⁹ While this may be true to some extent, Fischer neglects to account for the poem's situational importance in Hath Not a Jew. As the third entry in the volume, "Portraits of a Minyan" implicitly answers Shakespeare's or Shylock's rhetorical question. These portrait Jews, through the skilful realization of Klein's verbal strokes, are rendered remarkably and recognizably human--flaws, virtues, and all.

Characteristic of the first two poems in Hath Not a Jew, "Portraits of a Minyan" bears the weight of another, earlier age and of an earlier writer. Here, Klein's method invites comparison with Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. A strict comparison between the two pieces, one a long, elaborate narrative poem and the other a series of short character sketches, is admittedly untenable, but it is reasonable to consider Klein's character treatments in the light of Chaucer's

¹⁹G.K. Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem: Religion and Ethics in the Writings of A.M. Klein (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975) 22. Hereafter cited as In Search of Jerusalem.

"framework" or "frame stories," especially since Hath Not a Jew insists on rendering the flavour of medieval Europe. "Portraits of a Minyan" transforms Chaucer's frame stories, the vehicles for describing his travelling companions of widely varying classes and occupations, into "frame poems." An explanation of the title of the poem will establish both its Chaucerian and Jewish resonances. For the purpose of daily prayers it is proper for the worshipper to meet in congregation with a quorum, a minyan, of at least ten males over thirteen years of age. The insistence on a quorum for prayer guarantees the corporate and social character of Jewish religious loyalty. The poetic gallery that comprises "Portraits of a Minyan" consists of ten sometimes amusing caricatures of the men who might constitute such a quorum. The minyan is the framework within which Klein draws his sketches.

Klein's "Landlord," the first caricature in the "Minyan," easily combines the practice of Talmudic scrutiny, and its emphasis on numerical symbolism, with the practice of counting the profits gained from his livelihood. Another familiar type is the self-proclaimed free-thinker, the "agnostic" who still maintains tradition by respecting the memory of his late father in prayer. Thus "Pintele Yid," the little or younger Jew of the second poem, intones the Kaddish, the prayer for the dead which marks off the close of the service and hallows the name of God. The third portrait, "Red

Abraham," describes the man whose life is circumscribed by food and rejoicing; he shares the Chassidic view of experience which turns life into a grand feast. He also belongs to the company of "sprightlier" scholars whom Klein embraces in "Ave atque Vale." (That he shares Klein's name suggests that the poet sympathizes most with his image.) In the fourth poem, Klein's portrait of the "Shadchan," or matchmaker (who occupies a central role in European Jewish life, for he ensures racial perpetuity) is drawn with heavily-accented sarcasm; the shadchan's interests lie less in the course of true love than they do in the pursuit of gold. For the portrait of the "Sophist," Reb Simcha in the fifth poem, Klein probably drew on memories of his teacher, Reb Simcha Garber, under whose supervision Klein was placed at the Talmud Torah School in Montreal.²⁰ Like other scholars, proud of their exegetical accomplishments, Reb Simcha dares to interpret to "God the meaning of His book." The sixth portrait, that of "The Reader of the Scroll"--that is, of the precentor of the synagogue--reveals a man intent on interpreting the morbid subject of his text in joyful song as if with each "twisted note" he would wreak vengeance on his enemies. Standing in contrast to the scroll reader and his emphatic pronouncements is the "Sweet Singer" of the seventh portrait, "Old Mendel," who lacks both money and

²⁰See Usher Caplan, Like One That Dreamed: A Portrait of A.M. Klein; foreword by Leon Edel (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982) 32. Hereafter cited as Like One That Dreamed.

education but seeks heaven by singing psalms. Lacking the financial security of the landlord or the shadchan, Mendel humbles himself before God by counting his blessings. Following Mendel is the "Junk-Dealer" of the eighth poem, a figure whose intellectual capacities are as inferior as the rags that he hawks for his daily living. Miriam Waddington neatly describes his role as a character in the minyan:

Since most European Jews were very poor, class distinctions, as we know them, were non-existent, and the measure of a man was his learning and his knowledge of Torah, . . . An erudite Hebrew usually distinguished the fulltime scholars from those who earned their living more humbly, and so the junk dealer

...brags

'A Hebrew most ungrammared.
He sells God rags.²¹

The last two portraits in the gallery describe humble men whose religious piety is almost excessive. The first of these, the man with "an open heart," is rewarded by God for his generosity to his fellow men by a house filled with children. The last portrait of the "meek" man "Moses" acknowledges that "This little Jew" respects all of Creation, even the "spider in / His corner-nest." No doubt, the poem concludes, Moses will make room in "his tomb" for God's lowliest creatures.²²

²¹Miriam Waddington, A.M. Klein, Studies in Canadian Literature (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970), 23-4.

²²Waddington explains that the "whole poem is simply an expansion of and variation upon the Yiddish proverb 'a yid darf sich nit varfen in die oigen' (a Jew 'mustn't be too visible)," "Folklore in the Poetry of A.M. Klein," Ariel 10 (July 1979): 12.

Like so many of Klein's portrait poems, "Portraits of a Minyan" is precise in its observations and affectionate in its tone. A minyan, not religious renunciation, as Fischer sees it, is Klein's major subject. Certainly the poem is satiric, but it achieves a comfortable, not an impassable distance from its all-too human character sketches. Klein stands apart from the circle of the minyan, sharing neither in the materialism of the landlord nor in the piety of the faithful but recognizing, nonetheless, that these are men of his own kind. "Portraits of a Minyan" thus indicates a salient feature of Klein's writing style, a feature shared by so many other poems in Hath Not a Jew and by many of Klein's journalistic pieces: self-caricature. The "self," in Klein's vocabulary, designates a notion of the collective --the cultural group as "self." The poem's shrewd observer (the "single camera view" of "The Portrait of the Poet as Landscape") confidently assumes the right both to mock and to affirm his own people--in effect, himself. The degree to which Klein relies on the device of self-caricature as a defensive strategy should not be overlooked, nor should its importance in his writings be underestimated. As Klein himself was fond of commenting in his early essays and in his later lectures, self-caricature has long been a descriptive weapon of persecuted Jews:

By a strange irony of history, it was during the middle ages, a period of persecution and oppression, that Jews developed the sense of humour for which they are justly famous. This

phenomenon can be explained not logically but psychologically. Under great stress of sorrow, psychopaths tell us, one will burst forth in to inexplicable paroxysms of laughter. Made the clown of Europe by edict and by proclamation, dubbed with the saffron badge and the conute cap, the Jew lived up to his parody of himself; like the Jewish bandit who held up his victim for a snuffle of snuff, so, too, he wreaked vengeance upon his environment by cracking jokes at his own expense . . .

Some of these stories may perhaps have beards; it is our attempt to be orthodox. For this is the distinction between Englishman, Mohammedan and Jew, in relation to humour. When you tell a story to an Englishman he laughs twice; once when he hears it and once when he understands it; to a Mohammedan he laughs once, when he hears it--he probably never understands it; to a Jew--not once, he has heard it before.

One of the most distinctive traits of our humour is its self-deprecating attitude. It is verbal flagellation. It is of the type uttered by one Jewish card-player to another "what kind of a fellow are you to play with a fellow who'll play with a fellow like you?" It takes no chances. It assumes that the Jew is going to get the worst end of the stick.²³

Klein's advancement of self-caricature as a practical defensive posture partakes of a Jewish tradition as old, as he points out above, as medieval Europe, and as current as the self-effacing wit of Groucho Marx and Woody Allen. Klein's achievement, however, is his appropriation of that tradition to verse forms, a practice uniquely challenging.

In the "Landlord's" portrait, for example, one can see how effectively Klein marshals the rhythmic predictability of iambic tetrameter verse and the shorthanded legibility of enclosed quatrains in the service of self-caricature:

²³"Jewish Humour," Judean 7.5 (February 1934): 36; MS 005134-35.

He is a learned man, adept
 At softening the rigid.
 Purblind, he scans the rashi script,
 His very nose is digit.

He justifies his point of view
 With verses pedagogic;
 His thumb is double-jointed through
 Stressing a doubtful logic.

He quotes the Commentaries, yea,
 To Tau from Aleph,--
 But none the less, his tenants pay,
 Or meet the bailiff.

(118-19)

Each of the first two quatrains accents an exaggerated feature of the landlord's body. In the first, Klein equates the landlord's nose with a digit (perhaps a 4). This figurative equation unambiguously stresses the landlord's greedy nosiness while it permits Klein to draw on a crude racial stereotype at the same time. Like Groucho Marx's (or Chaplin's) facial features, deliberately accented by the play of dark brows and mustache, the landlord's nose both defines and fulfils the stereotype. In the second quatrain, Klein repeats the simple syntactical equation of the first quatrain ("His nose is very digit"--"His thumb is double-jointed"), thereby extending the metaphoric relation of body and number. The third and final quatrain, however, appropriately deviates from both the metrical patterning and the syntactical balancing of the preceding quatrains. Here Klein shifts to an even more abbreviated metrical arrangement in the second and fourth lines, effectively chopping the tetrameter lines in half. The comic result, albeit qualified by the seriousness

of the subject itself, is that the reader bumps up against the final end stop as abruptly and unexpectedly as the landlord's tenants "meet the bailiff." Not surprisingly, perhaps, there is a remarkable analogy between the comic function of the poem's three-part organizational structure and the three-part set-up of vaudevillian or silent film sight gags. The same comic principle of double repetition followed by an understated deviation from the recognizable pattern applies in both examples. In effect, the "Landlord" is a form of Klein's verbal slapstick. The deceptively simple appearance of this first portrait in the minyan is so necessary because the reader must see at once both the figure of the landlord and what he embodies. But as is so often the case with Klein, that simple appearance belies a rather sophisticated manipulation of poetic resources.

Likewise, in the portrait of the "Junk-Dealer," which is also drawn in three quatrains, Klein provides an immediate recognition of his character's untutored faith:

All week his figure mottles
 The city lanes,
 Hawking his rags and bottles
 In quaint refrains.

But on the High, the Holy
 Days, he is lord;
 And being lord, earth wholly,
 Gladly is abhorred.

While litanies are clamored,
 His loud voice brags
 A Hebrew most ungrammared.
 He sells God rags.

Because the subject here is not what the junk-dealer looks like so much as what he sounds like--that is, uneducated, loud, and proud--the poem relies on unpredictable metrical variation and strained wordplay to imitate the junk-dealer's voice in the minyan. The even iambic stresses of the first quatrain establish the junk-dealer's daily trade--"Hawking.... in quaint refrains." But the rhythms of his daily life yield to new and heightened emphasis on the "Holy / Days" of the second stanza. Iambics are converted to trochees ("Days, he;" "Gladly") and rhymes are pressed into false service ("Holy;" "wholly"). In the third stanza, the dimetrical second line consisting of an iamb and a forceful spondee ("His loud voice brags") thoroughly sounds the junk-dealer's proud, rough expression in the synagogue. It is Klein, however, who closes the poem in an obviously distanced, yet sympathetic voice. As one who stands outside the minyan, Klein hears the junk-dealer's unscholared prayers; the act of listening to such unself-conscious expressions of faith is a humbling one. That the listener is so moved is evident from the elegant economy of the concluding line--"He sells God rags." The comic truth of this final trope is all the more forcibly realized because of the simple assurance with which it is said. Whereas the portrait of the "Landlord" is drawn to increase the critical distance between Klein and his subject, the portrait of the "Junk-Dealer" is drawn to decrease that distance. Both are comic studies of the

poet's gaze, but in the latter Klein is sure to humanize his subject more and caricature less. Above all, both portraits evidence Klein's deceptively simple method of sketching the human truth in the Jewish character.

One further point needs to be said in the context of "Portraits of a Minyan." When considering some recommended revisions for Hath Not a Jew before it went to print, Klein drafted a letter, probably in the late 'thirties, to Abraham G. Duker, the contributing editor of the Contemporary Jewish Record. In this passage Klein is referring to the portrait of the junk-dealer discussed above:

I will not deign to discuss the other two paragraphs of misprint, save to say that "mottles" is just the precise word required to describe a greasy junk-dealer viewed with a bird's eye, and that the archaic language in the line quoted by your reviewer [is] there with a specific purpose--the same purpose which motivated the same kind of language in the sixth chapter of Joyce's Ulysses.²⁴

Klein's penchant for obsolete diction is evident in a number of his early poems, especially, as already noted, in the opening poems of Hath Not a Jew. His letter indicates the degree of his frustration with an editor who obviously failed to appreciate his method. Like Joyce, Klein's purpose in using archaic language is to revivify it and to demonstrate the continual fusion of the values and myths of the past with those of the present. The junk-dealer, as he wanders the streets of a modern urban ghetto, follows in the wake of

²⁴Letter to Abraham G. Duker (n.d.) Public Archives Canada 000154-55.

his racial ancestors. Just as Joyce's linguistic method relates the world of contemporary Dublin to the timeless patterns of myth, history, and religion, so too does Klein's method relate the modern moment to the same timeless patterns. The dispassionate observer, who sees with a "bird's eye" or with God's eye (the eye of the eternal present), contains the memory of and is, in fact, a repository of words. He notes the interrelationships between the levels of time and language. So it is that each portrait in Klein's poetic gallery characterizes a contemporary type in terms of his historical archetype. The flavour of medieval European Jewry which "Ave atque Vale," "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," "Portraits of a Minyan," and later "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry" invoke through archaisms also informs the texture of contemporary experience. And because they inherit all the eccentric gestures and attitudes of their rich past, the people wandering through the pages of history or through the streets of the urban ghetto in Montreal share the same unmistakable cultural language.

As if in answer to the question of whether or not the modern Jew carries the suffering of his tumultuous past, the next poem in Hath Not a Jew, "Greeting on This Day," is a direct response to tragic events current in Klein's time. The nine lyrics which comprise "Greeting on This Day" were

first published in the Menorah Journal in 1930²⁵ in the wake of the so-called Arab riots of 1929. "This Day" is one of death and chaos in Palestine (15 August 1929), but Klein urges life and calm in his poem. As the fourth entry in Hath Not a Jew, "Greeting on This Day" loses some of its topicality, but it sustains and perhaps intensifies its poetic function as a human cry against barbarism. Generally, the poem is an enthusiastic song in praise of peace and directed against grief and further bloodshed, a view consistent with Klein's editorial pieces of the time.²⁶ Specifically, the poem mounts an argument in favour of the ordering, balancing, and civilizing possibilities of poetic discourse while it explores various forms of that discourse.

The opening poem in the series urges its specifically addressed audience to harden itself against sorrow:

Lest grief clean out the sockets of your eyes,
Lest anguish purge your heart of happiness,
Lest you go shaking fists at passive skies,
And mouthing blasphemies in your distress,

Be silent. Sorrow is a leper; shun
The presence of his frosted phantom. Plant
Small stones for eyes so that no tears may run;
And underneath your ribs set adamant.

(124)

²⁵"Greeting on This Day," Menorah Journal 18.1 (January 1932): 1-4; Hath Not a Jew 22-28; Canadian Anthology, eds. Carl F. Klich and Reginald E. Watters (Toronto: W.J. Gage, 1966) 382; GH 001495-1501; GHP 001739-44; MS 002301-12, 002744 (22-28). Spiro explains that, ironically, "This Day" was also the "ninth of Ab, a traditional Jewish day of mourning when greeting must be curtailed," Tapestry for Designs, 57.

²⁶See Beyond Sabbath, 8-10.

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The rising intensity of the first quatrain is encouraged by the uncluttered directness of its parallel clauses and, by the simple clarity of its imagery ("sockets of your eyes"... Stress on the reader's (the "you" and "your" of the first quatrain) severe emotional and presumably justifiable trauma ("grief," "anguish") and stress on the reader's active response to such trauma ("shaking," "mouthing") yield to a new directive: "Be silent," Klein commands in the second quatrain, having paused sufficiently long to raise his reader's curiosity and to switch grammatical categories. The parallel clauses beginning with "Lest" are promptly subordinated to the assertive imperatives that follow: "Be silent," "shun," "Plant," "set adamant." The reader-sufferer is to defend himself with a wall of stony silence. But the poet fills that silence with his written record of his people's sorrow. Armed with a new language, not the one of vengeance or of loud curses, he strives to transcend the condition of grief itself on behalf of his readers.

Thus Klein shifts to a new audience in the second poem in the series, certain now that his reader is silently listening to him. The apostrophized "Chronicler" whom he exhorts to "pull down the heavy tone" and "inscribe / The welcome Jews received on coming home" to Palestine is, of course, himself as well as the traditional scribe of history. The record must not only be kept, written in blood, of the tragic event, but it must also be kept correctly. The

writing of the event not only relieves the sorrow of suffering, but it also reshapes the event itself, insuring its place as part of the documented, unforgettable reality of the present. Continuing in the imperative mode of the first lyric, Klein directs "sad Jeremiah"--the chronicler of the Book of Lamentations which is read on "this day" (the ninth day of the Jewish month of Ab)--to "Omit . . . adjectives" and "Spare . . . adverbs," to relate the events plainly and without the sorrow that followed them: "let your phrases house / No too-protesting tenant of despair." Clearly Klein is also directing these injunctions against lamentations to himself. What becomes especially evident is the precedent which the written word has over noisy cries of anguish or even over the spoken name of the Messiah:

And if the meagre tale brings no Messiah,
Messiah is a short conspiracy
Of throat and air.

(124)

As soon as it is uttered, the Messiah's name disappears, an insubstantial, invisible unreality. But language when written can "house" reality, can lease "tenants" of experience who may live on forever. Recorded language denies the void of the "blank page" and, by paradox, expresses the truth in silence. Recorded language is a long "conspiracy," as it were, of "bone" and "blood." Moreover, by inscribing the clause "The welcome Jews received on coming home," stripped of adjectives and spared of adverbs, Klein ironically expresses

the very absence of any welcome. Through a kind of verbal game or, put more accurately, through a paradox of expression and silence--the recording of a "welcome" and the real absence of a "welcome"--Klein shuns sorrow and honours the truth of history at the same time.²⁷

In the third poem of the series, Klein shifts again to a new form of address. Now he apostrophizes "Safed," the medieval seat of mystical teachings and the imagined playground of his childhood studies. But interestingly, before he launches into his song in praise of Safed, Klein asks himself a question regarding his own use of language: "Why do I weight my words with things irrelevant?" Ostensibly, the "things" are those concerns which drag him down and away from his loving memories of Safed. Words are "weighted" when they carry the sorrow of grief and suffering, but they are also capable of relieving such a burden:

O Safed, Safed,
 Though never have I left my northern snows,
 Nor ever boarded ship for Palestine,
 Your memory annoints my brain a shrine,
 Your white roofs poetize my prose,
 Your halidom is mine.

(124)

These remarkably autobiographical lines situate Klein in his Canadian climate while, by another paradox of expression, he is able to travel to a home he has never visited. Written

²⁷Tapestry for Designs, 58. Spiro notes that Jeremiah's Book of Lamentations is read on the ninth of Ab, "This Day," but Klein urges a turning away from lamentation in favour of "greeting."

language is a "house" built to last, as the second lyric in the series suggests, and this architectural principle is extended in the third lyric to include the "shrine," the "halidom" with "white roofs" of Safed which is lodged in Kleir's "brain." He need not have actually visited Safed to know it and claim it as his own. The insistent repetition of "Your" at the beginning of these lines not only makes that claim absolute, but it also serves to cast an incantatory charm on the poem which makes the retreat into the house of memory possible. That house of memory is built with words which etch images in the mind--images as real as the words themselves:

Your streets, terraced and curved and narrow,
 I climbed in my youth, attending on your sages,
 I sat at the feet of Rabbi Joseph Caro,
 I turned the musty and snuff-tinctured pages
 Of mystic books bewildering my little pate,
 And with Rab Isaac Luria, surnamed the Pard,
 Who rose on Friday twilights to become God's ward
 I ate, and blessed the single plate.
 I followed them, I loved them, sage and saint,
 Graybeard in caftan, juggling the when and why,
 Ascetic rubbing a microscopic taint,
 Scholar on whose neat earlocks piety ascended
 In spiral to the sky--
 I followed them, for better or for worse,
 Even as now I follow this impromptu hearse.

(124-25)

The further repetition of "I" and then of "I follow" contributes to the paradoxical movement of the poem--a movement back into the brain's memory of childhood and forward through the temporal narrative of that memory itself. The rhythmic repetitions of pronoun and verb are also gently balanced by

the careful placement of commas which rock these phrases in the secure cradle of memory. But the movement of the poem is not only back and forth; it is also upwards, in ascension, as if the journey backwards into the secure memory of childhood were releasing Klein from the "weight" of "irrelevant things." Thus the architectural geometry of "shrine," "roofs," "halidom," and then of "streets, terraced and curved and narrow" turns into the ascending "spiral"--which is both the curled "earlocks" of the devout and the material figure of Klein's spiritual climb towards an idealized childhood memory. Both the childhood experience and the memory of that experience are brought into being with words. In following his fond memories through the narrow, curving passages of the brain, Klein reaches towards "the sky," a point as far and as high as his imagination can take him. The dashes that follow this point in the poem halt the journey to Safed led by the sages and saints of Klein's past, the scholarly mystics "juggling the when and why" of existence. "I followed them," Klein repeats, "for better or for worse," married to their sacred teachings forever. "Even" in the present, in the "now" of modern atrocity which intrudes upon Klein's memory to bring him back down to earth, he remains loyal to their teachings. As a devout student, of course, Klein continues to juggle the mysteries of creation, but the final image of the poem is startlingly disturbing in its sudden appearance, and it is that image which Klein is compelled to follow. The "improptu

hearse" brilliantly transmutes spiral to black rectangle in an uncomfortably quick, hastily arranged preparation of death.

The fourth poem in "Greeting on This Day" continues the imagery of death in an eerie vision of rétribution:

The ghosts of Hebron lift their coffinlids
And throw the shards from off their eyes.
Spectres of Talpioth arise.
The cemetary sighs.

Even as unrest scurries in these skulls,
So are there those tonight
Who toss upon a bed where terror falls,
Where falls the rodent fright,
Who rise from off their couches, try the door,
Stare out of windows, see the moon drip gore,
Light up a candle, set it near the bed,
Mumble a Moslem prayer, lie up all night,
And wait, recumbent, for the ceiling to grow white.

(125)

Hebron's "ghosts" are none other than the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives who are believed to be buried there (where a mosque stands on the reputed site). Hebron was also the site of the worst rioting of 1929. In Klein's surrealist account, the ancient spirits are awakened by the massacre and move to terrorize the Arab inhabitants of Hebron. The poem is deliberately ambiguous, however, until the penultimate line, where "a Moslem prayer" finally establishes who is meant to be terrorized. Klein is also careful to avoid "shaking fists" or "mouthing blasphemies." This vision is not so much a prophecy or a curse as it is a strangely evocative narrative of absolute fear. Both the pattern of repetition at the centre of the poem ("Who," "Where," "Who") and the rhythmic haltings determined by its

frequent commas serve the intensity of this impersonal nightmare. Finally, the poem eerily highlights the whiteness of the "ghosts," the "spectres," the "moon," the "light" of the "candle," and the apocalyptic glare of the final line against the darkness of the night.

That contrast of white and black is carried into the fifth lyric of the series, but here Klein transforms the absolute horror of that tension into a symbolic account of historical reality:

The white doves flutter
From the roofs
Where stones did utter
Dark reproofs.

That these pale pigeons
Be alarmed
Guerilla legions
Have been armed.

Effendi, Mufti,
Holy ones--
They are not thrifty
With their stones.

This is the manner
Doves take flight:
The sky a banner
Blue and white.

(125-26)

This is, of course, another way of describing "The welcome Jews received on coming home" for the record. The allegorical simplicity of the poem partly offsets the grim reality (according to Klein) of peace-loving Jews being attacked by "dark" aggressive Moslems. Again, this is not, strictly speaking, a fist-shaking or blaspheming reaction to tragic events, but

it is another way of chronicling historical truths, a variation on the fact of history without the "weight" of sorrow and anguish.

The blue and white banner of peace formed by sky and dove which closes the fifth section of the poem prepares the way for the lyrical expression of the sixth section, a song of rebirth and return written in the manner of the Song of Songs:

O who is this, rising from the Sharon, bearing a basket of grapes, vaunting the golden apples?
 And who is he, that
 Other one, following behind a plough, breaking the soil,
 As hard as the heart of Pharaoh?

(126)

The song is addressed to Klein himself, to his community of readers, and to his people. Indeed, the particularized audiences of the opening sections of the poem (the "you" of i, the "Chronicler" of ii, and "Safed" of iii) now merge as a united audience--persecuted Jews, Klein the poet-recorder, and the animated land about to be reclaimed:

A son has returned to her that bare him; at her hearth
 he grows comely; he is goodly to behold.
 Behind the bony cage there beats the bird of joy;
 within the golden cup is wine that overflows.

(126)

The "son" who returns to his motherland (in echo of Solomon's "comely" bride) marks the end of a life of suffering and wandering (like Klein's Childe Harold) in search of release and peace. This, too, is a vision, like the imagined horrors of the fourth section and the symbolic battle between doves and guerilla legions of the fifth section, but now the

vision is of triumph and happiness. The sensual lyricism of the Song of Songs is an interesting model for Klein's poem, although Klein abandons the overt eroticism of the biblical verses for a more restrained language appropriate, perhaps, to a son's relation to his mother. But in deliberate imitation of the modulated parallelisms of the Song of Songs, this section of "Greeting on This Day" offers a recognizably ancient form of poetic expression. If, in addition to its function as a consolatory gesture, "Greeting on This Day" is understood as an investigation of optimum modes of poetic expression, then this sixth section presents an alternative, time-honoured form of versification--another record of truth--in a growing list of poetic possibilities. By this point in the series, Klein has worked through a number of formal considerations--from the rhetorical imperatives of the first two sections, through the entrancing repetitions of the third and fourth sections, the allegorical simplicity in quatrains of the fifth--so that the biblical versification of the sixth section may be seen as another, equally viable expression of "greeting," as opposed to grief and anguish.

"Greeting," of course, translates as shalom in the Hebrew, which in turn translates as "peace." Klein's hidden title, although recognizable to anyone with even a little knowledge of Hebrew, is "Peace on This Day." The poems that constitute the "greeting" of peace all serve to fill the silence commanded

at the outset. Each contributes to the record of the past and to the written promise of the future.

That promise assumes shape in the sixth, biblical section of the poem and is developed for the rest of the "greeting." In the seventh section, Klein finally turns his address to God as he considers how his people are to proceed now that the tragic event has been recorded:

We are a people of peace. Shall I then say,
Showing the whites of my eyes upraised to you,
"Forgive them, Lord, they know not what they do"?

(127)

Klein's impatience with Christian morality, or at least the morality of turning the other cheek, is obvious. And so he appeals to God to assist in avenging the Arab murderers:

Not so, Not so; no peace can be until
Sleek Syrian landlord and fanatic priest,
The greater and the lesser lice have creased
Their paunches to a pellicle,
No peace to them--the bandits battenning on blood!
No peace!
Rather the dagger to the hilt,
The bullet to the heart,
The gallows built,
and the ignoble cart!

(127)

These are strong words, hurled with certainty and stressed with alliterative forcefulness. These also contrast strikingly with the preceding section's biblical rhythms, and yet Klein's greeting of peace can only be offered to those without blood on their hands. Like an angry Old Testament God, Klein issues a cryptic set of instructions for death. Ostensibly it is this sort of action and not futile grieving

which must be carried out before the future can be lived peacefully.

After his message of vengeance is recorded Klein is quick to assure his Arab cousins that he desires peaceful co-existence with them:

To them no peace, but unto you, O fellaheen,
 O workers in the smithy of the sun,
 Dupes of ventriloquists who belch the Unseen,
 Good men deluded by the Evil One;
 I, the son of a worker, and a worker myself,
 I, who have known the sweat that salts the lip,
 The blister on the palm, the aching hip,
 I offer you companionship,
 Saying....

(127)

And as this eighth section closes on a personal note, with Klein admitting sympathy and understanding (albeit for easily "deluded" men), the ninth and final section of the "greeting" extends the peace offering in Italian sonnet form:

Accursed he who mouths a scarlet threat!
 Who lets new blood before the old congeals,
 Who makes of carcasses his festal meals,
 And who declares that he will not forget!
 The muezzin upon the minaret
 Announces dawn once more; the Moslem kneels;
 Elation lifts the Jew from off his heels;
 Izak and Ishmael are cousins met.
 No desert cries encircle Omar's dome,
 No tear erodes the Wall of ancient pain;
 Once more may brothers dwell in peace at home;
 Though blood was spattered, it has left no stain;
 The greeting on this day is loud Shalom!
 The white doves settle on the roofs again.

(127-28)

Perhaps most fittingly, the sonnet serves Klein's last section of the greeting. In its ordered tensions, balanced oppositions, and rhetorical harmonies, the Italian sonnet

aptly embodies the hoped-for co-operation between Jew and Arab. Within its necessary geometrical arrangement, Klein's poem contains several sets of oppositions--new/old, carcasses/meals, declare/forget, kneels/lifts, Izak/Ishmael, dome/Wall--which comprise a formal and thematic symmetry. In effect, all of the preceding sections of the "greeting" have led to this artfully ordered declaration of peace and well-being. Supported by syntactical parallelism, the visually obvious frequency of end-line punctuation, and the noticeable repetition of first words, the written geometry of the final section strengthens Klein's earlier suggestion that language can "house" the truth.²⁸ And by recording this vision of peace in the house of the sonnet, Klein brings it into being. Finally, it should be noted that as Klein moves through the series, shifting his address to different audiences ("you," "Chronicler," "Safed," "Lord"), he eventually comes to address his Arab brothers, "fellaheen," as necessary objects of his extended greeting. In the last section, it is therefore understood that both Jew and Arab are included in Klein's warning: "Accursed he who mouths a scarlet threat!" Both groups are indirectly addressed; both are meant to honour Klein's "Greeting on This Day." In extending his peace message to the same people--or to the same racial group--which occasioned the sorrow of the first

²⁸Recall Klein's "Marginalia" from chapter one: "Sonnets --neat, compact, residential--like self-contained cottages."

section of the poem, Klein demonstrates by his own example what is necessary to restore order and well-being to Palestine.

"Sonnet in Time of Affliction," the poem which follows "Greeting on This Day" in Hath Not a Jew, was also written in response to the Arab riots of 1929.²⁹ What makes both poems relevant in 1940, when Hath Not a Jew was finally published, is the continual tension and fighting between Arab and Jew over the territory of Palestine. What makes both poems relevant decades after they were written is, of course, the continual tension and fighting between Arab and Jew over the state of Israel. But Klein is sure to personalize "Sonnet in Time of Affliction," as he does with sections of "Greeting on This Day," partly perhaps to relieve himself of his guilt over not participating actively in the territorial struggle. As a committed Zionist, Klein undoubtedly coped uneasily with the contradictions of being an armchair soldier. Through his public poetry he could admit to such discomfort:

The word of grace is flung from foreign thrones
 And strangers lord it in the ruling-hall;
 The shield of David rusts upon the wall;
 The lion of Judah seeks to roar and groans . . .
 Where are the brave, the mighty? They are bones.
 Bar Cochba's star has suffered its last fall.
 On holy places profane spiders crawl;
 The jackal leaves foul marks on temple-stones.
 Ah, woe, to us, that we, the sons of peace,
 Must turn our sharpened scythes to scimitars,
 Must lift the hammer of the Maccabees,
 Blood soak the land, make mockery of stars . . .

²⁹"Sonnet in Time of Affliction," Judaean 3.1 (October 1929): 6; Hath Not a Jew 29; MS 002646.

And woe to me, who am not one of these,
 Who languish here beneath these northern stars

(128)

Klein was hardly languishing in 1929, but the word certainly connotes his self-consciousness with the relative safety and comfort of Canadian life at the time. Klein is careful, however, to avoid the danger of a whimpering confession. The poem gives the appearance of a personal, spontaneous deliberation--both the repeated end stops (after "groans" and "stars"), which indicate further private contemplation, and the rhetorical question and answer of the octet ("Where are the brave, the mighty? They are bones.") assist in this appearance--but this is weighed against the ordering parallel rhythms and the verbal contrivances of the sonnet. Indeed, it is precisely that tension between the apparently spontaneous tracks of thought and the restraining devices of the poem that informs its attempt to locate personal responsibility in public tragedy.

The octet of the sonnet, for example, describes the "affliction" of the moment in detachedly concerned terms. Characteristic of his preoccupation with the influential powers of language, Klein focuses on the "word of grace," not with grace itself. It is the word which brings grace into being; when "flung from foreign thrones," the word is obviously being misused. In fact, "strangers"--that is, non-Jews--"lord" the word to establish their unearned authority. The "affliction" of the time is thus characterized by an

illegitimate use of language. This is a time when "grace" can be "flung," when "strangers" inhabit the "ruling-hall," when the "shield of David rusts," when the "lion of Judah seeks to roar, and groans." By further linguistic paradox, the "mighty" are "bones," Bar Cochba's "star" has fallen, and "spiders" and "jackals" desecrate the temples. The profane rules in place of the sacred.

These sets of radical inversions motivate the paradoxical necessities of the sestet: the "sons of peace"--an epithet as out of place as it is complimentary in this sonnet in time of affliction--are thus compelled to turn "scythes" to "scimitars," to violate the meaning of their name and of language itself. When Klein writes that it is time to "lift the hammer of the Maccabees," he is not only calling to arms but he is also calling on the power of the name "Maccabee," which means "hammer." The word hidden in the name is lifted into action. This verbal feat answers the falling "star" of Bar Cochba's name, which means (son of a) star. And the word hidden in Bar Cochba's name is a further extension of the wordplay in "shield of David," the star of David or Magen David. The necessary, but unfortunately aggressive retaliations of the Jews, therefore, "make mockery of stars." In time of such affliction, that which cannot be seen will become apparent; that which ordinarily serves peace will serve war.

Whereas the octet of the poem establishes the generally violated state of language in time of affliction, the sestet turns to a more personal and immediate response to such violation. "Ah, woe, to us, that we, the sons of peace, / Must turn," Klein writes, establishing first his identification with the group as objects of affliction, as the afflicted, and then his identification with the group as subjects of affliction, as afflicters--from "to us" to "that we." The shift in grammatical categories is bridged by the restrictive use of the relative pronoun "that," which makes the move from afflicted to afflicter logically secure. Thus the transition from "sons of peace" to "we" who "must" reclaim territory is made to appear both natural and necessary. One final pronoun shift remains which involves a further process of identification. In the penultimate line of the sonnet, the "And woe to me," balances the earlier "Ah, woe, to us," thereby establishing Klein's personal relation to the group as one who is afflicted. But that immediate identification rapidly turns into paradoxical isolation: "And woe to me, who am not one of these." Klein is, then, both one of and not one of the group. His dilemma is that as a Jew living in Canada he is reduced to commenting on the struggle, frustrated by his inability (or unwillingness) to join his people, "these," fighting in Palestine. This, perhaps, is why the poem is titled "Sonnet in Time of Affliction" and not "Time of Affliction." Klein deliberately calls attention to the art of representing affliction which, as demonstrated,

depends upon a calculated arrangement of linguistic and poetic devices. It is the apparently irreconcilable discontinuity between language and experience--the poem and the pain of affliction--that forces Klein's somewhat guilty expression of separation from the group to which he belongs.

But Klein's guilt cannot be too debilitating: as the octet of the sonnet implies, experience itself is mediated by language. In time of affliction, language is misused, truth is inverted, and paradoxes thrive. The poet attempts to set language right, as it were, and so it is fitting that the radical inversions signifying affliction should be ordered and framed by the sonnet's geometry. The "me" who languishes under a Canadian sky, who by rhetorical admission is both part of and not part of a group (a "we", and a "me"), is also the "me" who by paradoxical truth is not languishing: he is writing a "Sonnet in Time of Affliction." He is, in effect, restoring the order of language. The tension between personal responsibility and public tragedy is thus brilliantly reflected and remarkably resolved in this compact, complex poem. The reader who looks beyond the surface diversions of a poem like "Sonnet in Time of Affliction" is apt to be rewarded by an astonishingly unified system that, as is the case with so much of Klein's work, defies the uncertainty of modern discontinuity.

Perhaps no single poem in Hath Not a Jew demonstrates Klein's profound interest in the civilizing geometry of poetic discourse more than "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens (128-132)," the next poem in Hath Not a Jew. First published in 1931 in the Canadian Forum,³⁰ "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" is arguably the most difficult poem in the collection. It is also the poem to have received the most attention. This is not surprising in view of the fact that it appeared in New Provinces in 1936 as one of two representatively modern pieces (along with "Soirée of Velvel

³⁰"Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," Canadian Forum 11 (September 1931): 453-54; Opinion 3.1 (November 1932): 16-17; New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors, ed. F.R. Scott (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936) 29-43; Hath Not a Jew 30-36; GH 001506-12; GHP 001746-51; MS 002653 (section V only); MS 002744 (30-36). Klein's revised copy of Hath Not a Jew contains the following section headings (in place of numbers) for the poem:

- (section i) Theologico-Political
- (section ii) "Devotion is love towards an object which astonishes us"
- (section iii) "A free man thinks of nothing less than of death"
- (section iv) "The multitude pays homage to the Book of the Bible rather than to the Word of God"
- (section v) More Geometrico Demonstratae
- (section vi) Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione
- (section vii) On Man, on the Rainbow
- (section viii) Deus sive Natura
- (section ix) Opera quae Supersunt

These headings are taken from Spinoza's own works.

Kleinburger"), making that the third time it had been printed before it found its way into Hath Not a Jew. E.K. Brown was quick to recognize the virtues of Jewish expression in "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," citing the poem as one of the finest written between the wars in Canada.³¹ Milton Wilson called it "an early masterpiece."³² But the first to discuss the poem in any detail was Miriam Waddington, who in her brief but important study of Klein's work recognized its "religious" (as opposed to just cultural) resonances.³³ Waddington's summary of the poem probably provoked G.K. Fischer's longer essay in her study of Klein's religious and ethical themes, where she argues that the poem reveals Klein's serious considerations of pantheism.³⁴ Most recently, Linda Hutcheon and Alain Goldschlager examine this long poem closely, analysing its nine-part structure in order to show how Klein's formal choices influence and develop the "thematic content" of his work.³⁵ This more critically focussed approach to "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" best illustrates the intricate workings of an obviously complex

³¹E.K. Brown, On Canadian Poetry, 1944 (Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1973) 76.

³²Milton Wilson, "Klein's Drowned Poet," in A.M. Klein (Marshall), 96.

³³Waddington, A.M. Klein, 17.

³⁴Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 35-52.

³⁵Linda Hutcheon and Alain Goldschlager, "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens: A.M. Klein as Wordsmith," Canadian Poetry 4 (Spring/Summer 1979): 52-57.

piece of poetry. Regardless of their critical approaches, however, all readers agree that it sustains a dauntingly impressive structure.

It needs to be mentioned that "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" is also one of the most reworked poems in Hath Not a Jew. To all appearances, it seems to have held Klein's attention for some time; significant revisions made during its publishing history indicate the nature of his working relationship to the poem. These need to be considered for a full appreciation but at this time it is fitting that the work be considered as it appeared in Hath Not a Jew and thus as readers have commonly seen it.³⁶ It also needs to be mentioned that the major source for the poem is The Philosophy of Spinoza: Selected from His Chief Works (With a life of Spinoza and an introduction by Joseph Ratner) of which Klein owned a copy.³⁷ Readers might not have known about Klein's extensive reliance on Ratner's "Life of Spinoza" and on his "Introduction to the Philosophy of Spinoza," nor would they have had to in order to appreciate the poem: but

³⁶See note 30 above. The poem as it appears in Waddington's Collected Poems contains a number of errors which have been silently edited in my quotations. Some of these are significant enough to be noted separately. Section vi, for example, contains obvious spacing around the couplets in all versions of the poem except Hath Not a Jew.

³⁷The Philosophy of Spinoza: Selected from His Chief Works. With a Life of Spinoza and an introduction by Joseph Ratner (New York: Modern Library, 1927). Hereafter referred to as Philosophy of Spinoza. I am grateful to Zailig Pollack for informing me of this valuable text and for noting Klein's markings in it.

this knowledge does direct attention to the fact that "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" is primarily about the man, and particularly the excommunicated man, who suffered a radical breach from his religious community when he was twenty four years old--two years older than Klein at the time the poem was written. Milton Wilson wisely realized the poem's importance as an early statement of one of Klein's central concerns: the isolation of the poet from society. In Wilson's view, "the title of this early poem might just as well be 'Portrait of Spinoza as Landscape,'"³⁸ a remark that points to Klein's early identification with figures of exile and separateness from the world. No doubt Spinoza, as Ratner describes him, appealed to Klein's own sense of difference, of being uniquely cut off from ordinary life. And no doubt Klein was attracted to Ratner's elegant description of Spinoza's life after excommunication, a life of painful but quiet dignity and of noble asceticism.

The title of the poem, as is now well known, refers to the trade of grinding and polishing lenses which Spinoza took up when he was excommunicated from the Dutch Jewish-Sephardi community (1656). It is also generally shared critical opinion that the title functions as a metaphor of Spinoza's philosophy: "What comes out of Spinoza's lens, as it magnifies one way and shrinks another, is a figure for

³⁸Milton Wilson, "Klein's Drowned Poet," 98.

God's relation to man and nature," Milton Wilson writes.³⁹ "By refracting rays of light, the lens brings into focus that which otherwise would have remained in obscurity. Spinoza's philosophy, on the spiritual plane, performs a parallel function," Fischer notes.⁴⁰ "Embodying simultaneously 'the infinitesimal and the infinite,' pantheism, like a 'polished lens,' afforded a hitherto unperceived view of God," Solomon J. Spiro comments.⁴¹ As creditable as these observations are, they neglect to acknowledge the likely source for the poem's title--Ratner's epigraph cited from Heine which Klein underlined in his own copy:

"All our modern philosophers, though often perhaps
unconsciously, see through the glasses which
Baruch Spinoza ground."

The metaphoric possibilities of the poem's title were probably inspired by Heine's own metaphoric observation, so that it is easy to see how one poet borrows from another to work his art. It is also easy to see why the poet Heine's paradox of unconscious sight would bear upon the poet Klein's interest in hidden truths. In other words, it is interesting to speculate that Klein found more inspiration for his title from another poet than he did from Spinoza himself, a suggestion which goes some way to concluding that "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" is less about pantheism (as Fischer and

³⁹Milton Wilson, "Klein's Drowned Poet," 97.

⁴⁰Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 41.

⁴¹Spiro, Tapestry for Designs, 60.

Spiro see it) than it is about the poetic representation of truth.

As mentioned earlier, "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" is a difficult poem. The variety of versification and the array of stanzaic orders within its nine-part structure prohibit immediate access to it. Indeed, without some prior knowledge of Spinoza's life and at least a passing knowledge of some of the poem's more obscure references, it would be dizzyingly incomprehensible. It does, however, bear the unmistakable distinctions of Klein's style at a first reading: a palpable texture of lines made up of unusual diction, consonance, assonance, alliteration, puns, and flaunting wordplay; sudden displays of tortured wit; a disturbing range of surface tones; the use of Latin and Latinisms; apparently exotic names. Klein's style here, as elsewhere ("Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," "Greeting on This Day," "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry"), is a conglomerate of mannerisms. If the poems were merely this, they would suffer from unrestrained vulgarity or sentimentality. Instead, the best of his mannerist, usually long pieces are mediated by the graceful rhythms of biblical verse and protected by the relentless geometry of his unifying forms. It is, perhaps, characteristic of Klein's style that the title of this poem is at once perplexing and captivating: "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens." Its precise meaning may, at first, be obscure, but its audible symmetry, its pandulous rhythm, and

its alliterative charm suggest a meaning of which the rest of the poem is, in a way, an explication. This view shares something of Hutcheon and Goldschlager's thesis that the poem "serves as an example of this process of generating meaning through form."⁴² A somewhat different emphasis, however, will reveal new relations between the form and the content of this poem.

The first section introduces the subject of Spinoza's excommunication. As Hutcheon and Goldschlager point out, "the first poem is of critical importance to both the circular and linear patterns of this series, for it is here that the basic opposition that will structure the work is introduced."⁴³ The argument runs that "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" is created on a principle of oppositions of which the relation between individual poems (microcosm, linearity) and the entire series (macrocosm, circularity) is the most salient example. But it may be seen just how much "basic opposition" is part of the fabric of each poem--part of its grammatical texture, versification, and rhyme scheme --to form a geometrical order consistent with Spinoza's (or Klein's understanding of Spinoza via Ratner) "geometrical order of exposition."⁴⁴ This can be partly demonstrated in

⁴²Hutcheon and Goldschlager, 52.

⁴³Hutcheon and Goldschlager, 52.

⁴⁴Philosophy of Spinoza, xxviii.

the first section of the poem, which evolves a fairly complicated dialectical procedure:

The paunchy sons of Abraham
 Spit on the maculate streets of Amsterdam,
 Showing Spinoza, Baruch alias Benedict,
 He and his God are under interdict.

(128)

The opposition between the two sets of couplets in these opening lines is immediately, audibly obvious. Less obvious, perhaps, is the way in which Klein sets words in skittish opposition to each other: "paunchy" sits incongruously near "Abraham;" "Spit" violates "maculate streets;" the Hebrew "Baruch" rests ironically beside the Latin "Benedict" (both mean "Blessed"); "He" and "God" are obviously opposed but more importantly both "He" and "God" are aligned against the Dutch Jewish community. Each line contains the ironic tension necessary for the sarcastic distancing of the authorial voice. Behind the poem stands the morally confident judge of history.

But these opening lines do more than "add onomatopoeia to the images of the community's scornful contempt for Spinoza," as one reader suggests.⁴⁵ They establish a pattern of antithetical relations that becomes the principle of the poem's form and the central subject of its content. Furthermore, these sets of oppositions do not merely inform the poem's structure, they are subsumed by a broader, unifying order--

⁴⁵Spiro, Tapestry for Designs, 61.

one determined by the visually alliterative A's, B's, and S's, by assonance ("Abraham," "maculate," "Amsterdam," "Baruch," "and"), as well as by the end rhymes of each couplet. These poetic devices are carried by the continuous patterning of tetrameter verse which directly echoes the syntactical symmetry of the poem's title. The rising and falling, back and forth motion of these opening lines thus provides a controlling rhythmic parallelism. In other words, the sets of oppositions which begin the poem are successfully integrated to the order of what is essentially one statement in four lines: In effect, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

This formal strategy, one which subordinates opposition to a comprehensive unity, is appropriate to Klein's understanding of Spinoza himself. The Dutch philosopher's fate was to suffer from a calculated misunderstanding. His scrupulously arranged argument in favour of the integration of man, Nature, and God was construed as an heretical assault against the principle of God's hierarchical supremacy. In truth, Spinoza was challenging the patriarchal, orthodox view of God--the "Jehovah" of the poem's section iv--but he replaced it not with atheism, or nothingness, but with a view of God as Nature. Spinoza dissolved the traditionally irreconcilable dialectic of man and God (I and Thou, Self and Other) by positing that "Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can

either be or be conceived without God."⁴⁶ As Ratner explains, "by making God and Nature equivalent terms" Spinoza effectively eliminated the doctrine of supernaturalism.⁴⁷ Man could "apprehend the infinite essence of God or Nature because every particular finite thing is a determinate expression of the infinite."⁴⁸ Spinoza's doctrine of the integration of the temporal and eternal realms necessarily challenged the orthodox view of the separateness of man and God. Such was his fate that he was excommunicated for aligning himself, and Nature, with God--for synthesizing what orthodoxy had determined necessarily irreconcilable.

For Klein, it was the particular ignorance of that Dutch community to maintain an irresolvable dialectic of man and God, not recognizing Spinoza's claim that one is inexorably bound with the other (just as "Baruch" and "Benedict" both mean the same "Blessed" thing, although they appear to be different):

Ah, what theology there is in spatted spittle,
 And in anathema what sacred prose
 Winnowing the fact from the suppose!
 Indeed, that better than these two things can whittle
 The scabrous heresies of Yawheh's foes,
 Informing the breast where Satan gloats and crows
 That saving it leave false doctrine, jot and tittle,
 No vigilant thumb will leave its orthodox nose?

(128-29)

⁴⁶Philosophy of Spinoza, 130.

⁴⁷Philosophy of Spinoza, lxvii.

⁴⁸Philosophy of Spinoza, lxi.

The emphasis here on the enforced dualism of the Jewish-Dutch orthodox is striking. Both "theology" and "sacred prose"--"two things"--work to separate two other things--Yawheh from his "foes." But Klein is sure to equate "theology" with "spittle" and "sacred prose" with "anathema," two things intended to separate "fact" from "suppose," truth from conjecture, or the rabbis' truth from Spinoza's wonder. Satan is, of course, opposite to Yawheh, and "false doctrine" is opposite to "sacred prose." But as with the first four lines of the poem, Klein plays these sets of pairs against the controlling rhyme, the alliterative stresses, and the syntactical parallelism of his verses. The divisive "theology" of the rabbis is rendered especially ironic in view of the poem's reliance on iambic meter and predictably amusing end rhymes ("spittle," "whittle," "tittle"; "prose," "suppose," "foes," "crows," "nose") through which the poem's author speaks.

Since neither "theology" nor "sacred prose" seem to have effected much change in Spinoza, the rabbis resorted to the rituals of excommunication:

What better than ram's horn blown,
And candles blown out by maledictory breath,
Can bring the wanderer back to his very own,
The infidel back to his faith?

Nothing, unless it be that from the ghetto
A soldier of God advance to teach the creed,
Using as rod the irrefutable stiletto.

(129)

The "soldier of God" of whom Klein obscurely writes may be explained by referring to Ratner: "so one tradition relates,

an attempt had been made by one of the over-righteous upon Spinoza's life soon after he became an object of official displeasure."⁴⁹ It is difficult to ignore Klein's use of the word "stiletto," which, as Hutcheon and Goldschlager point out, is a bilingual pun suggesting that Klein himself pens a new "creed" in this poem.⁵⁰ While it is tempting to entertain such an emphasis, it is more instructive (especially with Ratner's help) to see "stiletto" both as the instrument of a zealot's attempted assassination and as the pen with which the rabbis formally excommunicated Spinoza from their religious community. The stiletto's irrefutability is obvious in both cases: Spinoza's death would certainly have put an end to his heterodoxy, and the rabbis' eventual proclamation of excommunication certainly put an end to Spinoza's membership in the community of Israel. The irrefutable irony remains, however, that Spinoza's pen was mightier than either attempted murder or excommunication. As Klein implies, Spinoza survived every challenge to his life and beliefs.

In the second section of the "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," Klein turns to the figure of Uriel da Costa, another excommunicated Dutch heretic, in order to stress the irreducible conflict of meaning which the orthodox community fostered:

⁴⁹Philosophy of Spinoza, xvi-xvii.

⁵⁰Hutcheon and Goldschlager, 57.

Uriel da Costa
 Flightily ranted
 Heresies one day,
 Next day recanted.

Rabbi and bishop,
 Each vies to smuggle
 Soul of da Costa
 Out of its struggle.

Confessional hears his
 Glib paternoster
 Synagogue sees his
 Penitent posture.

What is the end of
 This catechism?
 But brings dogma
 That suffers no schism.

(129)

As with the first section of the poem, here Klein emphasizes opposition on practically every level. Of course, this binary arrangement underlines da Costa's impossible situation as a man in a tug-of-war between two opposing religious systems. His inability to apprehend the unity of his beliefs, and his failure to resolve apparently contradictory sets of worship, resulted in his suicide, which tragically brought an end to "schism." But Klein's distanced, ironic perspective on this "indecisive martyr"⁵¹ is expressed through the regularizing dimetrical verses, the controlling predictability of his rhymes, and the repetition of the stanzaic quatrains. The insistent unity of this section of the poem thus provides a confident alternative to the kind of divisiveness that drove

⁵¹philosophy of Spinoza, xii.

Uriel da Costa to his death and Spinoza away from the orthodox community.

It is not surprising, in light of the preceding discussion, that the third section of the poem, in which Spinoza himself is given a voice to speak, abandons the irony of the irresolvable dialectic. In its place, Klein writes a lyrical, blank verse expression of Spinoza's resolve in the face of despair:

Malvolent scorpions befoul thy chambers,
 O my heart; they scurry across its floor,
 Leaving the slimy vestiges of doubt.
 Banish memento of the vermin; let
 No scripture on the wall affright you; no
 Ghost of da Costa; no, nor any threat.
 Ignore, O heart, even as didst ignore
 The bribe of florins jingling in the purse.

(129-130)

In place of the ironic but necessary controlling authority of the preceding sections, Klein writes here with an unforced simplicity conspicuously devoid of antithesis. Instead, the rhythmic cadences of each line and the understated repetition of self-reflexive commands ("Banish," "let," "Ignore") convey the sincerity of Spinoza's determination. Most obvious, perhaps, is both the visual and audible repetition of "O" as Spinoza addresses his "heart" to withstand all pressure. Reinforced by twenty-two "o's" in a few eight lines, Spinoza's "O" defines and encircles the unity, the oneness (as opposed to Nothingness) of his metaphysics. In every way, the third section of "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" is distinctively free of the frustrating dialects of the preceding two sections.

But Klein returns to the subject of theological speciousness in the fourth section. Again Spinoza speaks, but here the presentation of quatrains, the measured iambic pentameter verses, the predictability of rhyme, and the sarcastic wit serve to identify Klein as the speaker as well:

Jehovah is factotum of the rabbis;
 And Christ endures diurnal Calvary;
 Polyglot God is exiled to the churches;
 Synods tell God to be or not to be.

The Lord within his vacuum of heaven
 Discourses his domestic policies,
 With angels who break off their loud hosannas
 To help him phrase infallible decrees.

Soul of Spinoza, Baruch Spinoza bids you,
 Foresake the god suspended in mid-air,
 Seek you that other Law, and let Jehovah
 Play his game of celestial solitaire.

(130)

Spinoza, Klein is sure to say, spared Christianity no more than Judaism. The orthodox trappings of particular worship were, to Spinoza, the superficial inventions of men intent on maintaining religious difference. God, by any name for Spinoza, is God. The irrelevant hierarchical and patriarchal god alluded to earlier is here given direct dismissal. Heaven is a "vacuum" in this view since there is clearly no place for man there. "Jehovah" plays "celestial solitaire," a game that by orthodox necessity prohibits mankind's participation. "That other Law," which Spinoza's God obeys, is best understood by referring to Ratner:

The central controlling idea of Spinoza's philosophy is that all things are necessarily determined in Nature, which he conceives to be an absolutely

infinite unified and uniform order. Instead of maintaining that God is like man magnified to infinity, who has absolute, irresponsible control of a universe which is external to him--the rather rude anthropomorphic account of the ultimate nature of the universe contained in the Bible--Spinoza maintains that God is identical with the universe and must be and act according to eternal and necessary laws.... Within this Being--God, Nature or substance (the more technical, philosophical term)--there is no dichotomy; and there is outside of it no regulative or coercive intelligence such as the Biblical God is supposed to be. Whatever is, is one.⁵²

Not surprisingly, perhaps, Klein had marked "N.B." in the margin beside this passage of Ratner's text, which goes a considerable distance towards elaborating this and following sections of the poem. It needs to be mentioned at this time that Klein had written an alternative third stanza to this section, one which he entered in his own revised copy of Hath Not a Jew:

Soul of Spinoza, Baruch Spinoza bids you
Beyond the mansion of the made to look
And see the true Maker, Locus that is God,
God in the world that is His open book.⁵³

The "mansion of the made" is an interestingly evocative phrase, one that suggests the theological superstructures imposed on the world by orthodoxy which, ironically, conceal rather than reveal the spirit of God. The "true Maker" is a "Locus"--that is, the site (as in Spinoza's geometrical propositions) of universal laws, the place of meaning to

⁵²Philosophy of Spinoza, xxxiii.

⁵³From Klein's revised copy of Hath Not a Jew, MS 002744 (30-36).

which Spinoza stands in conditioned relation. Notably familiar, too, is the last line of this quatrain, which echoes Klein's metaphoric habit of equating the world with a written text, a habit explored in some detail in chapter one of this thesis. Here, however, Klein exploits the idiomatic possibilities of the metaphor: the world is an open book to anyone willing to see God in it. The alternative quatrain to this section of the poem puts (Ratner's analysis of) Spinoza's "Law" into somewhat clearer and more positive terms. What Klein loses in wit and irony in the published version of section iv he gains in clarity and gentleness. Yet, both versions of the final quatrain insist that God inhabits this divinely material world, not some impenetrable "mansion" nor a celestial vacuum.

Section v, as noted elsewhere, is central both to the entire poem's structure and to its meaning. Hutcheon and Goldschlager point out that "in fact, it is a rhymed sonnet (abba cddc effe gg), a mixture of Petrarchan rhyme scheme (abba) and formal divisions into octave and sestet (as marked by the two 'prose' paragraphs) and the Shakespearean form, with its final thematically summarizing couplet:

Reducing providence to theorems,
 the horrible atheist compiled such lore
 that proved, like proving two and two make four,
 that in the crown of God we are all gems.
 From glass and dust of glass he brought to light,
 out of the pulver and the polished lens,
 the prism and the flying mote; and hence
 the infinitesimal and the infinite.
 Is it a marvel, then, that he foresook
 the abracadabra of the synagogue,

and holding with timelessness a duologue,
deciphered a new scripture in the book?
Is it a marvel that he left old fraud
for passion intellectual of God?"⁵⁴

In this brilliant central section, Klein resolves the conflicts generated by an arrogant orthodoxy, and he answers its foolish presumptuousness ("Synods tell God to be or not to be"). Spinoza's "passion intellectual" led him to realize the simple, natural, and ordered relation between God and universal laws. And the way to apprehend this relation was, of course, through language, the instrument of the intellect. Spinoza "proved," through the laws of grammar which, in turn, determine the laws of mathematics, that mankind (like objects in geometry) stands in a conditioned relation to God, not separate from Him but as part of a grammatical, or geometrical, equation. Both man and God partake of that equation, just as both the finite and the infinite partake of it. More to the point, Klein writes that the immeasurably small, the "infinitesimal," partakes of the immeasurably large, "the infinite," just as one word is subsumed by the other (and just as "time" is subsumed by "timelessness"). This is, of course, an intellectual perspective, but one no less "passionate" for so being.

Reason, therefore, becomes an organizing power: "theorems" --that is, grammatical propositions--explain "providence." The "fact" of section 1 is winnowed from the "suppose." The

⁵⁴Hutcheon and Goldschlager, 55.

"irrefutable" (i) argument is that "in the crown of God we are all gems"; God is the "Locus" of a circle (crown) of which we are the co-ordinates (gems). In the sestet of the sonnet Klein asks rhetorically, "is it a marvel," any wonder that Spinoza "foresook" the "suppose" of organized religion (which orthodoxy deems "fact" in section i) for the "fact" of his theorems? Moreover, the "duologue" between Spinoza and the eternal realm comfortably replaces Jehovah's lonely game of "celestial solitaire" (iv). Man is now engaged in the cosmic enterprise or, to use Hutcheon and Goldschlager's terms, the "microcosm" (man, "gems," "the infinitesimal") participates in the "macrocosm" (Nature, God, "crown," "the infinite").⁵⁵ Significantly, Klein remarks that Spinoza "deciphered a new scripture in the book," which readers of Klein know to be the book of Nature. To decipher is to write in ordinary language what is written in code. Nature is God's code which Spinoza, the lens grinder, brings to light.

Appropriately enough, the sonnet is disguised as prose or, as with Spinoza's mathematical propositions, there is poetry concealed in the text, waiting, perhaps, to be deciphered. That a "new scripture" (like a "second scroll" or a "new thing" made by the "nth Adam" of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape") is revealed in the closed order of the sonnet form is not surprising given Klein's attraction to the form's unifying possibilities. Even more illuminating in

⁵⁵Hutcheon and Goldschlager, 55-6.

this context is Ratner's observation on Spinoza's "intellectual love of God":

. . . from the comprehension of any particular thing, we can pass to a comprehension of the infinite and eternal.

This is most commonly understood, curiously enough, not in religion, but in art. The ecstatic power of beauty makes the soul lose all sense of time and location. And in the specific object the soul sees an infinite meaning. Indeed, one can almost say that the more specific or limited the artistic object, the more clearly is the absolute or infinite meaning portrayed and discerned. A sonnet is oftener than not more expressive than a long poem.... There are present, apparently, in the more pronounced mystical visions, characteristics similar to those of significant esthetic apprehensions. These visions are extremely rare and fleeting. But then we can be at the highest peaks only seldom and for a short while. But in a moment we see eternity, and in the finite, the infinite. It is for this reason Spinoza says the more we understand particular things the more do we understand God.⁵⁶

It is easy to imagine with what satisfaction Klein first read these lines, for in Ratner's analogy the value of religious experience is shared by aesthetic experience. Klein's emerging identification with Spinoza in "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" finds a likely source and certainly a justification in Ratner's analysis. The reconciliation of microcosm and macrocosm, science and religion ("theorem" and "Providence"), "infinitesimal" and "infinite" effected by the precise language of the sonnet is made possible because of man's intellectual capability.

⁵⁶Philosophy of Spinoza, lxii.

Section vi is, indeed, a hymn to that capability, or what Ratner calls "the virtue of the mind."⁵⁷ In echo of Spinoza's earlier cry against doubt (iii), this section repeats the sign of the perfect geometric figure, the "O," which is both letter and number, linguistic and mathematical symbol of unity:⁵⁸

Unto the crown of bone cry Suzerain!
Do genuflect before the jewelled brain!

Lavish the homage of the vassal; let
The blood grow heady with strong epithet;

O cirque of the Cabbalist! O proud skull!
Of alchemy O crucible!

Sanctum sanctorum; grottoed hermitage
Where sits the bearded sage!

O golden bowl of Koheleth! and of fate
O hourglass within the pate!

Circling, O planet in the occiput!
O Mocrocasm, sinew-shut!

Yea, and having uttered this loud Te Deum
Ye have been singularly dumb.

(130-31)

The circle is also extended from the earlier "crown of God" (v) to the "jewelled brain" of this section, and, indeed, it finds its form manifested everywhere. In these exuberant couplets, Spinoza lists all holy manifestations of this perfect figure. Here, too, Spinoza marries Christianity and

⁵⁷Philosophy of Spinoza, lxii.

⁵⁸As mentioned above, this section ought to be read with appropriate spacing around the couplets. The spacing emphasizes both the unity of the separate couplets and the silence which surrounds them.

Judaism: the Latin Sanctus sanctorum is a later translation of the Hebraism "holy of holies," the inner sanctuary of the temple where the ark containing Moses' tablets resided; this section is termed a "Te Deum," a particularly Christian designation of praise. Clearly circles rest within circles. The brain, a circle itself, houses knowledge of the eternal. Within its holy temple resides reason, the agent of knowledge. The traditional hymn addressed "to God" assumes special significance when it is understood here that this lyric is sung in praise of the intellect through which God is known. It should be noted at this time that the concluding couplet of this section was marked for deletion in Klein's revised copy of Hath Not a Jew as well as being deleted entirely from one of Klein's manuscript copies of the poem.⁵⁹ It is true that the lines awkwardly shift from the ecstatic O's of the preceding apostrophes to the curious "Yea" and "Ye" of the last lines. If Spinoza is the voice of the lyric (albeit Klein is audible, too) why does he address himself in the second person? And why the intrusive "Ye" instead of "You"? But the fact that Spinoza's "Te Deum" is bracketed by silence ("Ye have been singularly dumb") does provide a poignant conclusion in keeping with Spinoza's understanding of the limits of language. According to Ratner,

Reason has, for Spinoza, no transcendental status or power, and it plays no dictatorial role. Reason, for him, is essentially an organizing not

⁵⁹ Hath Not a Jew revised copy; also deleted in MS 002703..

a legislative power in man's life.... The power of the intellect is wholly derivative, dependent upon the nature of the things that it understands.⁶⁰

Spinoza's philosophical view privileges the world of forms, the world of Nature, but that world is apprehended through the organizing powers of reason without which the world, and God, could not be understood. In awe of what he celebrates, in the fulness of his realization, Spinoza/Klein enters a contemplative silence. The singularity of this mood denotes its single-ness, its one-ness. Thus the silence into which Spinoza falls does not register an inarticulate nothingness but rather a hushed potency in which the world waits to be made new again through utterance. It is, in other words, a something, not a nothing, into which Spinoza passes after his loud "Te Deum."

The world is, in effect, made new again in section vii, where, after silence, Spinoza asserts his awareness of the wonders of Creation. The insistent "I" which begins almost every line of these two quatrains is a reminder that Spinoza is the agent of knowledge who recognizes the "miracles" of Nature:

I am weak before the wind; before the sun
 I faint; I lose my strength;
 I am utterly vanquished by a star;
 I go to my knees, at length

Before the song of a bird; before
 The breath of spring or fall

⁶⁰ Philosophy of Spinoza, lviii-lix.

I am lost; before these miracles
I am nothing at all.⁶¹

(131)

The last line of this section returns Spinoza to the silent sphere mentioned earlier. The "nothing" which he claims to be is the "infinitesimal" or immeasurably small part of a gloriously eternal universe. But to be "nothing at all" is still to be something, however small; "nothing" is, of course, represented mathematically by a circle, the symbol of unity. Spinoza, whose "I am" resonates through the poem, exists, and knows that he exists, as part of something greater than himself. That something is the created universe, the world itself. In the margin of this passage on Spinoza's understanding of miracles Klein had marked "NB":

For Spinoza . . . miracles, did they actually occur, would exhibit not God's power, but His impotence. The omnipotence of the one absolutely infinite Being is not shown by temperamental interruptions of the course of events; it is

⁶¹In Hath Not a Jew revised, Klein replaced this section of "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" with the following poem--"On man, on the rainbow":

All flowers that in seven ways bright
Make gay the common earth,
All jewels that in their tunnelled night
Enkindle and flash forth

All these, now in the sky up-thrust,
To dazzle human sight
Do hang but on a speck of dust,
But dust suffused by light.

This poem can also be found as "Spinoza: On Man, on the Rainbow," SP 002109.

manifested in the immutable and necessary laws by which all things come to pass.⁶²

The natural world, when animated by Spinoza's vision of it, reveals the very small part that man occupies in it. But this vision frees man: "He can contemplate his place in the universe without bitterness and without fear."⁶³

The next section of the poem (viii) marks the peak of Spinoza's emotional and intellectual achievement. For this lyrical expression of loving worship, Klein relies on the moving rhythms and the time-honoured imagery of the Old Testament. Spinoza utters his prayer of understanding and love by echoing the language of the religious community from which he is now excluded. Here Spinoza's doctrine of the relation between the "infinitesimal" and the "infinite," between man and Nature, is given its fullest expression:

Lord, accept my hallelujahs; look not askance at these
my petty words; unto perfection a fragment makes its prayer.
For thou art the world, and I am part thereof;
thou art the blossom and I its fluttering petal.
I behold thee in all things, and in all things:
lo, it is myself; I look into the pupil of thine eye, it
is my very countenance I see.

(131)

It can be said that Klein attempts to represent a "duologue" (v) between Spinoza and the "timelessness" of which he is a part. In his utterance, Spinoza answers the traditionally irresolvable conflict of man and God, grammatically understood

⁶²Philosophy of Spinoza, xxxiv.

⁶³Philosophy of Spinoza, lxiii.

as an I-Thou relation, by rendering the pronouns virtually interchangeable. The separation between man and world dissolves. "For thou art the world, and I am part thereof," Klein writes, evidently inspired by Ratner's "God is identical with the universe . . . there is no dichotomy" beside which Klein had marked "NB."⁶⁴ Klein is also sure to marshal the authority of the Bible itself, word for word, as in these lines:

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there.

(Psalms 139.8)

And these words paraphrase one of Solomon's proverbs:

Go to the ant, thou sluggard, seek thou an audience with God.

(Proverbs 6.6)

Again, it is important to note a significant variant to the poem (one mentioned elsewhere).⁶⁵ The first versions of "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" (Canadian Forum, New Provinces) included these lines near the conclusion of the section:

For thou art the world, and I am part thereof; he who does violence to me, verily sins against the light of day; he is made a deicide.

⁶⁴Philosophy of Spinoza, xxxiii.

⁶⁵See Thomas A. Marshall, "The Poetry of A.M. Klein: A Thematic Analysis of the Poetry of Abraham Moses Klein in the Light of the Major Themes of The Second Scroll," diss., Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, 1964, 38; Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 52.

Howbeit, even in dust I am resurrected; and even
in decay I live again.

(See 132)

G.K. Fischer presents some possible reasons to explain why Klein omitted the mention of "deicide" in Hath Not a Jew, the most likely one being that Klein's orthodox readers could have misunderstood the lines as "blasphemy."⁶⁶ But Klein does return to the subject of the deleted passage in The Second Scroll nine years after the publication of Hath Not a Jew.⁶⁷ There, perhaps, the argument acquires more weight with the force of an eloquent context to support it. The deletion of the lines in "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," however, does not mitigate the force of the argument in favour of the interconnectedness of man and God which threatened Spinoza's religious community. In its incantatory parallelisms, its ecumenical imagery ("the rose is my blood and flesh"), its unfolding symmetries ("I am thy son, O Lord, and brother to all that lives an I"), and its ordering logic ("even as the moon draws the tides in the bay, so does it the blood in my veins"), section viii of "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" persuades on Spinoza's behalf, so much so that Klein himself seems to be speaking.

⁶⁶Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 52.

⁶⁷See The Second Scroll (New York: Knopf, 1951), "Gloss Gimel," 146; (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961) 110.

Klein does speak directly in the last section of the poem (ix), as he addresses the reader to remember Spinoza in the right spirit:

Think of Spinoza, then, not as you think
Of Shabbathai Zvi who for a time of life
Took to himself the Torah for a wife,
And underneath the silken canopy
Made public: Thou art hallowed unto me.

Think of Spinoza, rather, plucking tulips
Within the garden of Mynheer, forgetting
Dutchmen and Rabbins, and consumptive fretting,
Plucking his tulips in the Holland sun,
Remembering the thought of the Adored,
Spinoza, gathering flowers for the One,
The ever-unwedded lover of the Lord.

(132)

If the reader thinks of Shabbathai Zvi at all, it is as the seventeenth-century religious leader and false Messiah who formed a blasphemous marriage between himself and the Torah (within a year or two of Spinoza's excommunication). Zvi's marriage vow, "Thou art hallowed unto me," is a mockery of Spinoza's I-Thou relationship with God. That relationship is understood by its unity: God is the "One," identical with Nature, for whom Spinoza gathers his flowers, and tends his garden. Ratner's explanation of Spinoza's view of ceremonial law is particularly helpful in this context:

Spinoza's distinction between ceremonial and divine law is peculiarly significant and illuminating when applied to marriage.... Marriage is sanctified and made blessed not by the ceremonial law or priest or city clerk but by the divine law of love. Natural love, or love free from all ceremonial

coercions, is not merely not a questionable source of marital happiness: it is the only source.⁶⁸

Thus Spinoza, the "ever-unwedded lover," served God best in his garden of "Mynheer" (which fortuitously translates as "My Lord"). The serene conviction with which Klein concludes "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" rests in striking contrast to its opening, bitterly sarcastic couplets. In section ix, which resembles a Petrarchan sonnet at a glance, the tone is gently urged by the repetition of an exhortation ("Think of Spinoza"), by the stress on present participles ("forgetting," "fretting," "Plucking," "Remembering," "gathering"), which insure the continued presence of Spinoza in the memory, and by the simple elegance of its concluding rhymes ("sun-One;" "Adored-Lord"), which provide the necessary sense of ordered harmony which Spinoza attempted to demonstrate through language. As Hutcheon and Goldschlager wisely remark, Spinoza remembers the "thought of the Adored," an acknowledgement of the intellect's powerful role in the appreciation of Creation.⁶⁹

And so "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" concludes with a philosophical hush. It is easy to see, in light of this discussion, how attracted Klein must have been not only to the unifying possibilities that Spinoza revealed in language, but also to Ratner's sensitive and respectful

⁶⁸Philosophy of Spinoza, liii. Klein marked this passage in his copy.

⁶⁹Hutcheon and Goldschlager, 57.

treatment of the excommunicated philosopher. What Solomon J. Spiro calls the "ambiguity" of Klein's identification with Spinoza⁷⁰ is made clear when one considers that Klein probably found in Spinoza a kindred, intellectual spirit, one determined to face the misunderstanding narrow-mindedness around him. Klein's emerging sense of himself as an alienated, romantic intellectual--a sense which culminates in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape"--finds an understandably familiar historical and philosophical model in Spinoza. Both Fischer and Spiro's strained attempts to explain Klein's attraction to "pantheism," a term that Klein himself never used, overlook the nature of Klein's fascination with the linguistic-symbolic order that Spinoza achieved. To a poet interested, even preoccupied, with the hidden truths of poetic discourse, Spinoza's attempts to "prove" the unity of man, Nature, and God must have been irresistible.⁷¹ As Tom Marshall notes in his "Theorems Made Flesh," Klein "believes with the Spinoza of 'Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens' that the order in the universe can be grasped by the intellect."⁷² The early unpublished and uncollected poetry certainly reveals this about Klein and, as can be seen thus far, Hath Not a

⁷⁰Spiro, Tapestry for Designs, 61.

⁷¹See particularly Spiro's uneasy reaction to Spinoza/Klein's "impersonal pantheistic God," Tapestry for Design, 62-3. But what could be more personal than a God in whom the "I" is evident?

⁷²Thomas A. Marshall, "Theorems Made Flesh," A.M. Klein (Marshall), 151.

Jew continues to refine its expression through an elaborately sophisticated experiment with poetic discourse. Out of the business of grinding and polishing his materials, Klein achieved this remarkable nine-part poem, one of the finest in his repertoire.

The next long poem, or series of poems, in Hath Not a Jew is "Talisman in Seven Shreds" (133-36), first published in the Menorah Journal in 1932 and collected in Klein's personal custom-volumes.⁷³ "Talisman in Seven Shreds" carries the theme of the disappearance of language, the same theme of Sonnets Semitic and, of course, one of the major themes of Hath Not a Jew. Conceived as a sequence of seven Petrarchan sonnets, "Talisman in Seven Shreds" expresses man's inability to unlock the mysteries of the cosmos. Following the unifying vision of "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," "Talisman in Seven Shreds" bears a degree of ironic authorial distance: a fractured or shredded vision more aptly represents modern man's condition. As the title suggests, the key to understanding, the talisman (a pun on talis, the Hebrew prayer shawl)--a thing supposed to be capable of working wonders--is shredded. The reason for this, the poem states, is that knowledge of the holy name of God is lost. Knowing His name, of course, corresponds with

⁷³"Talisman in Seven Shreds," Menorah Journal 20.8 (Summer 1932): 148-50; Hath Not a Jew 37-41; GH 001534-37; GHP 001774-78; SP 002060-62 ("Tetragrammaton" and "Syllogism"); MS 002661-67 ("Tetragrammaton," "Syllogism," "Embryo of Dusts," and "Fons Vitae"); MS 002744 (37-41).

knowledge of the world. In order fully to appreciate "Talisman in Seven Shreds," two complex Jewish traditions, that of the Name of God and that of the popular legend of the golem need to be placed on view.⁷⁴

In Jewish belief, the tetragrammaton, the four-lettered name of God, JHVH, is endowed with special reverence since it is held that the Deity revealed Himself to the people of Israel by pronouncing it. The passage of time surrounds the precise pronunciation of the Name in mystery and confusion, thereby militating against a clear understanding of God Himself. The term "Jehova" for "Yahweh" arose as a result of a misunderstanding. Since the Jews, after the fourth century B.C., held the name Yahweh to be too sacred to be mentioned except in solemn prayer, they substituted "Adonai" --meaning "the Lord"--for the holy name and inserted the vowels e, o, a, between the letters JHVH as a reminder to change the name in oral reading. Early Jewish translators, unaware of the Hebrew practice, included the vowels and, in error, wrote the sacred name as J(e)H(o)V(a)H. There is a tradition that the original pronunciation was transmitted by the sages to their disciples periodically, once or twice every seven years. Even that practice ceased after awhile, and the method of pronouncing the holy name is no longer known with certainty. The number seven, which figures

⁷⁴See Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken Books, 1946) and On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism (New York: Schocken Books, 1965).

prominently in this tradition, is appropriately used by Klein as the number of fragments which constitute the talisman. Perhaps each sonnet in the sequence represents one of the talisman's letters. Solomon J. Spiro offers an alternative explanation which is also helpful:

"Seven shreds" derives from a Yiddish expression describing poverty--"ah kabtzen in ziben poless," a poor man [dressed] in [a garment of] seven overlapping edges [to hide the holes]"--and represents the tattered remnants of faith torn by doubt.⁷⁵

It is easy to see how all of these explanations of the number seven's symbolic importance are justified by the poem itself. But no uninformed reader could possibly be aware of such hidden symbolic resonances. Of course this is perfectly in keeping with Klein's poetic play with hidden orders.

The other tradition behind the poem involves the legend of the golem which may be found in Kabbalistic literature. "Golem" is a Hebrew word that occurs only once in the Bible, in Psalm 139.16--the psalm which Jewish tradition puts into the mouth of Adam himself. Here, probably, and in later sources, certainly, "golem" means the unformed, the amorphous. The notion grew and strengthened in medieval times, during the period of the great flowering of Hebrew scholarship, that by invoking the name of God, and with a proper application of the Kabbalah, lifeless matter could be transformed magically into the shape and the spirit of a man. It is traditionally held that frustrated attempts to breathe spirit into clay

⁷⁵Spiro, Tapestry for Designs, 64.

resulted in the release of demons. Klein's particular use of the myth is borrowed from a late conception of the golem legend which arose in seventeenth-century Poland. Until that period in history, the legend generally held that the magical creation of the golem figure was an achievement so strong that it matched the creation of the universe by God. Members of strong esoteric movements that sprung up among the Jews in the age of the crusades were eager to use the legend as an initiation rite which would give the adept a mystical experience of the creative power inherent in pious men. The Kabbalistic text that played so important a part in the development of the golem concept is the Sefer Yitsirah or the Book of Creation, dating between the third and the sixth century. This book sets forth the meaning or function of the ten sefirot, or original emanations of God, and of the twenty-two consonants of the Hebrew alphabet. The letters of the alphabet--and even more so those of the divine name or of the entire Torah (which was God's instrument of creation)--have secret, magical power. The initiate knows how to make use of them. Indispensable for the creation of the golem were the names of God and the letters, which are not only the signatures of all creation but also the structural elements, the stones, from which the edifice of creation was built. The affinity between the elaborate linguistic theory set forth in the Book of Creation and the fundamental magical belief in the power of the letters and words is clear and

would have exerted an obvious appeal for Klein. When the golem legend was carried over into Czechoslovakia, a new element entered the Polish conception: the golem became dangerous. His figure could grow out of hand so that control of him would be impossible to manage. He could develop such autonomy, such independence of will, that he might mechanistically destroy the world that he touched.

At the centre of this later development of the golem legend from which Klein draws his references in "Talisman in Seven Shreds" stands Rabbi Leow of Prague (c: 1520-1609), whose contribution to the legend is summarized as follows in Gershom Scholem's On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism:

The story is that Rabbi Leow fashioned a golem who did all manner of work for his master during the week. But because all creatures rest on the Sabbath, Rabbi Leow turned his golem back into clay every Friday evening, by taking away the name of God. Once, however, the rabbi forgot to remove the shem. [On his forehead is written 'emeth--truth. To return the golem to clay, one must erase the first letter so that nothing remains but meth--he is dead, whereupon he collapses and turns to clay again.] The congregation was assembled for services in the synagogue and had already recited the ninety-second Psalm, when the mighty golem ran amuck, shaking houses, and threatening to destroy everything.⁷⁶

Klein borrows directly from this later version of the golem legend in which the golem becomes an undesirable, dangerous monster; like Rabbi Leow, Ibn Gabriol, and Maimonides, however, he cannot resist probing the "vital cue," the secret formula which would reveal to him the secrets of creation.

⁷⁶Scholem, On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism, 202-3.

In "Syllogism," the first "shred" of the poem, the speaker dismisses the perversity of logic which would bind man, God, and dangerous golem together as mutual spirits. But in the second section, in "Embryo of Dusts," the effort of Rabbi Leow "to rouse the name ineffable" is heroically treated as the necessary sign to the citizens of Prague that God is always watching them. "Tetragrammaton," the third sonnet in the sequence, is a cry which despairs at the loss of the name by which the golem was first brought into being. The golem's "shard" is the tetragrammaton, itself a fragment of the true name which cannot be known. The speaker searches in vain for the truth: "Upon what margin shall I find it writ?" The cry is echoed in the following sonnet, "Fons Vitae": "How can I ever pry / behind the mystic chromosome? Grasp you." The question of whether God continues to write the daily workings of the universe or whether the golem (who is inextricably tied to the earth and the blind forces of nature) is the source of these workings is raised in "Enigma," the fifth sonnet in the series. What explains the guarantee of Jewish survival in the face of barbarous adversity? "Guide to the Perplexed," the sixth sonnet, is an ironic reference to Maimonides' theological tract, Guide of the Perplexed. According to one reader,

rationalist that [Maimonides] was, he over and over again insisted that there was something inherently deficient in human reasoning so that it could not be made the final test of truth, and that, in consequence, the last word had to rest after all with revelation.... This distinction

between the essentials and the non-essentials is the greatest contribution of Maimonides in the domain of Jewish religious thinking, and is nowhere better illustrated than in his treatment of the problem of creation.⁷⁷

In Klein's "Guide to the Perplexed," the speaker acknowledges that with every explanation of experience, and with every myth furnished by various religious and philosophical systems, he is tossed further into confusion. Like Maimonides, Klein is working towards a refutation of a purely rationalist explanation of experience. What Klein finally considers in "Guide to the Perplexed" is the disquieting notion that the universe moves ineffably and mysteriously according to its own mechanisms--"the work of golems stalking in nightmare"--from which human experience seems to be sundered. The last sonnet in the sequence, "Immortal Yearnings," begins with three familiar verbal formulae uttered "to unyoke the yoke" and release the spell of doubt and confusion characteristic of contemporary chaos. But these are vain attempts to wring truth from an unknowable source. Even the golem, when asked, cannot be trusted to deliver his answer honestly. In the meantime, the speaker persists in his quest, finding solace in the possibility that there is some purpose to it, although its nature will not be known until the moment of death. To entertain "immortal yearnings," to anticipate communication with the source at the core of things, provides its own purpose. The talisman remains shredded, but the

⁷⁷Isadore Epstein, Judaism (New York: Penguin, 1959) 209.

sequence of sonnets works through to its own moment of consolation and reluctant acceptance of fragmentation that characterizes the modern human condition. It is enough to know, "Talisman in Seven Shreds" implies, that there is a mystery which, although it defies penetration, enhances the sense of awe and the fear of life and so enriches experience. Spiro argues that the sonnet sequence proves Klein's rejection of "Spinoza's pantheistic God, a god bound by the laws of scientific necessity as the golem."⁷⁸ Of course this presumes that Klein subscribed to something like the pantheistic god Spiro describes, a god like the golem. But as the previous discussion has demonstrated, Klein's attraction to Spinoza's philosophy resided in more than a simple-minded view of a mechanistic universe. Spinoza's god, for Klein via Ratner, was indeed capable of inspiring the wonder and awe with which "Talisman in Seven Shreds" closes. Finally, it must be mentioned that in choosing the Petrarchan sonnet form for the poem, Klein employs an ordered structure--one that necessarily resolves the divisions of its two-part arrangement --with a rigorous rhyme scheme not merely to express the fear of chaos but also to keep chaos at bay; in so doing, he reinforces the possibility that order in the universe is, indeed, at work.

⁷⁸Spiro, Tapestry for Designs, 65.

"Design for Mediaeval Tapestry" (136-42), which follows "Talisman in Seven Shreds" in Hath Not a Jew, is another portrait poem written almost ten years before that volume's publication.⁷⁹ "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry" evokes the period in history which figures as a continual frame of reference in the collection. The medieval period is singled out by Klein not only because it was the age of the Kabbalists and the great rabbinical scholars and commentators but also because it so neatly parallels, in its history of suffering and persecution, the modern age. In its reliance on terza rima, the poem appropriately borrows from Dante to link its medieval portraits.⁸⁰ Like "Murals for a House of God," "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry" "frames" various Jewish characters as they react to horrible persecution. The steadying, regularizing measures of Klein's linking tercets, therefore, provide a unifying authority in contrast to the nightmare-nihilism and despair of the medieval characters themselves.

Unlike any other in the design, the opening section is untitled, an indication that Klein, the unifying authority--or designer--is arranging a view of the past through which,

⁷⁹"Design for Mediaeval Tapestry," American Caravan, 4 (1931): 351-57; Hath Not a Jew 42-51; Canadian Jewish Chronicle 7 November 1947: 8-9; GH 001520-27; GHP 001757-65; MS 002744 (42-51).

⁸⁰As chapter iii of the thesis points out, it is possible that Klein was also feeling the effects of Eliot's enthusiastic 1929 piece on "Dante," Selected Essays (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), 237-77.

perhaps, to see the present more clearly. The following sections voice differing attitudes by various characters who are set in subtle and ironic relation with one another and with their historical namesakes. The setting may be medieval, the poetic form may be borrowed from Dante, but the utterance is resolutely plain and impersonally modern:

Somewhere a hungry muzzle rooted.
The frogs among the sedges croaked.
Into the night a screech-owl hooted.

A clawed mouse squeaked and struggled, choked.
The wind pushed antlers through the bushes.
Terror stalked through the forest, cloaked.

Was it a robber broke the hushes?
Was it a knight in armoured thews,
Walking in mud, and bending rushes?

Was it a provost seeking Jews?
The Hebrews shivered; their teeth rattled;
Their beards glittered with gelid dews.

Gulped they their groans, for silence tattled;
They crushed their sighs, for quiet heard;
They had their thoughts on Israel battled

By pagan and by Christian horde.
They moved their lips in pious anguish.
They made no sound. They never stirred.

(136-37)

The rhymes serve to link the frightened animals in the wild with the frightened Jews in the medieval night, but whereas the animals sound their terror, the Jews maintain a helpless silence. Their passivity, and, consequently, the futility of their position render them suspect.

"Reb Zadoc," the first character in the design, is a pitiable man paradoxically trapped by his own specially developed capacity to remember. Instead of focussing on either proper objects of memory--Scriptures and holy texts--or on the promise of the future, Zadoc haunts himself with an epic list of the abominations to which Jews have been subjected. He cultivates a memory of humiliation and is ultimately paralysed by the obsession which erodes his moral convictions:

Reb Zadoc's brain is a torture-dungeon;
Reb Zadoc's brain is a German town.

(138)

Zadoc's biblical namesake is a priest in the time of David (2 Samuel 8.17; 15.24; 20.25). Klein's Zadoc, unlike the so-called "just" priest of the Old Testament, lives bitterly in his memories and spites his enemies hatefully. "Reb Daniel Schpochet," the next portrait in the design, exercises his exegetical training perversely. Since all things occupy a habitat appropriate to their natures, he reasons that the proper resting place for Israel is a tomb. Such a rationalized acceptance of fate renders him less pitiable than Zadoc but equally paralysed. Like Zadoc, Daniel's biblical namesake is a man of greater heroism and faith who withstood even leonine enemies. "Nahum," the next character in the poem, whose biblical namesake is the Old Testament prophet of hope, is here viewed ironically as a morbid interpreter of faith. He accepts, like Reb Daniel, what he perceives to be

his gloomy destiny, but his promises of immortality are hollow consolations in the face of fear. "Isaiah Epicure" answers Nahum by dismissing theology completely, opting, as his epithet testifies, for self-indulgence. His advice is also set in ironic relief to his biblical counterpart, the visionary prophet Isaiah, who condemned self-indulgence.

The "Job" of the next portrait is paralyzed by loss of faith. There is obviously no hope for a man bearing such a name who believes that God is inattentive. Angrily he asks God "How long will you sit on your throne, and nod?" The next entry on "Judith" is an echo of the light-hearted song that she hears a troubadour singing. Unlike the legendary Judith of the Apocryphal book, who is not deluded by the alleged gallantry of the great warrior Holofernes, this Judith bears false expectations of the "cross-marked vartlet" with whom she must wrestle. Her paralysis stems from not knowing her enemy. "Ezekiel" of the next section in the poem, whose name ties him to the Hebrew prophet of the Old Testament, the great leader who stressed moral responsibility and a return to godliness and faith, here proffers simple-minded advice. His facile solution proposes that Jews ought to practise set superstitious formulae to summon God's intervention. "Solomon Talmudi," who follows Ezekiel in the poem, suffers from egotism. He laments the loss of his Talmudic commentary, which he presumes would finally unravel the arcana of the Torah. By calling attention to the idea

that in burning the manuscript the crusaders burnt his name, he presumptuously sets himself all too familiarly in God's place. "Simeon," whose biblical namesake is the old Jew who blesses the Christ child (Luke 2:25), opts for conversion over death. He dreams of "much comfort and salvation" but, as the section on him ironically concludes, "Salvation in this life, at any rate."

Finally "Esther" speaks. Her indictment of the lusty burgher is viewed in the light of the biblical heroine who made use of her beauty and the lasciviousness of King Ahasuerus to procure salvation for her people:

The burgher sleeps beside his wife, and dreams
Of human venery, and Hebrew quarry
His sleep contrives him many little schemes.

There will be Jews, dead, moribund and gory;
There will be booty; there will be dark maids,
And there will be a right good spicy story

(142)

This Esther remains helpless in the face of such a dark reality. She hears only the "echoes" of her murdered husband's voice, and in her sorrow she offers a hauntingly apocalyptic conclusion to "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry":

The wrath of people is like foam and lather,
Risen against us. Wherefore, Lord, and why?
The winds assemble; the cold and hot winds gather

To scatter us. They do not heed our cry.
The sun rises and leaps the red horizon,
And like a bloodhound swoops across the sky.

(142)

These vivid final lines must be considered ironic in view of the introductory section of the poem. Esther insists that the cry of her people is unheeded, but the speaker at the outset declares that her people "made no sound." The voices of "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry" do not even communicate with each other; they remain separate as characters, each isolated within his or her anguish. No single cry sounds since each portrait reveals a discrete and unsatisfactory response of either cowardice, submission, panic, speciousness, or disillusionment. Thus Klein's tapestry displays figures in unhappy isolation and alienation. His technique of presenting the jumbled surface of history through separate characters and their points of view forces the reader to sort out his own conclusions by weighing the facts of what one character says against another and by perceiving the ironies implicit in their perspectives.

Peter Stevens, in his article "Radicalism and Jewishness in the Poetry of A.M. Klein," sums up the central theme of "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry:"

Surely the general message of the poem is a demand, not simply to all Jews but to all men, to recognize the Jewish situation in all its ramifications; it is a demand for something to be done. For all its Jewishness, this series is in the same mould as the radical poetry, being a rehearsal of indignities and of illusory answers and arguments made specifically through individuals. By the time the reader reaches the end of the series he has forgotten to a large extent the atmosphere of the Middle Ages. This series is Klein's authoritative statement on

the modern Jewish problem from both a religious and generally political point of view.⁸¹

While Stevens overstates the case in claiming that "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry" is "Klein's authoritative statement," he correctly observes the urgent motive of the poem. Behind the compounded ironies of the design speaks the cautionary voice of the poet, warning Jews to remember their historical antecedents whose unified voice consistently overcame the threat of annihilation. The speaker of the poem, in the introductory section, implies that the paler versions of historical heroes whose voices are barely heard suffered annihilation. G.K. Fischer alleges that "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry" was written during a time of disillusionment and that the poem "reflects Klein's pessimism."⁸² But it seems more accurate, after considering the complex levels of irony, to see in it Klein's faith in the potential of learning from the mistakes of history. While it is true that each individual seems to be crying out defencelessly against an indifferent universe, it is also evident that each character is crying to himself. The tapestry depicts the separateness of response; no universal shout, which is the shout the poem urges, is heard.

⁸¹Peter Stevens, "Radicalism and Jewishness in the Poetry of A.M. Klein," *Dialog* (1973): 46.

⁸²Fischer, *In Search of Jerusalem*, 59.

"Haggadah," the poem which follows "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry" in Hath Not a Jew (143-46), is clearly set in the present.⁸³ The title refers to the prescribed narrative and service that relates the Exodus from Egypt, and which is recited in the Jewish home on the first nights of Passover. The poem is divided into seven sections which correspond to the chronology of the service. With the exception of the notably sardonic second section, "Once in a year," "Haggadah" expresses both the obligatory recounting of the suffering in Egypt and the subsequent liberation from bondage which mark the Passover feast. Like the other poems in the collection, "Haggadah" stresses the importance of memory so that modern Jews, and perhaps all men, might better appreciate the present in the light of the trials and the victories of the past.

In his portrait of Rabbi Levi Isaac of Berditchev, "Reb Levi Yitschok Talks to God" (146-47), first published in 1932,⁸⁴ Klein would appear to be depicting his admiration for one of the more colourful religious characters in Jewish history. The subject of the poem finds its source in one of

⁸³"Haggadah," Judaean 2.7 (April 1933): 5 (part only: "Chad Gadyah"); Judaean 6.7 (April 1933): 55 (part only: "Etching," "Once in a Year," "The Still Small Voice"); Canadian Zionist 1.2 (April 1934): 12; Canadian Jewish Chronicle 7 April 1939: 4; Hath Not a Jew 52-56; GH 001563; GHP 001805-09.

⁸⁴"Reb Levi Yitschok Talks to God," Opinion 1.10 (February 1932): 16; Judaean 9.9 (June 1936): 70; Hath Not a Jew 57-9; GH 001586-88; GHP 001826-28; MS 002744 (57-9).

the most celebrated mystics of the Chassidic movement, which has its roots in eighteenth-century European Jewry. Levi Isaac of Berditchev is distinguished for his all-consuming love for Israel. He is known as the Intercessor of Israel before their Father in Heaven, and his communions with God are characterized by a daring intimacy. In Klein's imagination, the figure of Rabbi Isaac continued to represent the spirit both of inquiry and of wonder, aspects of devotion with which Klein readily sympathized. Several years after writing "Reb Levi Yitschok Talks to God" Klein wrote on the same subject in an article for the Canadian Jewish Chronicle:

Almost have I expected to hear your name mentioned in the war-communiqués, to hear it sounded from the radio, to see it headlined in the newspapers: Rabbi Levi Yitschok of Berditchev wins his debate with God....

For I have remembered you, as you have stood always in our legend, full of a pious audacity, addressing the Lord as if He were your intimate.... Who else among the saints, who else among the holy one of Israel, ever spoke to the Almighty and called Him: Thou.⁸⁵

And when Klein came to write The Second Scroll in the late 'forties, he chose to introduce his text with a quotation from one of Rabbi Levi Yitschok's communion pieces. Not surprisingly, then, the early poem imitates the familiarity with God that Rabbi Yitschok entertained in his written communiqués. The following may serve as an example of Yitschok's special style:

⁸⁵Beyond Sambatton, 198-201.

Good morning to Thee, Lord of the Universe!
 I, Levi-Yitzchok, son of Sarah, of Berditchev
 Have come to Thee in a law-suit
 On behalf of Thy people Israel.
 What hast Thou against Thy people Israel?
 No matter what happens, it is,
 "Command the Children of Israel!"
 No matter what happens, it is
 "Say to the Children of Israel!"
 No matter what happens, it is
 "Speak to the Children of Israel!"
 Father dear! How many other people are there in the world?
 Babylonians, Persians, and Edomites! . . .
 The Germans--what do they say?
 "Our King is a King!"
 The English--what do they say?
 "Our Sovereign is a Sovereign!"
 And I, Levi-Yitschok, son of Sarah, of Berditchev, say:
 Hallowed and magnified be Thy Name, O God!⁸⁶

Klein's poem follows a similar direction to this communion piece inasmuch as it moves from a troubled and demanding assault on the silence of God to a sudden and unquestioning acceptance of God's "mysterious ways." As G.K. Fischer points out, the poem finds a literary analogue in George Herbert's "The Collar." It also brings to mind, however, the movement of Tennyson's "In Memoriam." The italicized portions of the poem, which function like a chorus spoken from an objective vantage-point, are strongly reminiscent of Tennyson's "Mariana:" Compare Tennyson's

the mouse
 Behind the moldering wainscot shrieked⁸⁷

⁸⁶Epstein, Judaism, 277.

⁸⁷The Poems of Tennyson, ed. Christopher Ricks (New York: Norton, 1972), 190. For a later borrowing from Tennyson's poem, see Eliot's "Little Gidding" (section ii):

Dust inbreathed was a house--
 The wall, the wainscot and the mouse.

with Klein's

Somewhere a loud mouse nibbled at a board.

In both Klein and Tennyson, Nature--and the world of animals which inhabit it--continues to move in perfect indifference to the pleadings of the individual. In Klein's poem, however, the simple beauties of Nature, which these observations of natural phenomena represent, inform the rabbi's ultimate and solemn acceptance of God. Miriam Waddington points to "Reb Levi Yitschok Talks to God" as "further evidence of Klein's religious doubt."⁸⁸ But it is difficult to reconcile her assessment with the deeply religious portrait of the feisty rabbi that Klein so affectionately draws. Moreover, in the context of Hath Not a Jew, the poem echoes the resolving movement of "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens." For the mystic, for the rabbi, for Spinoza, and for the Klein exploring his faith in the 'thirties, the curtain of Nature which seems to stand between man and his god becomes the picture of God Himself. The world is not so much a veil as it is a window. Appropriate to the unifying vision which eludes the restless rabbi, Klein closes the poem with a Petrarchan sonnet:

So all night long Reb Levi Yitschok talked,
 Preparing words on which the Lord might brood.
 How long did even angels guard a feud?
 When would malign Satanas be unfrocked?
 Why were the tortured by their echoes mocked?
 Who put Death in his ever-ravenous mood?
 Good men groaned: Hunger; bad men belched of food;

⁸⁸Waddington, A.M. Klein, 16.

Wherefore? And why? Reb Levi Yitschok talked . . .
 Vociferous was he in his monologue,
 He raged, he wept. He suddenly went wild
 Begging the Lord to lead him through the fog;
 Reb Levi Yitschok, an ever-querulous child,
 Sitting on God's knees in the synagogue,
 Unanswered even when the sunrise smiled.

(147)

The rabbi's "monologue"--which recalls Spinoza's "duologue" with Nature--is effectively answered by the smiling sunrise of the final line. Yitschok may not recognize the message to be read in Nature, but the poet is sure to recognize the silent promise in daily renewal. In its sonnet structure, its gracefully calm conclusion, and its identification of God and Nature, "Reb Levi Yitschok Talks to God" resembles Hopkins' "God's Grandeur."⁸⁹ In both poems, the organizing consolation of the sonnet structure fills the void of doubt that threatens to overcome man. That readers of Klein frequently focus on Klein's struggle to know God as a sign of either religious doubt or despair indicates a certain inattentiveness to the intellectual passion that he brings to bear on metaphysical inquiry. The wonder with which this Petrarchan sonnet concludes is a reminder of the serene contemplation with which "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" closes. The problem of evil may not be solved, but comfort in Nature is, if temporarily, possible.

⁸⁹ poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. and with an intro. by W.H. Gardner (London: Penguin, 1953) 27.

"Plumaged Proxy" (148), the next poem in Hath Not a Jew, is a playful song to a rooster about to be slaughtered for the family meal.⁹⁰ The poem is full of the superstitious lore surrounding the slaughter. The speaker, ever-mindful that his brother takes the life of the rooster, protects his sibling by invoking his own superstitious benediction:

May six score roosters in the course of time
Be cooped with you upon your nether stage.
And may my brother live to a ripe age.

(148)

Klein was obviously fond of this poem since he chose to include it in his Selected Poems volume of 1954-55. It is difficult to find in "Plumaged Proxy" any "lines deprecating the superstitions of orthodoxy," as G.K. Fischer does.⁹¹ If anything, the poem acknowledges the existence of such superstitions with affectionate, folksy humour.

"Dance Chassidic" (148-49), which follows "Plumaged Proxy" in the collection,⁹² shows Klein's profound interest in the Chassidic experience of life. The circular dance which the Chassidic Jews perform with such exuberance and pride (and on which Klein comments in his "Genesis" chapter of The Second Scroll) is another example of the way in which

⁹⁰"plumaged Proxy," Opinion 1.23 (9 May 1932): 11; Hath Not a Jew 60; GH 001569; GHP 001812; SP 002054; MS 002533, 002744 (60).

⁹¹Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 113.

⁹²"Dance Chassidic," Jewish Standard 10 October 1930: 442; Hath Not a Jew 61-2; GH 001567-68; GHP 001810-11.

pious Jews attempt to communicate with "the Immanence of Him." Every gesture, augmented by wild music, is aimed at "Crushing Eternity into a dusty minute." Notable is the way in which Klein develops the pace of the poem, in imitation of the increasing intensity of the dance, by gradually moving from short lines of verse containing monosyllabic words to longer lines containing polysyllabic words. Moreover, each of the first three stanzas is a self-contained sentence that imitates the way in which the dance begins with carefully measured gestures, while the last two stanzas conclude with repeated end stops, suggesting the continual flow of energy and movement to which the dancers aspire. As is the case in so many of the poems in Hath Not a Jew and, indeed, in all of Klein's poetry, "Dance Chassidic" achieves a delicate balance of form and of content that marks Klein's consummate craftsmanship.

The next two poems in Hath Not a Jew, "Preacher" and "Scribe," display a similar attention to the relationship between verse form and poetic expression. "Preacher" (149-50), first published in 1930,⁹³ draws the portrait of a Jew railing against sin and damnation. He is a contemporary character who inhabits a terrifying world, a world somewhat uncomfortably viewed by the speaker of the poem. That Klein chooses to call this man a "preacher" places him in a context

⁹³"Preacher," YMHA Beacon 5.14 (18 April 1930): 2; Reconstructionist 2.12 (16 October 1936): 13; Hath Not a Jew 63-4; GH 001538-39; GHP 001799-80; MS 002744 (63-4).

that is unfamiliar to Jewish experience. The responsibility of Jewish religious and social life is commonly divided among three groups: teachers or rabbis, who inherit the role of the priest-prophet by interpreting the Torah in all its aspects to their people; scribes, whose duty it is to record the Law and to enthrone the Torah in the hearts and minds of the people through their pious example; and scholars, who transform Scripture from being only a written document liable to become obsolete into a continuous revelation keeping pace with the ages. All of these roles eventually converged during the Middle Ages so that the most venerated occupation to which a devout Jew could aspire combines the efforts of instructing, codifying, and studying Scripture. But "preacher" is a term rarely associated with any singular aspect of Jewish life, being, instead, more commonly a term used to describe one whose occupation and function it is to preach the Christian gospel. Thus, the preacher who is the subject of Klein's poem is uneasily associated with his Christian counterpart; he fulfills a role more appropriate to Christian practices than to Jewish ones. Moreover, the connotation of proselytiser which accrues to the word "preacher" has always been an anathema to Jewish teaching. The subject of the preacher's sermon is equally suspect. He moves his listeners to a state of wretchedness, not to a state of enlightenment, by intoning the perils of hell. Skeletal in appearance ("His index-finger, long and lean / Shook to

accusing tones"), he is a representation of a morbid, life-denying and death-oriented interpretation of scriptural texts. In light of Klein's consistent vision of the Torah as a statement of Creation and Revelation, and, consequently, of celebration, the preacher would seem to be occupying a sphere of Jewish experience that is antithetical to such an interpretation. Finally, he appeals to "old Jews," presumably those who have lost touch with the proper paths of worship and with both creativity and vitality. Instead of effecting action, his words generate paralysis: "His terrors struck them dumb." Silence, in Klein's vocabulary, is always regrettable. Placed, as it is, after the vital and inspirational "Dance Chassidic," "Preacher" is rendered even more ironic. The repetition of the pronoun "He" in the first stanza, of "His" in the second stanza, and of "Who" in the third stanza imparts the sense of the preacher's thunderous oratorical style; the effect of such forcefulness is unsettling. The last two stanzas at first seem to abandon the pattern of repetition when Klein focusses on the reactions of the "old Jews" listening to the sermon. But the poem mocks the preacher's oratorical style by repeating the word "wept" and the phrase "They wept" in these stanzas, which set the sad sobs of the crowd in uncomfortable and ironic relief to the preacher's angry words.

It might be mentioned in this connection that the term "preacher" is also a name for Solomon, the putative author

of Ecclesiastes. In 1929, Klein published "Kohleth" (20-21,⁹⁴ the title being the Hebrew term for Ecclesiastes), a poem which portrays Solomon as a dark, unhappy pessimist whose soul is assailed by scepticism. "Kohleth," unlike Ecclesiastes, fails to argue an expression of triumph over pessimism. Yet, behind the poem is a traditional conception of the historical Solomon. On the one hand, Solomon's contribution to the fruition of the arts and sciences by his wisdom, wit, brilliance, and consummate literary gifts is traditionally held in high esteem. On the other hand, Solomon's marriages to foreign princesses, for whom he built idolatrous shrines, only served to hasten the process of assimilation which profoundly affected the purity of Israel's religion. It is this latter view of Solomon which stands behind the figure in "Kohleth." The plush surroundings in which the Solomon of Klein's poem dictates his reflections and tergiversations serve to undercut his vision of earth as a burial ground for all human labours and hopes. Furthermore, he lacks the clarity of perception which would relieve his frustration, for unknown to him, his "tall, stripped, and oil-anointed Negro chamberlain" scoffs at the preacher's weary and self-indulgent morbidity from behind the throne. It seems clear that the word "preacher," in Klein's verbal repertoire, connotes a certain perversity of vision which is

⁹⁴"Kohleth," Judaean 2.8 (May 1929): 7; GH 001554-55; GHP 001795-97.

circumscribed by loss of faith in the face of death. Both the Solomon of "Kohaleth" and the wild orator of "Preacher" seem to have lost sight of the invisible, spiritual world.

By contrast, "Scribe," the poem that follows "Preacher" in Hath Not a Jew (149-50), presents a portrait of a man who does honour to his trade.⁹⁵ The scribe's occupation is no less important than either the rabbi's or the scholar's in Jewish life. It is appropriate that Klein focusses his attention on the scribe figure since the tradition concerning the copying of the Torah, which is the scribe's special trade, evolved out of an apprehension of Holy Scripture as a secret world of language. The Torah must always be hand-printed, and in this ancient but still vital conception, every single letter counts. A scroll of the Torah must be rejected for use in the synagogue if there is so much as a single letter too few or too many. The responsibility of the scribe is, in this view, conferred with special reverence, for if a single letter is omitted, or one too many written, the world is in danger of collapse. The scribe, then, in Klein's personal mythology, is identified as a co-worker with God, and thereby a partner of the poet, endowed as he is with the capacity and the power to control his own ends as well as to contribute towards the fulfilment of creation. Moreover, Klein was probably attracted to this singular

⁹⁵"Scribe," Jewish Standard 30 October 1931: 360; Hath Not a Jew 65-6; GH 001556-57; GHP. 001798-99.

profession because in its fundamental conception it identifies the universe with the Book.

Klein's "Scribe" endeavours to honour the role of this unsung hero in Jewish tradition. When the scribe undertakes to write God's Word, his whole being is in harmony with a divine rhythm: "The heart beats out the tetragrammaton." Even the body of the scribe assumes the physical appearance of the text that he writes:

His eyes are two black dots of ink
 The thin hairs of his beard
 Are symbols of the script revered;
 His broad brow is the margin of the parchment page,
 Clean for the commentaries of age.

(151)

The first stanza of the poem explains why the scribe's body is in harmony with a divine force. Yet, as is often the case with Klein's so-called Jewish poems, a full understanding of "Scribe" is not possible without the knowledge that the "black phylacteries" (known in Hebrew as *tephillin*) which the scribe dons are two small leather cases with straps attached to them, in each of which is inserted parchment inscribed with several biblical passages. The devout Jew binds one to his forehead--to rest nearest his thoughts--and he wraps the other round his left arm--to rest near his heart. Engraved on each is the consonant *shin*, the first letter of God's name, *Shaddai*, or Almighty. In this ritual, the scribe encircles his skin with the attached leather straps to ensure divine protection and to facilitate the

current of divine energy which flows through him when he communicates with the godhead. So protected, neither "Satan" nor "Lilith" can penetrate the "armour" of this Jew.

The body of the scribe is like a word in God's alphabet. It is also a parchment upon which "slimy exegetes will mark / Exegesis." When the scribe's body is laid to rest, it will return to its proper resting place as a page in God's Book. Finally, the soul of the scribe will rest on God's wrist, marking the reunion of matter and spirit that is the mystery behind Creation. The "true essence" of the last two lines of "Scribe" is none other than the mystical Shechina, the Divine Presence of God which is described in Kabbalistic texts (and which figures in Klein's The Second Scroll). The connection, in this poem, between the scribe's body and a written text also looks ahead to "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," where the words formed by the imagination constitute the "body's chart." "Scribe," then, provides early evidence of some of the central moral and aesthetic concerns which Klein would repeat in variation in his later work.

"Sacred Enough You Are,"⁹⁶ which follows "Scribe" in Hath Not a Jew (152), is virtually the only love lyric from the private volumes which Klein chose to include in his published collection. Even here, the reference to "phylacteries" qualifies the poem as a Jewish one. The poem establishes an

⁹⁶"Sacred Enough You Are," Hath Not a Jew 67; P32 001559; GHP 001843.

equation between the speaker's loved one and the Sabbath day. Both are so "sacred" that the worshipper, whether of the beloved or of God, need not call attention to what is self-evident to the world. Since "Sacred Enough You Are" is the only poem in Hath Not a Jew that addresses itself to Klein's personal love and, by so doing, acknowledges that excessive praise of her is unnecessary, it is as if Klein were implicitly stating here that the themes of his other poems (Jewish culture, racial history, anti-semitism, assimilation) do need attention. Thus, placed ingeniously in the centre of the collection, "Sacred You Are" functions like a reminder to the loved one--and to the reader--that the author of Hath Not a Jew does have a central place for love in his life. Such private sentiments need not be expressed but they must temporarily retire in the face of more pressing matters. So it is that, with the exception of the personal tone and the private voice of "Sacred Enough You Are," the rest of the poems in Hath Not a Jew adopt the public voice of the community spokesman.

Sonnets Semitic, the sonnet sequence which follows "Sacred Enough You Are," contains Klein's early love poems from his XXII Sonnets collection, but, as already mentioned, these are reworked to emphasize a particularly Jewish concern: the dangers of cultural assimilation. Sonnets Semitic also marks what may be considered the end of the first section of Hath Not a Jew; in its rehearsal of past, present, and

future visions of Jewish life, the sonnet sequence functions to summarize the major concerns of the preceding poems in the collection. Its implicit warning to readers to remember racial history and to safeguard themselves against anti-semitic patronizing reinforces the theme of pride in identity in "Ave atque Vale," of impressive patience in grim times in "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," and of the need for religious and cultural solidarity in "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry."

The second half of Hath Not a Jew is composed of a group of poems that evolved out of Klein's private collection, Poems (1934). As can be seen in the appendix (E) of this thesis, all of the poems in this last section of Hath Not a Jew are taken from Poems (1934) and reworked so that many of them form part of a particular group of lyrics under such titles as For the Leader with String Music, Of Kith and Kin, Of Sundry Folk, Of Kings and Beggars, and Of Holy Vessels. Klein originally intended Poems (1934) to be a collection of children's verses. David and Sophie Lewis wrote Klein in 1934, "[we are] looking forward to receiving the manuscript of your children's poems."⁹⁷ Klein published many of these early poems separately in either Opinion or the Judean in the early 'thirties but he did not find an opportunity to publish them as a group of children's poems until Hath Not a Jew.

⁹⁷David Lewis, Letter to A.M. Klein, 24 August 1934, Public Archives Canada 000006.

In the context of Hath Not a Jew, the children's poems have, perhaps, even more dramatic forcefulness and thematic weight than they would have if published as a separate manuscript. With their often troubled explorations of the modern human condition and the atrocities of the past, and with their probing inquiries into the nature of a mysterious universe, the poems in the first half of Hath Not a Jew are matched by the refreshing innocence of the poems in the second half. As a whole, the children's poems read less like verses composed for childish minds than they do like verses composed for child-like adults. Moreover, they reinforce the subtle insistence, in the first half of Hath Not a Jew, on the value of the child's accepting, intuitive, and possibly mystical vision of the world. In "Reb Levi Yitschok Talks to God," for example, the rabbi of the poem is characterized twice by his child-like ingenuousness; first, his "arguments to God" are described as "infant," and second, he is himself imaged as an "ever querulous child / Sitting on God's knees in the synagogue." Likewise, in the "Chad Gadyah" section of "Haggadah" (144-45), the Passover poem in the first half of the volume, the speaker recaptures the child's point of view of the holiday service and, in particular, the "curious plot" of the song known as "Chad Gadyah" that is sung by the celebrants after the ritual meal. In Klein's poem, the incremental verses of the traditional song are transmuted

into brief plot summary, and the implicit lesson of the song is clearly rendered from the child's point of view:

The Angel of Death flew
 And smote the Schochet;
 The Lord gave him his merit--
 The Lord the Angel slew.

In that strange portal whence
 All things come, they re-enter;
 Of all things God is centre,
 God is circumference.

(145)

The child has an intuitive grasp of the centrality of God. The Lord, as the child understands from the song that he sings, is the source to which all life returns. And, of course, in Sonnets Semitic, the idealized visions of harmonious life described in sonnets i and iii are cast in the fanciful moulds of a golden medieval past and of a fairy-tale realm--in mythical lands and times which a child might read in his picture books.

In Klein's imaginative universe, children and poets always see the world as if for the first time. Each is inspired to perceive the natural world as a glorious sign of God's handwriting at the moment of Creation. Central to this way of seeing is the rich ethos of Chassidism, with its emphasis on celebration and continual renewal, and with its passionate expressions of devotion. Like "Reb Abraham," the "jolly" rejoicer of "Portraits of a Minyan," and like the zealous dancers of "Dance Chassidic," the Chassidic Jew extols the virtues of food, drink, and music with the unself-

conscious emotional intensity of the child. Klein's sympathy for the Chassidic movement, therefore, is fundamentally congenial to his view of the value of the child-poet's intuitive apprehension of the wonders and mysteries of God's Creation.

The children's poems of both Hath Not a Jew and of Poems (1934) are, appropriately enough, written as nursery rhymes. Most of the poems are cast into either the melodic folk rhymes of iambic pentameter couplets or the compact dimetrical rhyming lines of popular quatrains. Some, like "Song of Toys and Trinkets" and "Song of Exclamations," are clearly modelled on Jewish folk songs. Others, like "Ballad of the Dancing Bear" and "Ballad for Unfortunate Ones," employ the narrative techniques of the traditional ballad form to tell a simple story with a strong moral message. In the popular children's verse forms, Klein also exploits his mastery of portraiture, which characterizes so much of the first half of Hath Not a Jew. The vivid portraits of imaginary and folkloric characters, the ballads that tell marvellous stories, and the self-delighting nursery-rhymes constitute something like a list of childhood memories. Moreover, by combining verbal portraiture and folk legend in Hath Not a Jew, Klein bridges the gap between his own modern sensibility and archaic Chassidic Judaism. Jewish life is chronicled within the cadre of a popular folkloristic device: the mythic community of bumbling townsfolk in whom are concentrated

every excess, foible, weakness, and imperfection of the collective racial conscience. In this way, Klein is borrowing from the literary tradition that Sholem Aleichem had hoped to establish at the turn of the century. The characters that populate Aleichem's stories are shtetl men and women--small-town folk, paupers, jesters, story-tellers--a light-hearted breed of men passing into the collective memory of Jewish life. The comic world that they share rises out of a condition of deplorable poverty and religious persecution. Such a vigorous response to life marks the fundamental impulse of Chassidism--that extraordinary religious movement which, starting in the middle of the eighteenth-century in some remote corner of the Ukraine, quickly spread to surrounding countries and within a decade embraced nearly half of world Jewry.

Central to the Chassidic movement are the teachings of its founder, Israel Baal Shemtov Besht, commonly referred to as the Baal Shem Tov. Baal Shem Tov stressed the importance of the Kabbalistic or mystical experience of life. In so doing, he emphasized the need for the restoration of harmonies in order to effect the redemption of Israel. But instead of appealing exclusively to Apocalyptic visions of Messianic deliverance in the future, the Baal Shem Tov directed the mind to the redemptive power of God in the present and in the context of everyday life. Each individual, he taught, can participate in the process of redemption in the here and

now. The Baal Shem Tov's teachings, not surprisingly, appealed especially to the uneducated men and women of European shtetls who inhabited a less worldly life than the educated rabbis of the Talmudic centres. Consequently, these shtetl men and women are traditionally viewed as having a child-like, innocent perspective of the workings of the universe. So it is that Klein's poems for child-like adults continue the affirmative philosophy that Chassidism injected into Judaism with the thoroughly emotional and richly colourful tradition that Sholem Aleichem brought to literature. In combining the lore surrounding the magnificent figure of the Baal Shem Tov with the shtetl-world of Aleichem, Klein evolves his own imaginative universe in which the modern Jew finds his ancestral archetype. The same spirit that moved Marc Chagall, in fact, to design murals, tapestries, frescoes, and stained-glass windows based on Eastern European Jewish folklore seemed to have inspired Klein to write his nursery-rhymes, ballads, portrait poems, and children's songs.

"Heirloom" (157-58), the first poem of the second section of children's poems, Of Kith and Kin, is central to the vision that both the child and the poet share in Klein's imaginative universe.⁹⁸ Considered in isolation, "Heirloom" might be seen to contain some degree of ironic ambiguity.

⁹⁸"Heirloom," Opinion 5.6 (April 1935): 14; Hath Not a Jew 77-8; The Book of Canadian Poetry, ed. and with an intro. by A.J.M. Smith (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1943) 397; P34 001958; MS 002303-4, 002744 (77-8).

Quoting the first two stanzas of the poem, for instance, with their acknowledgement that the speaker's father "bequeathed [him] no wide estates" but only the "strange "Books of the Baal Shem Tov," G.K. Fischer notes that "for all their gentleness there is irony in these words."⁹⁹ Klein, she goes on to state, "certainly did not think that the superstitions of the pale, the fear of demons and witches, made for good Judaism." In the context of both Poems (1934) and of Hath Not a Jew, however, "Heirloom" is unambiguous. The poems that follow "Heirloom" in Poems (1934), where it is placed first in the manuscript, and that surround it in Hath Not a Jew, furnish a decidedly positive repertoire of elements from the wide range of Jewish folklore, elements that are viewed from the familiar distanced perspective of omniscient cultural memory. Demons, beasts, and saints--the characters of the Baal Shem Tov's marvellous stories--co-exist in the recreated vision of early fantasy. Nor is this ironic, for "good Judaism" subsumes all aspects of the numinous domain which the child-poet inhabits. Moreover, "Heirloom" is the only poem in both Poems (1934) and in Hath Not a Jew that is deliberately set in the first person point of view. It is as if the poet were acknowledging in the poem that it is he who is remembering and that the rest of the poems in the collections are about what is remembered.

⁹⁹Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 16.

Like the two sonnets of Sonnets Semitic that see the speaker projecting himself back into the idealized past, the poems in Klein's private collection and in Hath Not a Jew also find the poet occupying an atmosphere of unpressured harmony where everything seems to be illuminated with the anticipation of discovery. The pictorial effectiveness of "Heirloom" is intimately linked to the shape of the Hebrew letters that suggest pictures to the child-like mind. Of the books of the Baal Shem Tov he says that they are

Beautiful: though no pictures on them, save
The scorpion crawling on a printed track;
The virgin floating on a scriptural wave,
Square letters twinkling in the zodiac.

(158)

Like the narrator of The Second Scroll, who in "Genesis" recalls the days when he first learned the alphabet and was blessed by "angel pennies" for his Hebrew studies, the speaker of "Heirloom" remembers the magical relationship between words and images, a relationship that marks the themes of Klein's children's poems. This is the nature of the vision that the child brings into the world, that the mystic tries to regain by probing the secrets of scriptural language, and that the poet attempts to recreate through his poetry.

For the Leader--With String Music, the first section of children's poems in Hath Not a Jew, groups a number of songs together that collectively establish the pre-eminence of the child-like response to the world. In "Songs of Toys and

Trinkets"¹⁰⁰ (154-55), for instance, the speaker of the poem is the child's mother, who wonders what toys she should buy for her little boy. She dismisses the bauble and the trinkets of conventional child's play in favor of more religious "toys," such as a "grageri," the traditional holiday noise-maker with the rasping sound that frightens the enemy "Haman" away. With his prayer shawl or "tallis" the little child will look like a Halloween "Ghost," and even evil spirits-- "Satan's host"--will be afraid to venture near the boy. With "palmaleaf and / Citron" in his hand and with "Phylacteries" as "reins" the child will look like a "little zaddik" or rabbi. So armed with these spiritual toys, he will guarantee his protection from threatening hostile forces. Surely "Songs of Toys and Trinkets," with its playful catalogue of superstitious devices, counters Fischer's charge that Klein did not consider such things "made for good Judaism."

"Song of Exclamations" (155-56)¹⁰¹ also speaks from the child's mother's point of view. In this poem, she evokes a series of benedictions which would guarantee the child's happiness. Each couplet of the song contains an italicized "exclamation" or impressionistic sound that the child might utter in imitation of sounds in the natural world. Finally, she concludes, "never let sorrow say / Its doleful *qi*, its

¹⁰⁰"Songs of Toys and Trinkets," *Opinion* 3.6 (April 1933): 22 ("Toys"); *Hath Not a Jew* 72-3; P34.001984 ("Toys").

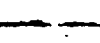
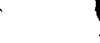
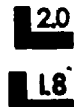
¹⁰¹"Song of Exclamations," *Opinion* 3.6 (April 1933): 23; *Hath Not a Jew* 73; P34.001987.

3

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NBS 1010a
ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2



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whimpering veh." In the next poem, "Song to be Sung at Dawn" (156), the speaker, with God's point of view, sees the morning gloriously unfolding and a little boy rising to say his "Modeh Ani," his blessing of thanksgiving to God for the daily restoration of life.¹⁰² "Song to be Sung at Dawn," in fact, catalogues the early events of the day in precise echo of the actual Modeh Ani. Like the prayer, it begins with an expression of gratitude to God for giving the rooster the intelligence to distinguish between day and night, and it concludes with thanks to God for removing sleep from one's eyes. Thus, the child who awakens to say his morning prayers at the end of the song will be giving thanks for all that has been described in the preceding lines of the poem. Both "Song of Exclamations" and "Song to be Sung at Dawn" implicitly acknowledge that God provides the child with his spiritual and material needs and that the contract between man and God must be honoured by prayers of thanksgiving.

"Market Song" (156-57) manages to capture the Yiddish syntax of an old country chicken hawker:¹⁰³

By now, you know not when
You will catch such fat doves,
Such doves again.

(157)

¹⁰²"Song to be Sung at Dawn," Judaean 6.9 (June 1933): 71 ("Song"); Hath Not a Jew 74; P34 001993 ("Song").

¹⁰³"Market Song," McGilliad 2.4 (February/March 1931): 64; Hath Not a Jew 74-5; P32 001712-13; GHP 001925; SP 002055; MS 002422, 002744 (74-5).

These are the words and the manner of expression that the adult persona of the children's poems might remember having heard as a child. Similarly, "Counting-Out Rhyme" (157), the final poem of For the Leader--With String Music, recalls the mnemonic song which the child would have repeated to learn his numbers.¹⁰⁴ As a group of poems, For the Leader--With String Music functions to recall the innocent simplicity of the past--the past not just of childhood but also of Eastern European shtetl life, which is continually associated with a child-like view of the world. As Miriam Waddington says of the children's poems in Hath Not a Jew, they "mythologize the traditional customs of eastern European Chassidic life. Klein, like every other Jewish child of Russian or Polish immigrant parents, was familiar with these customs and adapted them to the English language and the Canadian setting."¹⁰⁵ Indeed, it is as if Klein were determined to demonstrate the continuing relevance of ancient folklore and old-world customs to the modern Canadian reader. By establishing the child as the centre of vision in these poems, Klein connects old-world life with the young boy whose early experiences in Canada parallel ancient responses to the world.

¹⁰⁴"Counting-Out Rhyme," Opinion 3.6 (April 1933): 22; Hath Not a Jew 76; P34 001994.

¹⁰⁵Waddington, A.M. Klein, 19.

In the second section of children's poems in Hath Not a Jew, Of Kith and Kin, Klein extends his sympathy for the child-like view of the world which is informed by a sense of continuous wonder. After "Heirloom," the first poem of this section, "Bestiary,"¹⁰⁶ illustrates the way in which the child sees a marvellous picture-book in "copse of holy script." Because of the Second Commandment's prohibition against scriptural illustrations, the pages of the Torah are filled only with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. These the child mind turns into the shapes of animals and beasts. Again, the child intuitively grasps the connection between words and objects. In his open vision he sees with the eyes of the mystic--or the poet--who continually endeavours to recapture the magical link between letters and the objects that they signify.

In "Mourners" (159-60),¹⁰⁷ which follows "Bestiary," the child laments the passing of his favourite uncle, who delighted the family with his songs and his stories. But unlike the adult mourners (such as the aunt who "wept bitter and long") the child's response to the death of the uncle is less severe; his youthful concern is focussed on the loss of the

¹⁰⁶"Bestiary," Judaean 8.9 (June 1935): 70; Hath Not a Jew 78-9; The Book of Canadian Poetry 397-98; Canadian Anthology 382; P34 001975-6; SP 002052-3; MS 002235-39, 002744 (78-9).

¹⁰⁷"Mourners," Judaean 6.9 (June 1933), 71; Opinion 7.2 (December 1936): 20; Hath Not a Jew 79-80; P34 001959; MS 002744 (79-80).

wonderful tales that his uncle told and the "pennies" that his uncle gave to him to "Save for a lovely bride." Finally, in "Gift" (106),¹⁰⁸ the last poem of this section, the speaker is the child's father, who expresses his desire to be remembered by his son through the prayer-shawl sack which the child would use "singing the sweet liturgy." Thus, the memory of the father would be forever hallowed "In the sight of the Lord." "Gift" is a fitting complement to "Mourners" because the child's father would like to be remembered, perhaps in the way that the child of "Mourners" remembers his uncle.

Whereas Of Kith and Kin evokes the memories of the child's immediate family and of the childhood past, Of Sundry Folk--the next section of poems in Hath Not a Jew--evokes memories of the child's wider cultural family and of the mythical past of his picture books. In the first poem of the group, "Into the Town of Chelm" (160-61), the speaker describes the Polish town of Chelm, which is best known through the stories of I.J. Singer as a Jewish settlement inhabited by supposedly simple-minded bumlbers and innocent fools.¹⁰⁹ The "little boy" who rides into the town atop his pony enters the legendary town much like Alice entering the looking-glass world. In Chelm, everything seems to be "topsy-turvy"; life is managed backwards, so to say, in this fantastic

¹⁰⁸"Gift," Opinion 5.6 (April 1935): 14; Hath Not a Jew 80-81; P34 001977.

¹⁰⁹"Into the Town of Chelm," Judean 6.9 (June 1933): 71; Hath Not a Jew 82-83; P34 001961.

realm. It is interesting to note that in Klein's Poems (1934), the unpublished "Town Fool's Song"¹¹⁰ precedes "Into the town of Chelm" in the collection (see Appendix E). In "Town Fool's Song," the village idiot rests atop a roof singing and whittling aimlessly. Below him the townspeople trudge perfunctorily through the day:

The madmen in the cobbled lanes
 The nitwits in the street
 Scurry and grub, and for their pains
 A crust of bread and meat.
 But I sit over the windowpanes
 And dangle unwearied feet.

The fool with the open-eyed attentiveness of a child clearly has an advantageous view. He is connected, because of his physical (and thereby psychological) advantage, to the divine realm and its message; only he can hear its sounds. (It is worth remembering from the preceding chapter that in Klein's vocabulary, "the lunatic, the lover, and the poet, / Are of imagination all compact.") At the conclusion of "Town Fool's Song," the fool reveals that he is whittling a switch for "the horse that strays abroad"--the horse on which the Messiah will be riding, and whose hooves are suddenly heard "on sod" in the distance. This poem, in fact, neatly matches one of the last entries in Poems (1934), "Cavalcade" ["A 'psalm of horses and their riders"], where the Apocalyptic vision of horse and rider is transformed

¹¹⁰"Town Fool's Song," P34 001960.

into the startling revelation of a child atop a goat.¹¹¹ In theological terms each child is a potential Messiah. Thus it is that the song catalogues the more vivid images of warriors, kings, and wizards who ride the literary landscape and then dismisses these giants in favour of a type of Everychild gracefully cantering on a tamed goat. (A cognate of this image figures in Klein's later work in The Second Scroll, where the narrator imagines that he sees his Uncle Melech riding, like Christ, on a donkey on the streets of the Holy Land.) To appreciate the unassuming heroism of the child's posture, to see clearly the grand simplicity of his gestures, is to share with the fool in the Messianic moment. The world through which the child rides is imbued with magic. It may be the town of Aleichem's Kasrileveke, of I.J. Singer's Chelm, or even the urban ghetto of contemporary Montreal. Thus, the child who rides into the town of Chelm on his little brown pony partakes of the company of saints and Messiahs:

His grandfather told him that would he be wise
He must see the fool's town with his very own eyes.

(161)

Before the child stretches a panorama of Jewish fools and innocents. These are the "sundry folk" who figure in the poems of this section of children's verses in Hath Not a Jew.

¹¹¹"Cavalcade," P34 002022 ("A psalm of horses and their riders"); Canadian Jewish Chronicle 24 October 1947: 6.

There is "Jonah Katz (161-62), whose odd practice of grouping words together according to their aural similitude leads to a very poetic, and sometimes-nonsensical, interpretation of the world:¹¹²

Why did he dress
In robes the rabbit?
Why did his beasts
Don bystic habit?

Jonah Katz:
Was he a seer?
A poet? Sage
Or only queer?

(162)

Jonah is clearly all these things. His imagination responds to nature in an uninhibited, almost primitive manner. Words, in his mind, are all connected as if they formed part of one long sentence. Like the mystic, the child, and the poet, Jonah Katz grasps the fundamental relationship between objects. In fact, Jonah Katz rhymes the universe in much the same way that the poet rhymes his lines on this "queer" man.

The next three lyrics in Of Sundry Folk all rely on Jewish folklore for their subjects. The "Bandit" (162) of the first poem is borrowed from a favourite joke about a thief who stole some snuff and then "sneeze(d) himself away."¹¹³ The "Deed of Daring" (162) of the next poem is

¹¹²"Jonah Katz," Judaean 8.9 (June 1935): 70; Hath Not a Jew 83-84; P34 001965.

¹¹³"Bandit," Judaean 6.3 (December 1932): 22 ("A Jewish Bandit"); Hath Not a Jew 84-85; P34 001983.

Samson's procurement of a tasty herring for his favourite rabbi's dinner.¹¹⁴ And the "Biography" (163) of the third poem describes the joke of the little Jew who, in typically Jewish fashion, tries to get used to the fact that he is too poor to afford food and dies of the "habit" of not eating.¹¹⁵ One poem that might have been included in this group of playful poems is "Nose Aristocratic,"¹¹⁶ which is included in Poems (1934):

Prince Shlemozzle
 Had a long nozzle
 He held way up in the air,
 Until a vulture
 Gave it a sepulture
 And made him a Commoner.

Of course, the object of humour here, as in "Bandit," with its references to sneezing and snuff, is the stereotypically large Jewish nose. After "Biography," there comes "Doctor Dwarf" (163-64), who actually cures the lame and the sick through his intimate knowledge of natural medicine.¹¹⁷ He, like Jonah Katz, operates in a world where everything seems to be connected, where the relationship between objects is perceived so acutely that miracles are affected.

¹¹⁴"A Deed of Daring," Hath Not a Jew 85; P34 001970.

¹¹⁵"Biography," Opinion 5.6 (April 1935): 14; Hath Not Jew 85; P34 001973.

¹¹⁶"Nose Aristocratic," P34 001999.

¹¹⁷"Doctor Dwarf," Hath Not a Jew 86-87; P34 001866-67.

The next group of children's poems is entitled Of Kings and Beggars. In the "topsy turvy" world of mythical Jewish legend, royalty often appear as fools and poor men often assume noble stature. The first poem of this section, "Ballad of the Dancing Bear" (164-73), is also the last poem in Klein's Poems (1934).¹¹⁸ In the private collection, "Ballad of the Dancing Bear" serves to summarize the nature of the redemptive vision available to the whole cast of characters in the folkloric realm. In the context of Hath Not a Jew, "Ballad of th Dancing Bear" reiterates the value of the fool-child's view of the world. The narrative of the poem, which is traced through twelve sections of tetrameter couplets, begins with a colourful description of the busy Jews whose exacting efforts contribute less to their own welfare than to the coffers of the loutish baron Stanislaus. Fed malicious anti-semitic gossip by his priest, Thadeus, Stanislaus plots the eventual annihilation of the Jewish people. For his perverse amusement, he arranges that entertainment be provided by some dancing Jew in the banquet-hall. Only the town water-carrier, Motka, accepts the challenge. Through his remarkable dance, Motka woos both Jew and Gentile over to his own rejoicing vision of God. Miraculously, the crippled princess Paulinka abandons her sick-bed to join Motka in a graceful waltz. The couple

¹¹⁸"Ballad of the Dancing Bear," Centennial Jubilee Edition of the Jewish Daily Eagle 8 July 1932: 43-44; Hath Not a Jew 88-101; GH 001540-47; GHP 001781-88; P34 002029-40.

dance with the same spirit that moves the men of "Dance Chassidic." In both cases it is through the medium of dance that the devout Jew is able to reach a state of exalted joy, for the dancer forgets his sense of self and his surroundings and concentrates all his thoughts and feelings on union with God. Since it is capable of breaking through and overruling the normal laws of the universe with wondrous effects on the world of everyday existence, such a state of ecstasy is of incalculable consequence. Motka, through his dance, is both an ordinary man and a saint. Like the pious "Scribe" whose body resembles the letters that he fashions in God's name,

[Motka's] eyes were like dots of flame;
The iotas of God's name.

Flourishes on holy script:
Hairs with which his chin was tipped.

On his brow the tfillin set
Seemed a Hebrew coronet.

Tzizith danced against his legs,
Jubilant with caftan-rags.

It was rumoured he was one
For whom God preserved the sun.

(170)

Motka belongs to the company of Hebrew saints, particularly to the group of thirty-six men whom Chassidic legend believes walk anonymously through each generation. God, according to the Chassidic idea, chooses these men to represent His spirit in the here and now. Thus, "Ballad of the Dancing Bear" ends on a note of triumph and spiritual regeneration while also challenging the anti-semitic charge of the earlier

poems in Hath Not a Jew, and especially of "Ave atque Vale," that Jews are incapable of joyous celebration.

"Ballad for Unfortunate Ones" (173-74), which comes after "Ballad of the Dancing Bear," similarly praises the meek and the poor men whose sufferings will be rewarded when "the Messiah [will] ride his dappled mare."¹¹⁹ In that Apocalyptic moment, all wrongs will be redressed, all sicknesses will be healed, and nature will return to the harmonious balance ordained at the time of Creation. The anonymous saints and beggars of the world, like Motka, will be rewarded for their silent devotions by a merciful God. Paradoxically, one such man is "King Elimelech" (174-75), the subject of the next poem in Of Kings and Beggars.¹²⁰ A self-styled "king," Elimelech wanders through the village streets in parodic imitation of such royal men as the Stanislaus of "Ballad of the Dancing Bear." In Elimelech's simple-minded view, a home-made crown and sceptre ought to facilitate trade for "his daily / Butter and bread." But even the shtetl fools can see through his disguise. Like the foolish little Jew of "Biography," the last laugh is on Elimelech:

If kings will not hunger,
Then let them all fast!
So said King Eli-
Melech the Last.

(175)

¹¹⁹"Ballad for Unfortunate Ones," Hath Not a Jew 102-03; P34 002024-25; MS 002744 (102-03).

¹²⁰"King Elimelech," Opinion 5.7 (May 1935): 25; Hath Not a Jew 103-04; P34 002016-07.

Similarly, "King Dalfin" (176), who occupies the thimble-sized thrones of the next poem in Hath Not a Jew, is a comic character in the kingdom of Jewish folklore.¹²¹ After weeks of searching for the suddenly vanished King, the inept court sages discover that he had hid himself "in the crater / Of the cymbalist's fingernail." Both "King Elimelech" and "King Dalfin" deflate the trappings of royalty; it is the beggar and not the king who deserves God's attention. Such is the theme of "Wandering Beggar" (177), which follows "King Dalfin." The poem sets forth the idea that the beggar, like the wandering Jew and the anonymous saint ("incognito prince"), rules over a natural kingdom--that is, the landscape through which he travels--without the burdens of power. His baggage is his bread sack, "The road his realm," and "a song his law." No one, the poem concludes, would prefer "the sight of gold coin" to the sight of such a humble ruler.¹²²

The last group of poems in Hath Not a Jew, Of Holy Vessels, contains a collection of portraits, each of which praises a devout man who honours God's name through prayer and study. Preeminent among these is the "Baal Shem Tov" (178), the first portrait of the group.¹²³ As the speaker

¹²¹"King Dalfin," Hath Not a Jew 105-06; P34 002026-07.

¹²²"Wandering Beggar," Hath Not a Jew 106-07; P34 002018-19.

¹²³"Baal Shem Tov," Judaean 8.1 (October 1934): 4; Opinion 5.4 (February 1935): 17; Hath Not a Jew 108; P34 001988-89.

of "Hairloom" affectionately recalls, the books of the Baal Shem Tov are especially attractive to children because the Chassidic rabbi understood the value of the child's vision of the world. Thus he

Who hearing a child's song float on sunlit air
 Heard far more piety than in a prayer
 That issued from ten synagogal thebats.

The Baal Shem Tov is known as "the Master of the Name" because he was thoroughly initiated in the mystical ways of apprehending the cosmos and saw God's handwriting in all of Nature. The characters who follow "Baal Shem Tov" all display his love of children and his Chassidic enthusiasm for life. "Elijah" (178-79), for instance, teaches the children their mandatory Hebrew lessons with a great sense of fun.¹²⁴ "O, this was a wonderful / Synagogue," the speaker says of the playful hours spent in Elijah's company. Similarly, the "Cantor" (179-80) of the next poem, nourished on the six eggs that he buys from "the jubilant grandma," delights even the hen with his sweet songs.¹²⁵ In this poem, Nature co-operates with the cantor, a "holy vessel," who honours God's Creation by his music. In "Scholar" (181), the next poem in Of Holy Vessels,¹²⁶ a goat, with its voracious appetite for grass and clover, its crooning sounds, and its

¹²⁴"Elijah," Judaean 5.1 (October 1931): 8; Opinion 5.4 (February 1935): 17; Hath Not a Jew 109-10.

¹²⁵"Cantor," Hath Not a Jew 110-12; P34 002014-15.

¹²⁶"Scholar," Opinion 3.6 (April 1933): 22-23; Judaean 6.9 (June 1933): 71; Hath Not a Jew 112-13; P34 001962.

"wise pate" and "beard," is likened to a scholarly rabbi with his voracious appetite for Torah, his chantings of the "Mishna," and his bearded countenance. Here, as in "Elijah," the natural world mirrors the devout ways of holy men. And in "The Venerable Bee" (182) another of nature's creatures is anthropomorphized into a scholar.¹²⁷ The text that the bee studies is the "torah scroll" of the "convoluted rose." His benediction ("kiddush") over his meal is recited "on / A flowercup of dew." The animal kingdom is, of course, God's kingdom; hens, goats, bees, and owls participate in "study" of the divine scroll of Nature, reading, so to say, God's Book. The poems in Of Holy Vessels reiterate Klein's profound belief in the interconnectedness of the natural and the human worlds and reassert the analogy (which informs the early manuscript Auto-da-fé and so many of the poems in Poems [1932], Gestures Hebraic [1932], and Gestures Hebraic and Poems [1932]) between the poet--who recreates in rhyme the divine text--and God--who ordained the text at the moment of Creation.

The last entry in Hath Not a Jew is the short poem "Orders," which was first published ten years earlier.¹²⁸ "Orders" occupies the only space in the last section of the

¹²⁷"The Venerable Bee," Judaean 8.1 (October 1934): 4; Opinion 5.6 (April 1935): 14; Hath Not a Jew 114-15; P34 002005.

¹²⁸"Orders," McGilliad 1.1 (March 1930): 7 ("Order"); Hath Not a Jew 116; P32 001701; GHP 001924; P34 002028. The Collected Poems incorrectly enters this poem as "Nothing at All: Orders." Nothing at All is the section heading.

volume which is entitled Of Nothing At All. Typically, the elegant simplicity of such a short piece belies its complex and allusive implications. The title of the section--Of Nothing at All--is paradoxically followed by "Orders"--a word that simultaneously denotes an imperative and a nominal function. The eight grammatical "orders" of the poem comprise its poetic order:

Muffle the wind;
 Silence the clock;
 Muzzle the mice;
 Curb the small talk;
 Cure the hinge-squeak;
 Banish the thunder.
 Let me sit silent,
 Let me wonder.

(183)

Both the title of the section--Of Nothing at All--and the title which follows it--"Orders"--point to a recurring idea in Klein's written work (and indirectly mentioned during the discussion of "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens"): the mystical principle of Creatio ex nihilo, or Creation from Nothingness. Just as Creation follows from Nothingness in the mystical texts, so does "Order" issue from "Nothing at All" in Klein's deceptively simple conclusion to Hath Not a Jew. Klein's likely source of this provoking notion is the important and influential Kabbalistic text the Zohar. "Nothing," as the Kabbalists define it, is always taken as God's innermost mode of being, which becomes creative in the moment that God unfolded the universe. It is, above all, the primordial point out of which the world came into existence

through God's pronouncement of the Word.¹²⁹ (Such an act of Creation was articulated by the sixteenth-century Kabbalist, Isaac Luria, whose complex myth of the origins of the universe is developed by Klein in The Second Scroll. "Greeting on This Day," section iii, acknowledges Klein's debt to Luria.) In a review of a translation and an analysis of the Zohar, Klein wrote in 1932 that

It is a work which shines forth from the gloom of the Dark ages with an effulgence all its own, accentuating the fact that while most practitioners of mysticism of that era prided themselves on being Masters of Black Magic, the Zohar springs forth as a Book of White Splendour....¹³⁰

It is not difficult to understand why Klein would be fascinated with this mystical text--a most unique form of biblical commentary--nor why its numerical and linguistic symbolic order would appeal to him as much as Spinoza's linguistic geometry.

Thus in "Orders" Klein concludes Hath Not a Jew with a command to himself--and to the reader--to "sit silent" and "to wonder" at the mysteries which language cannot penetrate. Reason, as the Spinoza of "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" implies, cannot in itself transcend this world; it can, however, organize it. What a calming distance this poem has come from the fragmented nightmare vision of "Talisman in Seven Shreds" and the tragic restlessness of "Child

¹²⁹See Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism.

¹³⁰"White Magic," rev. of The Zohar, by Ariel Bension, Canadian Jewish Chronicle 7 October 1932: 5, 16.

Harold's Pilgrimage." In many ways, "Orders" eloquently summarizes a major theme of Hath Not a Jew: the "vital cue" for which the speaker of "Talisman in Seven Shreds" searches. The smiling sunrise which enigmatically faces the "querulous" Rabbi Levi Yitschok, and the "saecular imperturbability" which concludes "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" find satisfying resolution in the certain order of the concluding poem. Like the Spinoza of one of Klein's finest poems who, after a life of writing philosophy, ends his days in his garden "Remembering the thought of the Adored," and like the "Scribe" who, after completing "three pentateuchs," ends his days in union with God, the poet is left contemplating the world in private silence after he puts down his pen. So, too, does the reader when he puts down the book.

II. More Gestures Hebraic

Hath Not a Jew represents over a decade of Klein's work and interests. As a whole, the collection well represents Klein's achievement in the 'thirties--his facility with various verse forms, with archaisms, with poetic diction, and with the successful fusion of both Chassidism and mystical cosmology and modern experience. Yet Hath Not a Jew also belies the extent of Klein's creative output during the 'thirties, for in addition to the poems that went into that volume, Klein wrote many others which appeared in various

periodicals and others which were collected in his private volumes but never published. As well as writing poetry Klein continued at the time to publish essays and short stories which echoed in prose what he stated in poetry.

Several of these poems of the 'thirties are worthy of consideration because not only are they superb examples of Klein's developing poetic skills, but they are also testimonies to such central moral and aesthetic preoccupations as the role of Jewish history in the modern experience and the profound relationship between the poet-creator and God. It is also worth remembering that these poems, in contrast to the early poems published in such periodicals as the McGilliad and the Canadian Forum ("La Belle Dame Sans Merci," "Christian Poet and Hebrew Maid," "Wood Notes Wild," to name a few examples), appeared, for the most part, in either one of the two influential Jewish-American periodicals: Opinion and the Menorah Journal.

As early as 1928, for example, Klein published "To the Jewish Poet" (12).¹³¹ In this Petrarchan sonnet, the speaker counsels the would-be poet to cease lamenting past injustices and to start acknowledging the potentiality of a glorious future: "The dawn arises, tinted white and blue," the speaker says of the colours of a new nation about to be born as the state of Israel, where in due time the wandering hero

¹³¹"To the Jewish Poet," Canadian Jewish Chronicle 6 July 1928: 21.

of The Second Scroll will recognize the birth of the modern Jewish poet. With a similar optimism, "Five Weapons Against Death" (17-19),¹³² which was written in 1929 to commemorate the death of Bessie Koslov's father, urges a turning away from mourning and acknowledges the possibility of happiness in the present. The "Afterword" of "Five Weapons Against Death" is especially noteworthy. Whereas the preceding five sonnets argue against a morbid indulgence of sorrow, the afterword departs from both the form of the sonnet sequence and the personal tone of its exhortation to offer a moral lesson in the form of a parable.

The crow upon the hawthorn bush
 Pecks at the haws until they bleed;
 Or watches some red earthworm push
 Himself along a slimy weed;
 Or meditates the autumn leaf
 Turning to powder and to dust . . .
 He caws in arrant unbelief.

(19)

The crow is an essential element in the workings of natural law, which includes the inevitability of change and the fulfilment of Creation in death and decay--the return to the proper union of matter and spirit. But his "unbelief" is "arrant"; he "watches" and "meditates" the process of mutability, but he lacks the capacity to understand it. Yet, it is also true that his "caws" are a protest against that process.

¹³²"Five Weapons Against Death," Menorah Journal 16.1 (January 1929): 49-51; P32 001629; GHP 001862-65.

Typically, Klein concludes "Five Weapons Against Death" with a sense of triumph in wonder.

Celebration of the mystery of the material world is also prescribed in "These Candle Lights" (13), a Petrarchan sonnet which lovingly orders a memory of the feast of Channakah (lights).¹³³ This is another early sonnet which remembers the victories of the past in order to illuminate the miracle of the present:

Dead heroes ride the chariots of the wind;
 Jew-phantoms light the candles of the sky;
 Old war-cries echo in my memory;
 The ghosts of five brave brothers stalk my mind.
 And this because my father and his kind
 Are lighting heirloom'd candelabra, aye,
 Are singing praises to the One on High,
 This night in which past battles are enshrined!
 As sweet as were the sweet songs of degrees
 That David sang rejoicing, is this rite
 My sire rejoicing sings; and as the sight
 Of almond blooms that burst on spring-time trees
 Is sight of this menorah, and of these
 Eight blossoms breaking on a winter night!

(13)

Memory is a selective search for communication with and inspiration from the past through ritual. Moreover, that ritual inspires the poet to see the relation between the natural-material world ("almond blooms") and the spiritual-symbolic world ("heirloom'd candelabra"). Similarly, "Ballad of Signs and Wonders" (14-16) draws a parallel between the

¹³³"These Candle Lights," Judaean 2.3 (December 1928): 8; Canadian Jewish Chronicle 14 December 1928: 22; Canadian Zionist 3.6 (November 1936): 40; GH 001577; NS 002670. The Collected Poems incorrectly enters the poem as "Candle Lights."

triumph of medieval Prague and the return of life in Springtime.¹³⁴ The essence of Jewish experience for the Klein of the late 'twenties and 'thirties lies in celebration, not in grieving.

Perhaps the most consistent point of view of these early poems is that of the third-person, godlike perspective. From this advantageous--and what Klein called "bird's-eye"--view, the poet observes, records, and renders into poetry the subtle nuances of Jewish life, its distinctive virtues and its excesses. He perceives how tradition etches Jewish identity on the faces of all those who comprise the Jewish character and how it manifests itself in the gestures of Jewish behaviour. Yet the persona of these poems is not impassive. The very act of observing becomes a form of participation in the spectacle of Jewish experience in the modern world. And, of course, the act of creation is repeated with the accomplishment of every poem. In the portrait or "frame poems" of this early period, the persona (as already mentioned in connection with Hath Not a Jew) consistently sketches Jewish characters with both affection and gentle irony. Perhaps the earliest example of Klein's portrait poems is "Five Characters" (8-10), written and published

¹³⁴"Ballad of Signs and Wonders," Canadian Jewish Chronicle 13 April 1928: 9; GH 001548-51; GHP 001789-92; MS 002160.

when the poet was just eighteen years old.¹³⁵ G.K. Fischer notes that the poem "is strongly reminiscent of cinematic techniques."¹³⁶ (In fact, as Usher Caplan notes in his biography Like One That Dreamed, and as is clear from the number of references to the movies in Klein's work, the poet loved the cinema.) The sequence of Petrarchan sonnets that comprise "Five Characters" moves from portrait to portrait, adopting, in each one, a form of selective subjectivity. Each of the character's thoughts are mingled with the observations of the omniscient observer, much in the same way that Klein at times fuses the speaker's point of view with Spinoza's in "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens."

The holiday which stands behind the sonnet sequence of "Five Characters" is Purim. For the Klein who liked to note that he was "a Purim Jew," the celebration of Purim, which means "lots" (as in lottery) was a favourite holiday. During the festivities--which celebrate Queen Esther's remarkable powers of persuasion, first in capturing the attention of King Ahasuerus and second in convincing him to reverse the edict which would destroy all Jews in his kingdom --Jews are encouraged to intoxicate themselves with the help of alcoholic spirits through rejoicing so that they are

¹³⁵"Five Characters," Menorah Journal 13.5 (November 1927): 497-98; Canadian Jewish Chronicle 2 December 1927: 4; Judaean 3.6 (March 1930): 7 (one section only: "Mordechai"); Judaean 9.6 (March 1936): 45.

¹³⁶Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 18.

unable to distinguish between the hero, Mordechai, and the villain, Haman. Not only did the rhapsodic delirium that the holiday condones appeal to Klein's Chassidic delight in active celebration, but the idea of trespassing on the conventional limitations of moral judgements to the degree that the reveller inhabits a realm where hero and villain are confused probably appealed to his intellectual disposition. Traditionally, the festival of Purim includes a dramatic re-enactment of the Book of Esther, usually performed by school children at a local synagogue. "Five Characters" displays the key figures of the historical tale in imitation of the holiday pageant.

The first portrait of "Five Characters" is of King Ahasuerus, a lusty man whose chief occupation is imbibing wine. The rhythm of the sonnet is marked by several caesuras and exclamation points which imitate the rising and sinking action of the king as he struggles in drunken fashion to address his assembly. Ahasuerus sees in the bottom of his drained goblet the reflection of his queen Vashti, "set in the jewelled fore-part of his crown." The next sonnet turns to a portrait of Vashti, whose beauty is implied in the first sonnet ("A naked innuendo cameo / Of his loved empress shone in purple glow"). But the expectation that her gorgeous appearance will be described in her portrait is undercut by the discovery, in the last line of the sonnet, that she suffers from the humiliating disfigurement of leprosy. The

loss of her appeal that is a consequence of her sickly condition invites the rise of the beautiful Esther ("Hadasah"), whose character is the focus of the third sonnet. Esther's successful relationship with Ahasuerus allows for her uncle Mordechai's audience with the king, an audience which, in turn, provides the subject of the fourth sonnet. It is in this audience that Haman's conspiracy against the throne is revealed to the king. Mordechai represents the image of a man who refuses to bow to an idol, specifically to Haman; thus, the purity of Mordechai's faith ensures victory for his people. So it is that the final portrait of the villain Haman is also the portrait of a dead man who ironically achieves his ambition to rest in high places by dangling from a "gallows-tree." The gallows which Haman had erected for Mordechai's death becomes the instrument of his own execution.

The design of "Five Characters" sets forth a natural progression in which each Petrarchan sonnet functions like a frame in a narrative. As Fischer notes, the outstanding feature of the sequence is its highly visual impact: Ahasuerus is enchanted by the cameo of his wife; Vashti's face in turn is bloodless ("deathly wan"); Esther's beauty is imaged in the garden where she walks enveloped by roses and moonlight; Mordechai is portrayed as being resolutely erect before a "belly-walking crowd;" and Haman, Mordechai's alter-ego, is imaged erect but dangling from the gallows in silhouette.

"This is a poem," Fischer observes, "which is designed to illustrate the constant relevance of the Bible tale."¹³⁷ Indeed, even more pertinent, perhaps, than Fischer's reference to "cinematic technique" is Klein's method of combining portraiture and narrative in the manner of biblical narrative panels. Indeed, "Five Characters" brings to mind the visual narrative of Michaelangelo's biblical panels on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel from which Klein drew so much inspiration for The Second Scroll.

"Murals for a House of God" (50-57) is another of Klein's skilful early demonstrations of narrative through portraiture.¹³⁸ This sequence of lyrics employs documentary reportage in the form of the two sections in the poem which impassively chronicle the facts of its historical subject in order to furnish the background for the several voices who comprise the murals. Specifically, the subject of the poem centres on the events of the First Crusade in 1096, when Jews of the German town along the Rhine, Mayence, were confronted with crusading hoards. Many of these Jews sent their property for safekeeping to the homes of friendly Christian burghers. Some of them were themselves hidden in Christian homes and others in the palaces of the bishops.

¹³⁷Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 18.

¹³⁸"Murals for a House of God," Opinion 3.9 (July 1933): 18-21; Poems (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1944) 56-58 (one section only: "Rabbi Yom-Tob of Mayence Petitions His God"); MS 002442-85.

Still others depended upon the promise of protection and stayed home. When the crusading bands arrived, however, the local burghers refused to risk their lives to defend the Jews as they had promised. In Klein's poem, Count Emmerich and the monk, Johannus, speak for those who sympathized with the attacking crusaders, betraying the Jews to them.

It can be argued that in "Murals for a House of God" Klein is attempting a method of representation that is similar to Browning's method of revealing history and character through the presentation of different subjective views of the same situation. Each of the characters reveals his nature through his speech, and like Browning, Klein chooses little-known characters out of the past in order to demonstrate a sense of continuity with the present. Robert Langbaum could be speaking of Klein's "Murals for a House of God" when he writes that

the historical attitude suggests that the past was as confused and unglamorous as the present. The historical attitude is also interested in tracing change--in showing how different were the ideas and values of the past from ours, in showing that the past was itself in the process of change. Yet the historical change is apparent because we can measure it against a recognizably continuous human or psychological reality. This again is opposite to the mythical attitude, which idealizes the past in order to set it up as a permanent criterion of value.¹³⁹

¹³⁹Robert Langbaum, The Modern Spirit: Essays on the Continuity of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Literature (New York: Oxford UP, 1970) 78.

Whereas in "Five Characters," turning as it does on the ultimate victory of the Jews, Klein transforms historical characters into mythic ones, universalizing the five portraits into allegorical archetypes in order to convey a sense of the permanent value of the Bible story, in "Murals for a House of God," he adopts the historical attitude of which Langbaum writes. Moreover, the story of "Murals for a House of God" is grounded in the medieval, not the biblical period, and lacks a happy sense of resolution. In fact, the key figure in the events of the medieval setting, Count Emmerich, is demythologized--exposed as a hideous, self-serving drunkard through his own bitter railings against the Jews. The degree of irony in the poem, which not fortuitously is set in Germany, is heightened through an awareness of the unmistakable parallel between the atrocities perpetrated against the Jews of the past and the crimes perpetrated against the Jews of the present. The speeches of the characters, from the spiteful Count to the young man alarmed "before the kiss of death," emerge as unwitting and ironical declarations of character. Behind the poem stands the watchful chronicler. The judgement that he silently passes on the speakers is finally unambiguously negative. "Murals for a House of God" is most like Klein's "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry." Not only do both poems refer to the medieval period, when Central European Jews suffered grave indignities, but they also draw on both Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Boccaccio's Decameron

for their technique. Both works might easily have served as models for Klein, for in their choice of a diverse assembly of narrators, each of whom reveals himself in a manner completely suited to his nature, both Chaucer and Boccaccio developed the drama of the interaction of the characters' personalities. Moreover, the concomitant diversity of style of the tales (from chivalric romance to bawdy fabliau, from folk tale to sermon) is equivalent to Klein's manner of representation in both "Murals for House of God" and "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry." For instance, the "Scatterbrain" of the first poem in "Murals for a House of God" sings his bawdy song ("On bane big-bellied mothers feed; / Poison is suckled at the paps") with all the earthy spite of an alehouse sociologist. By contrast, the "Ballad of the Hebrew Bride" combines folklore and history ("When he will clasp you to his side / With what name shall you hail him, Bride? / O, I shall run, and have no breath; I shall not even whisper: Death!") to convey the urgent plight of a virgin.

Klein's insistence in his poems of the 'thirties on evoking the past, and especially the medieval past, mirrors the same purpose that inspired Chaucer to write the Canterbury Tales, Boccaccio to compose the Decameron, and Browning to write his historical poems, especially The Ring and the Book (another example of multiple viewpoints behind which the poet stands in judgement): to expose the moral condition of the present. Through the reflected images of the past,

which are mirrored in the poems of Hath Not a Jew, and in Klein's related poems of the 'thirties, the reader is consistently forced to apprehend the strength of the poet's moral position. For Klein, poetry could effectively communicate the urgency of contemporary issues because the reader is compelled to engage in a process of reconstruction and, by so doing, come to his own realization of the truth. Behind so much of Klein's written work in the 'thirties is the idea that the Jewish poet has a moral responsibility to face: to revivify Jewish language, culture, and well-being through art. And in poetry, Klein could effectively combine his moral and aesthetic preoccupations. The poet, as an agent of God, unfolds his ordered universe of words, which the reader must quarry, with his imaginative reason to ascertain the moral principle at work. Indeed, as editor of the Judaean from 1928-1932 and in the years following, when he worked for the Chronicle, Klein frequently discoursed directly and indirectly on the subject of his social function as a poet. In one article, for example, written to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Max Nordau's death (Nordau, a philosopher, Zionist leader, successful novelist and less successful playwright is remembered primarily for his Degeneration, his attack on certain nineteenth-century poets), Klein wrote that

the slogan "art for art's sake" has never been acceptable to Jewish thought. The Hebraic ideal, as opposed to the Greek, is not based upon the beautiful, but the good. Control, not form, is of

paramount importance. The moral, and not the play's the thing. Did not Yehu Halevi [poet-philosopher c. 1085-1140] say that Greek literature was as a blossom, and Hebrew as a fruit?¹⁴⁰

As is so often the case in Klein's prose editorials, he implicitly connects himself to a well-known and respected historical figure, specifically here to Halevi. One of the best known Hebrew poets (and the subject of the third section of Klein's Poems volume), Halevi began writing his poems at a very early age.

No doubt, Klein's serious attention to religious-cultural preservation through art was provoked by his uncanny awareness of how in danger Jews were of losing not merely their identities but even their right to exist. As Usher Caplan notes in his biography of Klein, the Montreal poet was convinced very early, along with "only a small number of prescient observers, that Hitler needed to be taken seriously." Klein's "particular sense of foreboding for his own people," Caplan continues, "was informed by a close attention to news from Europe and by an ingrained historical awareness of Jewish vulnerability to barbarous attack. As early as 1928 he had been alerting readers of the Judaean to the anti-Jewish demonstrations of the Hitlerites in Germany."¹⁴¹ In October 1933, when the world tacitly approved the installation of Germany's new

¹⁴⁰Beyond Sabbation, 120.

¹⁴¹See Like One That Dreamed, 81.

mustachioed Chancellor, Klein wrote the following article for the Judaean:

And throughout this entire period of time, the shadow of the swastika--that four-legged cross running away with itself--hovered and hovers still over Europe. The house-painter of Austria has put a whitewash of barbarism over the murals of civilization. In Germany, to report a phrase now famous, the clock has turned back, and the inverse alarm has been sounded everywhere in the hearts of those concerned over humanity. Six hundred thousand Jews are being condemned to a state worse than peonage, deprived of their civil rights, subjected to the most degrading discrimination, and, on protesting, ordered--not to exile, for that would be relief--but to the slow Aryan tortures of a concentration camp. Nothing can save them; neither conversions nor support of their Nazi regime,--their blood, according to the mad Teutonic science, is impure. Only a blood transfusion can partially achieve that, and it is with a grim irony that the Nazis are performing that operation, even unto the death of their victims.¹⁴²

Since Klein so fully understood the precipitous situation of Jews in the twentieth century it is of little wonder that he responded so urgently to a call to speak and, thereby, to remember on behalf of his people. Most often, the young Klein's response to the horrors that he sensed were escalating in the modern world was not to inveigh against them but to emphasize instead the value of Jewish life.

Reading through Klein's work of the 'thirties provides one with a sense of the intensity of modern madness. As this discussion has shown, Klein reacted to the growing global frenzy with a steady reliance on the organizing powers of language. Everywhere his mistrust of modernity is

¹⁴²Judaean, 7.1 (October 1933): 30.

apparent--from his assaults against assimilation and his warnings against forgetfulness to his fear of greed, individualism, and egomania. Both in his prose and in his poetry Klein adopts the voice of the serious social poet whose personal needs appear to harmonize with his public function. Whether celebrating the victory of ancient Jews from a child's perspective ("Five Characters") or lamenting the losses sustained by medieval Jewry ("Murals for a House of God"), Klein's voice sounds unfalteringly consistent. His identification with his culture is firm, but it is also mediated by a guarded scepticism of the weaknesses of his own kind. Alert to the dangers of both anti-semitism and Jewish self-hatred, Klein conveys a well-reasoned objective detachment--a resolutely sane voice in a world of rising confusion. Not surprisingly, the poetic forms through which Klein expresses his themes are conservative and traditional. The sonnet form which appears so frequently in the 'thirties work obviously suits his passion for wordplay and his love of design. Similarly, the sculpted stanzas of his ballads and medieval narratives and the incantatory parallelisms of his best biblical verses unfold on the white space of his pages with a convincing regularity that often belies the anarchic terror of their subjects. In the next section of this chapter it shall be seen that Klein entertained the mystical notion that not only is language an instrument of order but it is also an agent of power itself.

III. The Golem

One early poem that describes the chaos of contemporary conditions is "Exorcism Vain" (34).¹⁴³ Like the concluding sonnet of Sonnets Semitic, "Exorcism Vain" laments the consequences of forgetfulness, in this case more specifically the loss of the Name. Behind the poem lies the same Kabbalistic belief in the mysterious pronunciation of the tetragrammaton that lies behind Klein's "Talisman in Seven Shreds." Since, in "Exorcism Vain," the correct pronunciation of God's Name is unknown ("The tongue has faltered"), evil spirits stalk the world and "pandemonium is again motile." And since man's relationship to God has been strained by forgetfulness, by lack of attention to history and culture, and even by loss of faith, he lacks the capacity to create harmony. Instead of speaking clearly, he stutters. Breakdown in language is mirrored in the breakdown of social order. "The circle," the perfect form of the world and of the Torah that contains the world, is "broken." "Exorcism Vain," it is worth noting, is divided into three quatrains that are faithful to the rhyme scheme of the Shakespearean sonnet (abab/cdcd/efef), but the poem lacks a final couplet. The resolution or illumination which such a conclusion might provide is incompatible with the state of imbalance described in the poem.

¹⁴³"Exorcism Vain," McGilliad 2.5 (April 1931): 98-99; GH 001573; MS 002578-79 ("A psalm for them that utter dark sayings").

In addition to the complex Kabbalistic conception of the tetragrammaton, "Exorcism Vain" alludes, perhaps more subtly, to the rich tradition of the golem. This Kabbalistic tradition is, it will be recalled, explicitly set forth in "Talisman in Seven Shreds," but in "Exorcism Vain" Klein merely implies a connection between the presence of "demons" and the Polish legend of the golem figure who is released into the world by a mispronunciation of the Name. Both traditions, however, were very much on Klein's mind in the 'thirties. Further evidence of how intensely interested Klein was in Kabbalistic conceptions of the tetragrammaton and the golem is provided by the collection of extensive notes and the two hand-written chapters for a novel, The Golem, to be found among the Klein papers in the Public Archives of Canada. Although the manuscript is undated, it is plausible to speculate that Klein first began to formulate his thoughts for The Golem in the 'thirties when the subject surfaced in the poems of the period.¹⁴⁴

The intended scope of the project can be gleaned from the preparatory notes that Klein gathered for the novel. First there are pages of vocabulary lists, including popular idioms, biblical phrases from Genesis, Joshua, Matthew, and the Chronicles, and all the possible variations on the name of God. Then there is an outline for the novel, which

¹⁴⁴The Golem ("Notes" and completed drafts) MS 002986-3331. All references to The Golem papers are noted in parentheses.

provides further insight into the direction intended for the story:

- Introduction
- The curse and the blessing
- His work with Rabbi Leow: make parallel to our own
- Describe conditions of peace
- What was going on under Rudolph II
- Studied the stars. Thought one day he would discover a new one. In the meantime a pleasure to look at them.
- Dross into gold
- Suddenly the storm broke

(002993)

This brief summary sketch suggests that Klein intended to write a novel based on the Polish legend of the golem which could be read as a modern parable on the condition of contemporary Jewry. By amplifying the skeletal specifics of the tale with elaborate descriptions of the socio-economic and political history of Prague, he would have been able to remind readers of how unstable is the Jewish footing in history and of how uncomfortable the status of the Jew is in a world run by non-Jews. Klein had never been to Prague, but he studied its geography, climate, and architecture. Based on his research, he drew a map of the city which fixed the important synagogue, the Altenu Schul, at its centre. In addition to these details, the extensive notes for The Golem are indicative of the moral tone which would have been at the philosophical core of the fiction. For instance, Klein raises the question of whether or not the golem could be invited to pray in a minyan. Would the golem, in this connection, be considered a man or merely a remarkable clay

likeness of one? And at some point in the novel, the golem would request of his master, Rabbi Leow (the central figure of "Talisman in Seven Shreds") that he be provided with a helpmate. Obviously, Klein intended to echo Adam's request to God for a companion and, in a later version of the same myth, the monster's request to his creator in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein for a partner.

But it is in the two chapters that Klein did complete (they exist only in rough copy) that the most interesting and provocative insights into how the novel would be shaped are to be found. The Golem begins with a declaration by the first-person narrator of his role in the story:

On this twenty-second day of the month of the gentile's August, in the year one thousand six hundred and nine, the which day, after our own true reckoning anno mundi in the eighteenth of Elul of the three hundred and sixty-ninth year of the Sixth Millenium, I, Sinai ben Issachar, aforetime scribe, secretary, and amanuensis to the erst deceased and deeply mourned rabbi, the Hoihel Rabbi of Prague, Rabbi Judah ben Bezalil Leow--O wound still open!--having in pity and humbleness of spirit prepared myself to the accomplishing of change that the great Cabbalist, dying, laid upon me, do now, within the twenty four hours his soul was exonerated this burdened world, commence the relation of the marvellous strange wonders which he in his lifetime worked.

(003296)

By casting his tale as the testimony of a scribe--an eye-witness reporter, so to say, of the weird and legendary events about to unfold in flashback--Klein ensures a kind of literary realism which not only offsets the mystical nature of the golem legend itself but which also ensures an immediate

suspension of disbelief. It is significant that the narrator is a scribe, for--as has already been seen--Klein was as much interested in the nature of this singular profession as he was in the legend itself. In The Golem, Klein parallels the magical powers of the great Rabbi Leow, who enters into a relationship with God through his extraordinary creative accomplishment, with the magical powers of the scribe (like the "Scribe" of Hath Not a Jew), who enters into a similar relationship with God through the onerous task of copying His Word and thereby repeating the first act of Creation. With this in mind, The Golem might be considered as a statement about the creative process itself. Certainly, the novel addresses itself directly to the creative performance of Rabbi Leow, who by invoking God's Name fashions a man from clay. Moreover, Sinai ben Issachar, who stands at one remove from the rabbi, feels the formidable responsibility of faithfully recording the rabbi's life and works. And finally, the narrator seems to speak for the author, echoing Klein's preoccupation with his role as imitator of God:

And it came to pass, say the Scriptures, even announcing with the phrase, as our commentators aver, either the imminence of calamity or the advent of salvation--but at what curve of this revolving circle, this coming and passing and coming again, at what tangent shall I snatch?

(003297)

Like so many of Klein's early poems (Auto-da-fé, Escape, the lyrics of Poems [1932]), which begin with either direct or indirect quotations from Genesis, The Golem also begins with

a quotation from the first book of the Old Testament. In this case, as in the other examples, the scribe's creative function is aligned with God's.

The narrator, who is thus both copyist and author, faces the blankness before him, the unfilled pages of his manuscript, with a statement on the writer's familiar difficulty --how to begin:

I envy against all our custom, the calligraphists of the gentiles, who heralded their texts with the initial ornate, some single letter in the curlicues and branchings whereof there is already shadowed forth, not only the emblem, but almost the whole narrative of the illumined page.

(003297)

The Hebrew custom of which the scribe writes is that which prohibits the use of illustration in the writing of Scriptures. This custom, of course, finds its source in the Second Commandment and is one of the most important rules which the scribe must follow. (Klein alludes to the custom in "Heirloom," mentioned earlier in this chapter and in the "Numbers" section of The Second Scroll.) Issachar then recalls a medieval manuscript of Genesis, written by a monk, which he had once seen:

. . . the chapter beginning, sed et serpens. How cunningly colubrine that S was shaped, sinuous, undulant, round, the subtlety of the old serpent symbol'd in every spiral and twist of that sigmoidal letter! And within the daedalian convolutions about the rampant head and sleek ophidian tale, how helplessly was caught our Mother Eve! Surely in that coloured letter, with its rings of gold and gorgets of minium, the third chapter entire found its likeness and similitude! With what

image, then, shall I adorn my own first letter of exordium?

(003298-99)

But the question is rhetorical because the scribe has already begun, has already answered it with his exceptionally long introductory apologia on the struggle to begin. Furthermore, he has cleverly circumvented the prohibition against illustration by using words to conjure up the image with which he would begin his text. There is a suspicion that the subject of his description, the entanglement of Eve and the serpent, serves not only to foreshadow the ominous events of the novel but also to suggest that The Golem finds its "likeness and similitude" in these opening remarks. This suspicion is confirmed in the first chapter, where Issachar records the deathbed wish of his master, Rabbi Leow, who, until the last, seems haunted by the moral ambiguity of his creative endeavour:

"Did I do it right . . . when I summoned him out of chaos. . . . For a rending doubt tears me. Now, when only certainties should make up my baggage, a great doubt assails me." He seemed to weigh it. "Would it not have been better, altogether better, had I allowed the Lord's occasions to take their intended course? Was it not an evidence of lack of faith in God's conduct of the world, on my part an arrogance, a stiff-neckedness, to seek to prevent His will with my vain meditations?" He paused, and then returned to his remorse. "And for such daily purposes to use the Ineffable Name! . . . in the accounting of Heaven which of the two prevails, the intention or the act?"

(003304)

Rabbi Leow's dangling query ties him to the tradition of the Faustian hero, to Dr. Frankenstein, and to Adam himself inasmuch as the pursuit of knowledge and the urge to create "some new thing"--the poet's commendable impulse in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape"--immediately enters him into competition with God. The potential consequences of such an impulse, therefore, raise the spectre of doubt and moral ambiguity from which the hero never really escapes. Issachar, the scribe, when asked by his dying master to record the tale of his life, initially recoils from the undertaking because such a record would be another form of creation and would, perhaps, lead him on a similar quest for truth into a dark labyrinth from which he might not return the same man. He insists that he is not up to the task, that he is a mere scribe, a copyist; but Rabbi Leow advises him to follow the ten-fold rules for the scribe (which will be discussed shortly in this chapter) because "they will make [him] author."

The dialogue between the scribe and Rabbi Leow is an introduction to The Golem. Chapter two of the novel begins in Issachar's childhood past. He retraces his memories of early life in Venice--of his family life, the course of his education, and the character of his companions. Of major interest to the present discussion is his "growing scepticism of the speculations of reason itself" and his particular inclination to seek perfection through Jewish mystical texts, the books of the Kabbalists. (This point recalls

Klein's own use of these works in Hath Not a Jew.) The central subject of the chapter, however, concerns the narrator's first confrontation with "Evil, which was transformed into something real and present." One day, a Jew from Trani, one Isaac Conchio, entered Issachar's father's services. Issachar had immediately distrusted Conchio's unctuous, obsequious manner and tried to warn his father of his suspicions. Conchio had so expertly ingratiated himself with the family, however, that when his deception and malevolence were revealed it was too late; the narrator's parents had their fortunes stolen right from under them. Issachar's father was left spiritually and economically devastated, and his mother lost her speech and died soon afterwards. One day Issachar received a manuscript called The Perfect Crime, written by his close friend Leon de Modena, whose father was killed by Conchio. The shocking piece detailed how a man might wreak revenge on another in a most hideous and unsuspecting manner. Modena began his "satanic strategy of murder" with the opening lines of Genesis: "In the beginning, He created the heaven and the earth." So it is that Modena is inexorably linked in his mad way with the other figures in the novel, who would devise and execute their own creative strategy, who seek justice through revenge or through the pursuit of truth: Rabbi Leow, the golem, Conchio, and the narrator himself. The chapter concludes with the troubled Issachar

having turned away from the sordid schemes of the world to study the mystics and "to dream of Jerusalem."

Presumably, the novel would have concluded with the destruction of the golem, accomplished, according to Klein's notes, by reading the Book of Creation backwards. But the thoughts of the scribe and the effect on his life of the marvels he would witness remain as mysterious as the legend itself. Given the tone and the direction of the two chapters, it is inviting to speculate that the moral questions raised at the outset of the novel by Rabbi Leow concerning the act of creation would not be answered by a judgement against "the intention." The overwhelming impression of Klein's written work testifies to his obsession with the mysteries of creation and ultimately to his celebration of the creative process despite its consequences.

Offering, as it does, the recipe for the creation and destruction of the golem, the Book of Creation (known in Hebrew as the Sefer Yetsirah), is not only fundamental to the development of the golem concept but is also essential to the development of Judaic interpretations of cosmology. Since Klein was well acquainted with this enigmatic, Kabbalistic text and its magical view of the Torah, it is important to understand the basic assumptions underlying the practical exegetical methods employed by the authors of the Book of Creation. According to Klein's notes for The Golem, one of Issachar's most accomplished tasks was to have been a

comprehensive study of the Book of Creation. Now much of Kabbalistic speculation and doctrine is concerned with the realm of the divine emanations, or sefiroth, in which God's creative power unfolds. Inasmuch as God reveals Himself, He does so through the creative power of the sefiroth, a term conventionally derived from a Hebrew root word meaning "to number."¹⁴⁵ The ten sefiroth which God poured forth at Creation include three entities: spirit-air, water, and fire. The six others are the six dimensions of space--the four cardinal points of the compass in addition to height and depth. These, together with the Spirit of God (the Shechina or "true essence" described in Klein's "Scribe"), constitute the ten sefiroth, which are eternal. The Book of Creation opens with this keynote statement:

In thirty-two mysterious paths of wisdom did the Lord write, the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, the living Elohim, and King of the Universe, the Almighty, Merciful, and Gracious God; He is great and exalted and eternally dwelling in the Height, His Name is Holy, He is exalted and Holy. He created His Universe by the three forms of expression: Numbers, Letters, and Words.¹⁴⁵

The thirty-two paths are then explained as the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, together with the ten sefiroth. The ten non-material entities constitute the mould into which all created things were originally cast. The letters, on the other hand, are the prime cause of matter, which by its union with the forms gave rise to the world of corporeal

¹⁴⁵The Book of Creation, trans. Arthur Edward Waite (New York: Ktav, 1970) 17.

beings. The process which the Kabbalists describe as the emanation of divine energy and of divine light is characterized, then, by the unfolding of the divine language. The secret world of the godhead is a world of language, a world of divine names and words that unfold in accordance with a law of their own. The elements of the divine language appear as the letters of Holy Scripture. Hence, letters and names are not only conventional means of communication, but far more: the twenty-two consonants of the Hebrew alphabet in which the Torah was written contain the secret essence of both Creation and Revelation. Language and number, conjoined, are thus declared to be the instruments whereby the cosmos in all its infinite variety of combinations was called into existence by God.¹⁴⁶

It is a short step from the Book of Creation to the evolution of the tradition concerning the writing of the Bible and especially to the writing of the scrolls, which must always be hand-printed. Consequently, the scribe's role is conferred with special reverence. As a being endowed with the power and the capacity to control his own ends, as well as to contribute towards the fulfilment of Creation, he is, like the poet, a co-worker with God. So it is appropriate that Klein would have focussed The Golem on a scribe figure as much as on Rabbi Leow himself.

¹⁴⁶This explanation of the significance of the ten sefirot is condensed from Scholem's On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism, 100-05.

"The Seventh Scroll," a short story that Klein published in the Jewish Standard in 1933, is of major interest in the light of this discussion.¹⁴⁷ The story is typical of several of Klein's finest achievements in short fiction in its masterful blend of the tragic and the humorous. Reb Yekuthiel Geller, a thirty-five-year-old scribe, is the central character of "The Seventh Scroll." His self-deprecating, insouciant manner associates him with a long line of shlemiel characters in Jewish literature. These are foolish or unlucky men who stroll through life as if through a dream and who accept the circumstances of their fate as the incomprehensible workings of a divine plan.¹⁴⁸ In this story, Geller's unsung accomplishments include the successful completion of six Torah scrolls and an untold number of talismans (for phylacteries) and countless mezuzahs. The story-teller stresses the serious nature of Geller's profession and formidable responsibility. He mentions early in the narrative that an error in the scribe's work would render any one of his scrolls useless, in which case it would have to be

¹⁴⁷"The Seventh Scroll," Jewish Standard 22 September 1933: 119, 163-67; Canadian Jewish Chronicle 12 September 1947: 4-7; 19 September 1947: 9, 15; MS 003680-98. See also A.M. Klein Short Stories, ed. M.W. Steinberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983) 97-110.

¹⁴⁸In "The Yiddish Proverb," Canadian Jewish Chronicle 12 December 1952: 4, Klein defines the difference between a shlemiel and a shlimazel: a man is being served tea in a restaurant by a waiter who spills it over the customer's lap. "The waiter is the shlemiel and the drinker is the shlimazel proper."

sealed in an earthen vessel and "buried in the coffin of a saint."

What is particularly interesting about "The Seventh Scroll" is that Klein chose to cast his archetypal little man in the role of a scribe. Like Issachar, the central figure of The Golem,¹⁴⁹ Geller assumes his place in Klein's moral-aesthetic as a masking figure for the poet himself. Moreover, Klein's preoccupation in the 'thirties with the function of the scribe, who spends his life in imitation of God and His creative powers, anticipates Klein's obsession, in the 'forties and 'fifties, with the unacknowledged saintliness of the poet in society. Like the poet-hero of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," who wears a "halo of anonymity," the scribe wears a halo of comic sadness while, in the end, his private vision triumphs over the foolishness of the world.

"The Seventh Scroll" partakes of the lyrical pathos of the great Yiddish story-tellers, such as I.L. Peretz and Sholom Aleichem.¹⁴⁹ The pervading tone of sadness and hopelessness in the story expresses the inability of human beings to respond or even to communicate with one another; however, the virtuous, indeed, saintly life of the scribe does not pass unnoticed. The narrator, like Peretz's and Aleichem's story-tellers, shares with the reader in an

¹⁴⁹Klein translated one of Peretz's short stories, "Ne'ilah in Gehenna," Commentary 17. 1 (January 1954): 68-71. See A Treasury of Yiddish Stories, eds. Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg (New York: Schocken Books, 1973) 213-28.

unqualified appreciation of Geller's struggle and ultimate failure to perfect Creation by re-creation. And like his Yiddish models, Klein expresses, through the theme of anti-heroism, his admiration for one who does not actively exert his social will but lives and endures in silence instead. The so-called victim, Geller, is seen as the sanctified agent of moral purity. It is this anti-heroic tradition that informs even the persona of Klein's love poetry; consistently, he is figured as the little man, long-suffering, persistent, and lovingly ironic ("the spectacled little Jew" of "Ballade of the Poet;" "the poor scribbling Abraham" of "Why do you love me as you say you do;" the "humble thin-voiced Jew" of "Would that three centuries had seen us past;" and the "dwarf, a Jew" of "Upon a time there lived a dwarf, a Jew"). Anyone, Klein seems to be saying in "The Seventh Scroll," can learn to conquer the world, but only a Geller can learn to live in it.¹⁵⁰

One final note is pertinent to this discussion. Almost twenty years after the publication of "The Seventh Scroll" and "Scribe" Klein wrote a series of essays on "The Bible Manuscripts" for the Canadian Jewish Chronicle in which he asks how is it that confidence can still be maintained in the authority of the Torah: "The Scripture in our hands, which attests to the existence and disappearance of its own

¹⁵⁰Waddington's "Folklore in the Poetry of A.M. Klein" offers a helpful analysis and explanation of the sources of Klein's "little Jew."

original, is but a transcript. Who made it?" His answer develops in the article with the casuistical flamboyancy of rabbinical argument. That the Scripture survives at all indicates, he maintains, that there was an original. In order to counterbalance the tautological speciousness of such an hypothesis Klein sets forth the rigid tenfold code which every scribe is compelled to follow:

- 1) Writing must be done on parchment.
- 2) Before writing, meditate.
- 3) No erasures.
- 4) And the ink--indelible.
- 5) Before writing, every word pronounce.
- 6) And before the writing of the Names of God--pause, Pronounce, and ponder.
- 7) No writing downward.
- 8) No piercing of letters, either.
- 9) No gilding the letters.
- 10) Count letters; do not add, omit not.¹⁵¹

This is the honourable code, it may be remembered, which Rabbi Loew advises Issachar to follow in The Golem for "they will make [him] author." Klein argues in "The Bible Manuscripts" that the nature of the tradition in which the scribe operates, its rigorous demands and its insistence on the unqualified devotion of the copyist, encourages acceptance of and credibility in Holy Writ. "Who would dare tamper," he asks, "with such a tradition?" "The letters of Scripture," he continues, "stand separate and erect; like armour, they are the soldiers of Israel." In this view, to slip is to suffer "an illusion, an error in reading." "Jews," Klein once wrote elsewhere,

¹⁵¹"The Bible Manuscripts," Canadian Jewish Chronicle 28 September 1951: 9, 5; 26 October 1951: 9.

"have been running a circulating library for two thousand years--and with only one book."¹⁵²

Looking back on this chapter--on the lyrical enthusiasm of Hath Not a Jew, on the ordered verbal paintings of the uncollected poetry of the 'thirties, on the mysterious unfinished prose experiment, The Golem, and on the poignant shtetl world of "The Seventh Scroll"--it can be seen that Klein's written work during the 'thirties, and especially that which addresses itself to Jewish experience and Jewish thought, is based on a rigorously consistent body of ideas. The consistency of Klein's ideas during this period is not contradicted by the extensive reading and considerable eclecticism which opened up for him windows on the philosophy of Spinoza, Chassidism, the Talmudic commentators and the Kabbalist thinkers. The very fact that Klein's diaries and notebooks list favourite quotations from such varied thinkers as Nietzsche, Heine, and Oscar Wilde indicates that he culled from his reading the philosophical, moral, and metaphysical speculations that harmonized most conveniently with his own evolving interpretation of Judaism and its place in the modern world. The point also needs to be made by way of concluding this chapter that Klein's interest in Jewish thought, Jewish folklore, and Jewish tradition, is never merely ornamental. For Klein, as for the scribe, writing is the fulfilment of a grave duty. The act of

¹⁵²"Notes," MS 004462.

creation allows the poet to collaborate with an immortal rhythm. The "camera eye" records the condition of contemporary fragmentation but never seems to be defeated by the spectacle. Behind it all is the poet-creator, occupying a privileged vantage-point in a sacramental universe.

Chapter Three

Radical Poems

In 1932, Klein showed his undergraduate friend Leon Edel some of the poems that he had been writing for four years. Edel, Caplan notes, was so struck by "the maturing of Klein's talent," that he "arranged to write an article on him for the Canadian Forum."¹ In that article, Edel praised Klein's "extraordinary facility" with his "Jewish poems," citing "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry," "Greeting on This Day," "The Ballad of the Dancing Bear," and other poems which eventually found their way into Hath Not a Jew as "all-important" examples of Klein's "hardiness of thought and of feeling." But in his conclusion Edel chose to single out what he perceived to be a "new phase" of Klein's craft; Klein, Edel wrote, "has become a poet of the proletariat."² Specifically, Edel was referring to a series of poems like "Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger" and "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" that reflected the "Marxian influence" and mirrored "the present crisis" of the Depression. Although Klein, as Edel notes, called these poems his "industrial" poems, they have since become familiar as Klein's radical poems. (Waddington

¹Usher Caplan, Like One That Dreamed: A Portrait of A.M. Klein foreward by Leon Edel (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982) 62. Hereafter cited as Like One That Dreamed.

²Leon Edel, "Abraham M. Klein," Canadian Forum 12 (May 1932): 301.

coined the phrase in her study of Klein and uses it in The Collected Poems.) That Edel would have focussed on Klein's "radical poems" in his summary statements and, by so doing, neglected to mention nearly one hundred and fifty other poems that Klein had shown him indicates both the tenor of the times and the degree to which Edel must have considered the radical poems superior to Klein's other achievements.

The early 'thirties, as Caplan writes of them, were difficult years for the working-class district of Montreal; unemployment was particularly evident in Klein's Montreal neighbourhood. Out of such unstable social-economic conditions grew "a pervasive sense of crisis and ideological debate" which, as Caplan remarks, "Klein could hardly have avoided."³ The "debate" of which Caplan writes centred on the growing conviction that Socialism might be the answer to the economic and political problems of the period. In fact, Klein's closest friends, F.R. Scott and David Lewis, "were already well on their way to helping found Canada's first major socialist party."⁴ But Klein, as Caplan rightly points out, was never as "politicized" by the Depression. His primary concern was still with the writing of poetry, and so he turned instead to expressing his political and social concerns in verse and in what became known as the radical poems of this period. No doubt, Edel's enthusiasm for these poems

³Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 63.

⁴Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 63.

stemmed partly from his sympathy for their subject matter. In England, Auden, Spender, MacNiece, and C. Day Lewis were writing lyrics that sympathized strongly with Marxian thought. The impact of their poems must have been felt by the Edel writing for the Canadian Forum. In Klein, Edel probably recognized the potential for an authentic "proletarian" poet who could compete with the influential British poets of the period.

"Mr. Klein," Edel wrote of the twenty-three year old Montreal poet, "admits the influence of Eliot," but, he continued, "it does not matter, for it is Eliot with the foot-print of Klein upon him."⁵ Four years later, W.E. Collin wrote in The White Savannahs that Klein's "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" was built to Eliot specifications."⁶ Collin's recognition of Eliot's influence was not meant to damn Klein, but to praise him. Yet, curiously enough, ever since both Edel and Collin congratulated Klein on his skilful handling of Eliot's influence in the radical poems, readers have dismissed the poems precisely on the grounds that Klein was heavily derivative of Eliot. Probably because the poems were not published in Klein's first volumes of poetry they were, at first, ignored. But writing in the Canadian Forum in 1950, Louis Dudek claimed that the radical poems were "a

⁵Edel, "Abraham M. Klein," 301.

⁶W.E. Collin, The White Savannahs 1936, intro. by Germaine Warkentin (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975) 209.

kind of anti-poetry." Coincidentally, Dudek wrote that Klein's poems belong to the same period when Klein was "aping T.S. Eliot and writing Marxist satires" in the very same periodical in which Edel had praised Klein's "industrial poems."⁷ No doubt, Dudek was inadvertently acknowledging Edel's earlier piece when he wrote that the radical poems constituted Klein's "second period"--what, in fact, Edel had termed Klein's "new phase" of poetic development. But Dudek, notwithstanding his acknowledgement of that "new phase," saw it as a period from which Klein had to emerge as a more mature poet. Dudek's argument helped set the tone for future considerations of the radical poems. In 1965, John Matthews wrote that they were "poor." Perhaps borrowing from Dudek's earlier comments, Matthews continued to say that the "influence of T.S. Eliot is followed in rapid succession by that of Auden, Day Lewis and Spender," and that the poems are "poor" because they had been omitted "from any of the volumes of the collected poems."⁸ Miriam Waddington accounts for these later reappraisals of the radical poems. Dudek, she rightly points out, was "obedient to the aesthetic bias of [a] time" when, she implies, it was not only fashionable to counter the trend of Eliot cultism

⁷Louis Dudek, "A.M. Klein," in A.M. Klein, ed. Tom Marshall, Critical Views on Canadian Writers (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970) 70. This article is reprinted from The Canadian Forum 3 (1950): 10-12.

⁸John Matthews, "Abraham Klein and the Problem of Synthesis," in A.M. Klein (Marshall) 139.

but also to identify one's self with a less obviously left-wing bias. Dudek, Waddington facetiously adds, would have preferred to see Klein as having "shed his Jewish baggage" so that he could "travel light and right--the latter in more ways than one."⁹

Dudek and his contemporaries did indeed feel it necessary to stem the tide of indiscriminate and uncritical acceptance of literary trends that had washed over Canadian letters in the first half of the century. In so doing, Dudek dared to counter the established criticism of such notables as E.K. Brown and the E.J. Pratt who had written in 1944 of the style of Klein's radical poems that while it seemed "at first strikingly derivative of Eliot," it "brewed a tang of its own." Klein, Pratt wrote, "had a way of making us ignore the echoes by a manner of utterance which was imposed upon the material by the nature of the theme and by his own vivid personality."¹⁰ This catalogue of critical history points less to what the radical poems have to say and how they work than to their relation to fashionable critical taste. Miriam Waddington devotes an entire chapter of her short study of Klein to such considerations; she is the only critic thus far to attempt anything in the way of a comprehensive exploration of the themes and the complex structural principles

⁹Miriam Waddington, A.M. Klein, Studies in Canadian Literature (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970) 31.

¹⁰E.J. Pratt, "Review of The Hitleriad," in A.M. Klein (Marshall) 18.

of the radical poems. Her discussion, in fact, is a valuable starting point for more detailed exploration of the controversial poems of Klein's so-called radical period.

While it is true that the radical poems were omitted from Klein's published volumes, this is hardly a reasonable point by which to judge them as either "anti-poetry," with Dudek, or as "poor" poetry, with Matthews. The radical poems would hardly have suited the Jewish themes of either Hath Not a Jew... or Klein's Poems (1944) and would have been out of place in the lyrical studies of the Canadian environment which make up The Rocking Chair poems. Moreover, the radical poems do belong to a special period in both Klein's life and Canadian history, a period when social conditions dictated an immediate response to the political injustices of the Depression. For this reason alone they are worth considering as period pieces. (One does not dismiss, say, Auden's or Spender's 'thirties protest poems simply because the Depression belongs to what now seems a bygone age.) But even if the radical poems were to be considered too dated there would still remain the matters of their literary merits, their complex structures, their often subtle use of ironic allusions and themes, and their style and diction. "In assessing the radical poems almost entirely in terms of topicality," Waddington argues, "Dudek misses Klein's linguistic skill and social commitment."¹¹ In fact, Waddington, in her

¹¹Waddington, A.M. Klein, 53.

endeavours to redress the critical balance, goes so far as to say that "it is difficult to understand how any critic could suggest that Klein's work derives from Eliot."¹² As brave as such a statement may be, especially in the light of almost every reader's insistence--from Edel to Matthews--that the radical poems bear Eliot's influence, it is inaccurate. Waddington, of course, wants to liberate Klein from the charge of derivativeness. She thus stresses Klein's habit of drawing on Jewish thought and Jewish culture in the radical poems. But it is difficult to understand how she can ignore Klein's open debt to Eliot in such poems as "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" and "Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger." Not only does Klein "derive" his themes and style from Eliot in these poems, but he also insists on using Eliot in a consciously referential manner in order to develop an ironic frame of reference for his own themes and preoccupations. Klein; it will be argued, does not simply evoke Eliot; he reveals in the radical poems what he thinks of Eliot.

In her introductory remarks to a study of Eliot's "speech," Anne Ridler writes, in obvious paraphrase of Eliot's own critical statements, that "to learn to be a poet is to learn the art of pillaging."¹³ Ridler claims that

¹²Waddington, A.M. Klein, 47.

¹³Anne Ridler, "A Question of Speech," in T.S. Eliot: A Study of His Writings in Several Hands, ed. B. Rajan (London: Dennis Dobson, 1947) 108. Hereafter cited as T.S.

Eliot "had a host of imitators" who could not hope to compete with "so graceful, conscious and mature a writer."¹⁴ But Klein, too wise a poet to pillage secretly and, for that matter, too independent a poet to want to, opted for a more ingenious strategy. Eliot's own method, as revealed in The Waste Land and admitted in his essays ("Tradition and the Individual Talent" and The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism), was to quote self-consciously from his preferred literary models--the classical poets, Dante, the metaphysical poets, the French Symbolists--partly to align himself with the values of a tradition which he felt had disintegrated in his own age. And in the post-War period, as M.C. Bradbrook writes, Eliot "found a principle of order in the traditions of his art."¹⁵ Klein, taking his cue from Eliot's aesthetic practice, self-consciously quotes Eliot, as well as Eliot's literary mentors, partly to achieve the same ends. Since the radical poems are occasioned by the same view of social fragmentation and disorder that rests behind Eliot's work and since they attempt, through the "application of a principle of complexity," as Cleanth Brooks says of The Waste Land,

Eliot. See Eliot's "Philip Massinger," in Selected Essays (London: Faber and Faber, 1932) 206. "Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different."

¹⁴Ridler, "A Question of Speech," 108.

¹⁵M.C. Bradbrook, "Eliot's Critical Method," in T.S. Eliot, 126.

"to give the effect of chaotic experience ordered into a new whole,"¹⁶ it certainly appears that Klein not only wanted to pillage Eliot but that he also wanted to be caught in the act. Any discussion of the radical poems must take Eliot into account or, at least, must recognize the way in which Klein self-consciously applied Eliot's principle of quotation to force an identification between himself and the tradition for which Eliot stands. It is not surprising that Klein would have chosen to call attention to such an identification in the radical poems for they are united in a view of a whole society, not just a Jewish one, in disintegration. The Jewish poems of the 'thirties, even when they lament cultural disintegration (Sonnets Semitic, etc.), have, at least, a recognizably rich Jewish tradition to which they may refer. But the radical poems, with their broader treatment of social, economic, and spiritual impoverishment, contain a much wider cultural history. It is with such an awareness of the universal history of the human condition that Klein appropriately broadens his frame of reference.

To speak of the radical poems is to speak specifically of six long poems which Klein wrote throughout the 'thirties and which he published in either the Canadian Forum or in New Frontier. These are: "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet," "Spirée of Velvel Kleinburger," "Blueprint for a Monument of

¹⁶Cleanth Brooks, "The Waste Land: An Analysis," in T.S. Eliot, 32.

War," "Of Daumiers a Portfolio," "Of Castles in Spain," and "Barricade Smith: His Speeches." These poems may be considered as constituting Klein's radical period not only because they share a particular point of view of a specific time but also because they address themselves to the problems of all men suffering political injustices. But it ought to be kept in mind that many other poems written during the 'thirties could be considered "radical" inasmuch as they were written to reflect and to attack social ills and economic injustices. Indeed, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" laments the plight of its wandering hero, who is denied dignity by the agents of oppression in the contemporary world. "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry," although it is primarily a poem about the position of Jews in medieval society, is also a comment on Jews in twentieth-century society facing anti-semitism. And such poems as "Ballad of the Dancing Bear" and "Wandering Beggar" can be viewed as explicit statements on the superior position and the incontestible dignity of the poor as opposed to the royal or the rich man. The difference between these poems and the so-called radical poems is that in the former, Klein primarily speaks to the Jewish condition while in the latter, he primarily appeals to the universal condition. In addition to this, in the former Klein most often comments in the light of Jewish history, continually setting forth the parallel between medieval Jewry and contemporary Jewry, while in the latter, he most often abandons this device and

squarely faces the present. In fact, Klein's insistence on rooting his subject in a current and contemporary social landscape might best be compared with his treatment of contemporary society in The Rocking Chair poems, where he comments directly on his immediate environment, writing, as he does in the radical poems, with more of a sociological perspective than a historical one.

I. "My Literati Friends in Restaurants"

An early sonnet, "My Literati Friends in Restaurants,"¹⁷ is worth considering as a useful introduction to Klein's radical poems. In this Shakespearean sonnet Klein sets forth an opposition between the speaker of the poem and the company that he keeps. With playful mockery, he describes the serious conversation of his coffee-house companions whose indignant, table-thumping, left-wing rhetoric, punctuated by cigarette puffing and coffee-sipping, seems exaggerated and even ridiculous to him. While they inveigh against time-honoured institutions such as marriage and religion, the speaker "toy[s] with a blank menu and a pen." What this

¹⁷"My Literati Friends in Restaurants," Opinion 2.8 (25 July 1932): 16; 22S 001487; P32 001619; GHP 001853; The Collected Poems of A.M. Klein, ed. and with an intro. by Miriam Waddington (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974) 42-3. All subsequent references to published poems are to this edition and are noted in parentheses. Readers should also consult Zailig Pollock's "Errors in The Collected Poems of A.M. Klein," Canadian Poetry 10 (Summer/Spring 1982): 91-99.

learned scribbler produces is nothing less than the last line of Dante's Divine Comedy: "L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle" (the love that moves the sun and the other stars).¹⁸ Of course, Dante here celebrates the ideal goal of the journey through the spheres: the Christian God of love. In "My Literati Friends in Restaurants" the line seems specifically to be addressed to a woman or, at least, to someone with whom the speaker is in love since, thinking of such a person, he refers to "our love." His coffee-house friends also express their love, not for any one person in particular but "for the working classes." Clearly they are passionate--they shout their love--but the speaker does not share their enthusiasm, distracted as he is by his more private and personal feelings. In fact, he admits to being mildly embarrassed ("Here it sounds silly") to be thinking such thoughts in the midst of his shouting companions. Yet in his evocation of Dante, the speaker seems to be drawing a parallel between the absolute power and purity of his love and that of Dante's. By the time that Dante utters his summary line he is no longer thinking of a specific woman but of God. Klein's speaker may not be thinking of God, but he does draw a distinction between his friends' love for the working classes and his own private love. Thus, although he

¹⁸The Divine Comedy, trans. C.H. Stinson (London: Pan Books, 1980) 499.

may feel self-conscious about having such feelings in such company he nevertheless insists on the purity of those feelings.

"My Literati Friends in Restaurants" encapsulates what may be considered as the general attitude of Klein's radical poems. On the one hand, the speaker of the sonnet identifies himself with his politically conscious friends; on the other hand, he sees himself as set apart from them by his interest in his personal love and, more important, by his interest in literature. Thus the sonnet cleverly expresses the speaker's affection for his earnest coffee-house cohort while it simultaneously mocks the somewhat affected histrionics of his companions' gestures and rhetoric. While they speak of Plato, he dreams of Dante.

While the speaker declares, in the last third of the sonnet, that he scarcely knows how he came "by this" last line of the Divine Comedy it is inviting to speculate that Klein came by it through reading Eliot or, specifically, Eliot's essay on "Dante," first published in 1929.¹⁹ Since it is included in Klein's private collection--the XXII Sonnets of 1931--"My Literati Friends in Restaurants" was probably written sometime during that year. Very likely Klein would have read by then the essay which served to establish Dante as a central figure in Eliot's great literary tradition. M.C. Bradbrook is not exaggerating the situation when he writes that after the appearance of Eliot's essay it

¹⁹Eliot, "Dante," in Selected Essays, 237-277.

was as if the "Renaissance didn't happen." Eliot, Bradbrook states, "showed the way the wind blew." Indeed, Eliot's

essay on Dante has been followed not only by considerable general interest in Dante, but by a cult of the later Middle Ages which threatens to become as monotonously vociferous as the cult of the metaphysical poets.²⁰

Klein was probably caught up in the wave of "general interest" in Dante that swept over an entire generation of readers of Eliot. It might even be said that Klein's continued interest in the Middle Ages in the 'thirties stemmed from the same "cult" of attention to which Bradbrook refers. When Klein was writing "My Literary Friends in Restaurants" such a cult was just beginning to take shape and was hardly "monotonously vociferous." If accepted, the suggestion that Klein came to Dante through Eliot indicates that even in 1931 Klein was not simply imitating or paying tribute to Eliot; he was making far more subtle use of his references.

Now, in 1929, Eliot was not yet speaking as a committed Christian. His point in the essay on Dante is to draw attention to belief as an informing principle in Dante's work which, regardless of the reader's personal beliefs, must be appreciated on its own terms. In this approach, the honourable critic "sees certain beliefs . . . as possible so that [he can] suspend . . . judgement altogether."²¹ As Samuel Hynes writes, Eliot is in effect "saying that even

²⁰Bradbrook, "Eliot's Critical Method," 121.

²¹Eliot, "Dante," in Selected Essays, 259.

though we may not be able to accept a philosophy as true, we will not altogether despise it if we see that it can be used in a good poem."²² In the context of Klein's "My Literati Friends in Restaurants," Eliot's argument is particularly relevant. It is not just the speaker's love for a woman which forces his self-consciousness at the restaurant table; rather, it is his love and appreciation of literature which belongs to a sphere of experience from which his political interests may be excluded or, perhaps, even to which they are subordinated. The point of this discussion is to suggest just how far Klein's use of Eliot reaches in the work in which Eliot so obviously figures. Dudek and his contemporaries preferred to see Klein's use of Eliot as ornamentation and thus neglected to probe the ways in which Klein consistently employed his quotations in the service of aesthetic function. There is, in fact, no uncritical acceptance of Eliot in Klein, as further exploration of the radical poems shall demonstrate. Years after "My Literati Friends in Restaurants" and the radical poems of the 'thirties, Klein distinguished himself from the host of "imitators of Eliot" who, he observed, "write, under mesmerism . . . compose in their sleep. They have been bitten by the TSE-TSE fly."²³ Clearly Klein did not see himself as having been so mesmerized.

²²Samuel Hynes, "The Trials of a Christian Critic," in The Literary Criticism of T.S. Eliot, ed. David Newton-De Molina (London: Athlone, 1977) 70.

²³MS 005241.

II. "Diary of Abe Segal, Poet"

The first of the radical poems to be published, "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" (82-88) is similar in theme to "My Literati Friends in Restaurants."²⁴ The title combines both Klein's name and, probably, that of Klein's friend J.I. Segal, a Montreal poet whose Yiddish poems Klein translated during the 'thirties. The deliberately autobiographical reference underlines an association between the beleaguered subject of the poem, a poet who must endure the drudgery of factory life to make ends meet, and Klein himself, a man who throughout his life lamented the fact that he had to work at jobs which took him away from the writing of poetry. Like "My Literati Friends in Restaurants," "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" is primarily concerned with the political and economic issues of the day; like the sonnet, the longer poem is also concerned with literature and its role in such a world. Most telling, perhaps, is that like "My Literati Friends in Restaurants," "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" makes explicit use of quotation in the representation of these themes.

"Diary of Abraham Segal" is, as its title suggests, a "diary" or a journal of a day in the life of a poet. Though Segal casts himself in the third person in his diary, the

²⁴"Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet," Canadian Forum 12 (May 1931): 297-300; GHP 001829-38.

poem functions in the manner of an interior monologue inasmuch as the speaker reveals himself through his poem. Segal is in the process of recording his day, or remembering it, as if he were a character in a play. This particular perspective functions significantly on two levels. On the first, the speaker's deliberate distancing of himself from his self underlines the degree to which he is alienated from his working environment. Since he must suffer through a series of boring and meaningless chores and conversations he is consistently and acutely conscious of his estrangement from his environment. Thus, Abe Segal cannot help but see himself enacting a daily drama in which he has little immediate interest. On the second level, the third person distancing perspective also stresses his view of himself as a writer, constructing a version of himself in language which makes pattern and meaning out of ordinary experience. Just as Abraham Klein constructs Abraham Segal to speak on his behalf, so does Abraham Segal construct a persona of Abraham Segal to speak on his behalf.

Klein's obvious model for "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" is Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," a poem about another alienated modern man who, unlike Segal, does not seem to possess the redeeming poetic vision that can save him from himself. Eliot's poem is clearly an interior monologue; although Prufrock appears to be addressing another party, he is, as Robert Langbaum notes, "speaking for his

own benefit." Langbaum's observations about Prufrock's peculiar form of address might well apply to Klein's treatment of point of view in "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet." Prufrock, Langbaum writes,

addresses his other self--the "you" of the first line, "Let us go then, you and I," and the second party of the "we" in "We have lingered." Prufrock's other self figures as the auditor who watches Prufrock's performance at the tea party and to whom Prufrock tells what he learns through the performance about his life. In introducing the speaker's other self as auditor, Eliot makes explicit what is implicit in all the dramatic monologues. All those inadequately motivated and ineffectual utterances are addressed ultimately across the dramatic situation and across the ostensible auditor to some projection of the speaker for whom the superfluous element of the utterance is intended.²⁵

Klein seems to have recognized this fundamental feature of the dramatic monologue and exploited it to reinforce his purpose in "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" so that the speaker, as Langbaum writes, "speaks to understand something about himself." The difference between the "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and Klein's poem, however, is not just that this feature is implicit in Eliot's but explicit in Klein's. Prufrock is not writing his poem--it is understood that he is thinking it--while Abe Segal is definitely writing his experience. Segal's poem is, after all, conceived as a "diary." Segal's ability to write is, in fact, what distinguishes him from Prufrock. Eliot's poems claims to be a "song" but only ironically, of course. Klein's poem is a

²⁵Robert Langbaum, The Poetry of Experience (New York: Norton, 1957) 190.

"diary," a written testimony to Segal's creativity. Thus Klein not only makes obvious reference to Eliot's poem, but he also uses it as a point of departure for his own poem.

The ten sections of the poem are each introduced by a diary entry in which the third person point of view is established. These section headings function in somewhat the same way as Coleridge's marginal notes in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner": to provide a context for the narrative direction of the poem and, perhaps more significantly, to provide in prose what the poetry expresses so richly. More shall be said about the relation between "the Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and Klein's poem at the conclusion of this discussion, by which time such remarks will be more suitable. At this point, it is important to recognize that each section heading documents a specific time and its related function for the purpose of good record-keeping, while the poetic rendering of that function elaborates the vision of the poem.

Abraham Segal's diary begins early in the morning: "7:15--He rises." In this first section Segal is rudely awakened by the "alarum of a dollar clock." A slave to a factory time clock, he is denied the luxury of greeting the morning with lyrical delight or, at least, in a more natural, unhurried fashion. The first three stanzas are filled with allusions to bygone ages when morning aroused happier dreamers far more gently, without the infusion of mechanical devices. These were times when the Horatio of Hamlet, even after a

rather unusual night of ghost-watching, managed to remain calm enough to appreciate the beauty of first light ("But look, the morn in russet mantle clad / Walks o'er the dew of yon eastward hill")²⁶ or when the narrator of the "General Prologue" of the Canterbury Tales lingered on the sensual beauty of the morning ("and small foweles maken melodye").²⁷ Natural sounds "well may be," Segal admits, but not for his "slug-a-bed ears." The allusion here to Romeo and Juliet is especially telling ("Fie, you slug-a-bed!" Juliet's nurse remarks).²⁸ Morning, the time when lovers like Romeo and Juliet traditionally part, is the time of song, of "pastoral minstrelsies," of natural music and of human, organically produced sounds. "The lark at heaven's gate may sing, may sing," Segal remarks, again in echo of Romeo and Juliet's early morning conversation concerning the lark and the nightingale,²⁹ and the "triple braggadocio of the cock" may sound,³⁰ but he cannot hear such music. The start of Segal's day--and of Segal's work week--is signalled by the mechanical

²⁶Hamlet 1.1.166-67.

²⁷Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. and with an intro. by John Matthews Manly (New York: Henry Holt, 1928) 149.

²⁸Romeo and Juliet 4.5.2.

²⁹Romeo and Juliet 3.5.1-36.

³⁰See "Braggadocio" in The Oxford English Dictionary where it is noted that the word is a "name given by Spenser to his personification of Brag, Vainglory," Faerie Queen 2.3. Klein's use of the word in this passage is appropriate to Segal's lament for the passing of an age which Spenser represents.

raspiness of the alarm clock, by the irritating noises of milk machines, and by the intruding honks of automobile horns. These, he writes ironically in his diary, "Cheerily rouse" him out of sleep. In effect, the opening stanza of the poem establishes the degree to which Segal is estranged from the pastoral world of traditional poetry. In his mechanistic, modern realm, the poetry of morning time cannot be authentic. It must be borrowed--there is no time to create--and then only in parts, so that the result is pastiche: a collage made up, as is the stanza, of lines written by other poets.

The next stanza of the first diary entry raises a rhetorical question in which Abraham Segal describes the nature of his "five o'clock dreams." Significantly, both the five o'clock of early morning reverie and the five o'clock of late afternoon that marks the end of Segal's work-day and his re-emergence into the city are suggested here. The ambiguity of the time reference is deliberate; Segal's description of the city which comprises this stanza is both fact and fantasy, reality and dream. Moreover, the strange combination of images which is evoked here to furnish the frightening and electric urban landscape is borrowed directly both from Eliot's "Unreal city" in The Waste Land and from Baudelaire's "Tableaux Parisiens" in Les Fleurs du Mal, one

of Eliot's acknowledged sources for his own cityscape.³¹ In fact, Segal's vivid dream-nightmares ("cauchemars") directly borrow Eliot's and Baudelaire's poetic images. Baudelaire's "Rêve Parisien," for example, conjures up a labyrinth of treeless corridors:

Babel d'escaliers et d'arcades,
C'était un palais infini
Plein de bassins et de cascades
Tombant dans l'or mat ou bruni.³²

Segal imagines "Thin witches mounting escalators." Baudelaire's "Le Cygne," aimlessly walking through dusty Parisian streets, passes a Negress lost among the northern fogs:

Je pense à la négresse, amaigrie et phthisique,
Piétant dans la boue, et cherchant l'oeil hagard,
Les cocotiers absents de là superbe Afrique
Derrière la muraille immense du brouillard.³³

Segal imagines "negresses / Lipping spirituals into radios." His Black-African women are as lost and distanced from life as are Baudelaire's. Moreover, Segal's reference not only evokes "Le Cygne" but also the entire cycle of poems in Les Fleurs du Mal that is concerned with Baudelaire's mulatto mistress, Jeanne Duval, the black sorceress ("Sorcière au

³¹Eliot, Collected Poems 1909-1962 (London: Faber and Faber, 1963) 81. See Eliot's note to Baudelaire's Les Sept Vieillards. Hereafter cited as Collected Poems.

³²Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal (Paris: Libraire Armand Colin, 1958) 113.

³³Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal, 96.

flanc d'ébène, enfants des noirs minuits")³⁴ of sexual desire. Segal dreams not only of negresses and witches but also of "ogres," "ranunculi," "imps," and "elves"--of exotic or weird creatures who are really urban dwellers flying planes and using telephones, inhabitants of the mechanical realm. Like Eliot's London inhabitants, they belong to a throng of urban workers moving and flowing from one destination to another. It is likely that Eliot's influential essays on "Baudelaire" (1920, 1930), in which the French poet's "use of imagery of the sordid life of a great metropolis" is singled out as a "mode of release and expression for other men,"³⁵ prompted Klein to turn to Baudelaire's poetry for his inspiration. The main point of Eliot's essays (particularly the later one) is that Baudelaire's images of contemporary urban life are elevated "to the first intensity," so that a "new" language was invented to convey immediately the intensity of that life. So it was that Eliot himself turned to Baudelaire's "fourmillante cité" ("Les Septs Vieillards")³⁶ as a model for his own treatment of a modern wasteland. In Baudelaire's city, as in Eliot's and in Klein's, dream and reality seem to mix so that the urban landscape is charged with menacing portents. Consider Baudelaire's city, where

³⁴Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal, 30. See also the poems in Baudelaire's "Spleen et Idéal" section of Les Fleurs du Mal.

³⁵Eliot, "Baudelaire," in Selected Essays, 426.

³⁶Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal, 97-99.

"le spectre, en plein jour, raccroche le passant,"³⁷ Eliot's "Unreal city," where "death" undoes "so many,"³⁸ and Klein's city, where humans look like monsters or curious mythic creatures. It is important to remember though that Klein, or Segal, openly borrows his city images, not merely to force an identification between his poem and its antecedents but to further the point that Segal is obliged to borrow. In the mechanical, hurried, and unnaturally paced realm of modern life there is no time to invent a new language.

The last lines of the first diary entry confirm the nature of the modern urban vision:

So have
They clipped the wings
Of fiery seraphim,
And made of them, --ye angels, weep!--
Dusters.

(82)

The pronoun of the second line is fruitfully ambiguous. Its antecedent is properly the "cauchemars" of the preceding stanza, so that Segal's nightmares turn angel's wings into "dusters." But the pronoun also suggests the anonymous, faceless sources of power: the capitalist captains of industry running the machinery of the urban wasteland. Segal, in this stanza, also continues his practice of borrowing from earlier sources. In addressing the "angels" he could

³⁷Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal, 97.

³⁸Eliot, Collected Poems, 65.

be echoing the Isabella of Measure For Measure, whose speech may well be pertinent here:

But man, proud man,
Dress'd in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As makes the angels weep . . .³⁹

If Segal's "fiery seraphim" are rooted, as seems possible, in Isaiah's vision of the glory of God (Isaiah 6.2,4) they also represent a lost time and a lost vision. The reference functions to round out the first entry of the diary. Just as Segal admits in the opening stanzas that the world to which he wakes is, sadly, far removed from the world of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and others, so he concludes by admitting that even his dreams are far removed from the glorious visions of Isaiah. The world through which he moves is Eliot's and Baudelaire's: modern-day death-in-life, where angels' wings have been replaced by coats worn to keep industrial pollution from soiling one's clothes. No wonder that Segal resents having to wake up to such a world. Perhaps in a subtle equivalent of Eliot's radical paradox that "April is the cruellest month," Segal's first diary entry suggests that morning is the cruellest time. An oblique reference to Eliot's Waste Land may be seen in the preoccupation of the entire first section--and, indeed, of the entire poem--with the passing of time. Segal laments the fact that

³⁹Measure for Measure 2.2.117-22.

he is bound to the time-clock of modern urban life; he wakes to the sound of automobile horns, much as Eliot's narrator of "The Fire Sermon" admits that it is not Marvell's "winged chariot" of Time that he hears "But . . . the sound of horns and motors."⁴⁰

It should now be clear just how much of a pastiche is this first section of "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet." The references, some more obvious than others, function on one level to establish the essential subject of the section: the difference between Segal's modern world at morning and the world which in his imagination he sees as less anxious and less hurried. But it ought to be kept in mind that the references function on another level, as part of the pattern of quotations which the entire poem evolves. Segal, is, after all, a literary man--certainly a would-be poet--and only such a man would be able to render his waking experience in this way. Only such a man would be able to know the references from which to quote and, more importantly, find some comfort in the shaping experience of literature which might save someone from completely surrendering to the mad chaos of the waking cauchemar. That Segal is obliged to borrow his poetry suggests that he cannot, at least at this time of the day, invent his own language. Creativity is necessarily prohibited in the mechanical age. The final irony here, an irony which should become increasingly evident

⁴⁰Eliot, Collected Poems, 70.

in this discussion, is that Segal's early morning pastiche is part of a larger and new whole--the entire "diary"--which Segal is in the process of shaping.

With this in mind, it is especially interesting to observe that the next two diary entries are written in the form of a sonnet. The second diary entry, "8:15--He travels on the street-car, and reads over a neighbour's shoulder," is cast in the shape of a Petrarchan sonnet. The choice of this form is particularly ingenious because it furthers the ironical juxtaposition already established in the first section of the poem between the noisy chaos of the modern world and Segal's actively ordering imagination. That this is a Petrarchan sonnet, a vehicle traditionally employed to express the language of love, intensifies the irony of Segal's perspective since the newspaper is concerned with violence and sex, not with idealized love. Moreover, the newspaper which Segal scans is representative of the discontinuous, fragmented randomness of modern experience. Early morning street-car passengers are bombarded by the mass of heterogeneous details on the newspaper page. The nature of the information itself reflects modern man's preoccupation with the ephemeral trivia of current events: the sordid details of celebrity life, sex, and violence. Through the use of enjambment, Klein--or rather Segal--brilliantly captures the newspaper's manner of representing information: "No sex / Appeal say critics of two bankrupt

plays." Restricted by the demands of the spatial arrangement of information on the newspaper page, words hang ambiguously at the end of lines and bump against columns. The effect is thus ironically amusing: "No sex" and "New gang wars / Disturb police." Finally, it can be said that the use of irony is especially effective in view of the fact that the formulaic conditions of the sonnet, with its demands on the limited use of space and its insistence on the economic presentation of information, reflect the manner of representation demanded by the newspaper format.

The Shakespearean sonnet is employed to similar effect in the next diary entry., "8:45--He considers the factory hands." This time Segal extends his ironic perspective of his modern situation by grimly parodying an official report on the monetary value of a worker. The opening two lines are borrowed from Hamlet--specifically, from Hamlet's moving tribute to the human form ("What a piece of work is man").⁴¹ Segal's sonnet is a long way from Hamlet's ennobling description of human attributes. Segal, in fact, plays upon the synecdoche of the factory "hands" who, in being so termed, are regarded as mere parts of a corporate labour team and whose individual humanity is thus denied. So it is that the factory doctor, "Aesculapius Pavlov," "Dissects cadavers," thus reducing the human body to its utilitarian value of "eighty-seven cents." The factory doctor's name provides both an ironic and a

⁴¹Hamlet 2.2.292f.

sardonic commentary on his activities: Aesculapius is the Roman god of healing whose experimental tampering with the natural cycle of human life brought down Zeus's wrath in the form of a thunderbolt, and Pavlov is the Russian doctor whose experiments with human behaviour conceived of man as merely a bundle of animal instinct. The Shakespearean sonnet functions particularly well here because it not only provides a handy model for the doctor's report--its structural divisions mirror the divisions of the human body--but it also reinforces the grim irony between Shakespeare's celebrations of the human form and the purpose to which that form is being put in Segal's age.

In the fourth diary entry, "9:05--He yawns; and regards the slogans on the office walls," Segal, obviously bored and in search of distractions, ironically considers the religious homilies hung, no doubt, to inspire the office occupant to work for what Max Weber's translator calls "the Protestant ethic and the spirit of Capitalism." In Segal's wry view, the God whom such slogans evoke is a "Moneytheist," and the religious sentiments which they express easily remind him of the language of stockbroking. Thus the Lord "lurks / in dividends" and man is bound to Him "In hallowed bonds." Segal also invokes Christ's injunction in the Sermon on the Mount to "Consider the lilies of the field" (Matthew 6.28; Luke 22.29). In the context of the poem, such a consideration is highly ironic; the flowers that bloom in the fields do

"not spin, nor toil," yet they, as the Gospel points out, are beautifully "arrayed" because God provides their "raiment." But the factory hands who must spin and toil so hard in the service of the "Moneytheist" are denied such handsome provisions. (Klein employs the same New Testament passage with a similar ironic effect in another radical poem, "Barricade Smith: His Speeches," which will be discussed later.) That this entire section is cast in the form of cross-rhymed quatrains, and thus effects a chain of verse, underlines Segal's sense of entrapment as he sits in his dreary office.

The fifth diary entry, "11:30--He receives a visitor," clearly and deliberately alludes to Eliot. The boss's wife, "Milady Schwartz," is a vulgar version of the noblewoman or great lady that her title suggests in much the same way that Eliot's Madame Sosostriis is a vulgar version of a priestess. Furthermore, she arrives, as Eliot writes of the visitor in "The Fire Sermon," like an "expected guest."⁴² Segal's account of her visit is marked by the contrast between two kinds of life: that of the rich, comfortable class and that of the working class which Segal and the factory hands represent. Thus, her visit to her husband's factory is viewed, through Segal's sceptical eyes, with a poignant irony. No matter how much Milady Schwartz pretends to understand her husband's milieu, she represents a world of almost grotesque comfort and luxury far removed from the

⁴²Eliot, Collected Poems, 72.

realities of the world into which she so briefly and so condescendingly steps. In this section, Segal, like Prufrock, is acutely aware of the mask that he prepares in order to face her. Such a state of heightened and uncomfortable self-consciousness intensifies the distance, not only between him and her, but between his public self and his inner, observant self. Segal's inner eye focusses on Milady Schwartz's "pendulous chins, and gold teeth," details which render her all the more grotesque in his imagination. Her false modesty ("oh no, she is no snob") and her artistic pretension ("Moi, j'ai Apollon sur les bouts de mes dix doigts . . .") render her more objectionable to him. In an echo of Prufrock, Segal reduces her artistic and literary dalliances to mindless flirtations: ("A teaspoon of art, before and after cards"). The direct allusion to Eliot's "Love Song" here is functionally significant to all of Klein's poem. Prufrock, in his paralytic, self-imposed entrapment of consciousness, comments bitterly on his own life by reducing the accumulated gestures of experience to so many trivial actions: "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons."⁴³ But Segal is neither as hard on himself nor as paralysed as Prufrock; the quotation is not directed against himself but, rather, against the boss's wife and the world of meaningless preoccupations that she represents. She, not Segal, suffers in this instance from the banality of modern life, although further irony is

⁴³Eliot, Collected Poems, 14.

directed at her since, unlike Prufrock, she is probably unaware that she inhabits such a condition. Although Segal resembles Prufrock superficially--both are plagued by the penetrating self-awareness that Milady Schwartz lacks--they differ on one critical point. Segal is depicted as turning such knowledge to his own advantage: he is writing about it and, in so doing, sufficiently distancing himself from the dead-end which Prufrock confronts. Segal transforms his perceptions with wit and wry humour so that the world which he so ironically views never loses its comic-absurdist edge. Prufrock imagines himself to be a victim of some theatrical joke and, consequently, abandons any hope of changing his situation. But Segal, although he too sees the world as a stage, never once imagines that he is so victimized that he cannot exercise any control over it. In fact, it is Segal who literally gives the stage directions: "Exit Lady Schwartz." Finally, it can be said that in this section of "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet," with its Shakespearean echoes ("Milady" Schwartz's visit is treated like a dramatic scene), Segal extends his ironic awareness of the difference between Shakespeare's age and his own which is established in the first section of the poem. But, as well, Segal here firmly establishes a view of himself as a modern-day bard who, precisely because his world is so different from Shakespeare's, must create a new language to meet the absurd circumstances of his own time. In effect, each of the section headings in

the poem might be seen not only as marginal notes in the manner of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" but also as stage directions. In this way the entire poem can be seen as constituting a modern answer to the problem of dramatic representation in the modern world.

Even Segal's lunch break is rendered in his diary with the same ironic, comic-satiric vision. In "12:20--He worships at the North Eastern," Segal imagines himself to be a devotee at the altar of a lunch-counter. God is a short-order cook ("the Lord, our Host"). His "Angel punches the register." It is physical and not spiritual nourishment that a "human soul" seeks here and only some figures on the lunch tab acknowledge Segal's existence: "A soul ate here." This passage also derives its central metaphor from Eliot. In the "Fire Sermon" section of The Waste Land, the protagonist, walking through the urban landscape of modern London,

can sometimes hear
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
The pleasant whining of a mandolin
And the clatter and chatter from within
Where fishermen lounge at noon: where the walls of
Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.⁴⁴

This passage marks a happy fusion of architectural styles and of cultural elements; a splendid seventeenth-century church wrought in the classical style rests comfortably beside a noisy modern bar. Indeed, these lines signal a rare instance of affirmation in The Waste Land since Eliot

⁴⁴Eliot, Collected Poems, 73.

here suggests the possibility of meaning in Lower Thames Street. Klein's, or Segal's, allusion to these lines is particularly ingenious. The description of the "North-Eastern" indicates a much less comfortable mix of architectural styles: classical or, rather, "Cretan floors / Mosaically" (the tiles of Noses?) "crawl towards Alpine walls" (Canadian walls?). Not only is Segal obliged to borrow his poetic images--an unfortunate necessity of too little time to invent new ones--but he also combines them in a striking example of what D.M.R. Bentley calls "Mongrelism"--that is, the ludicrous mixing of incongruous imported and vernacular elements.⁴⁵ Bentley's definition is especially pertinent in this context since he applies it to the well-grounded practice in Canadian poetry of importing ill-fitting forms and techniques and adapting them to Canadian content. Klein demonstrates, in this section of Segal's diary, the kind of decorative mongrelism that results when the creative spirit is prohibited from expressing itself. Since Segal must borrow, in this case from Eliot, the results are indeed ridiculous. Yet since this passage of "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" openly imports its technique, as do so many other parts of the poem, and since it so obviously calls attention to its procedure, it brilliantly testifies to the complex network of ironies at Klein's command. Moreover,

⁴⁵D.M.R. Bentley, "A New Dimension: Notes on the Ecology of Canadian Poetry," Canadian Poetry 7 (Fall/Winter, 1980): 5.

the passage also testifies to Segal's own ironic view of his situation. Only a man like Segal, with his particular eye for detail and his special shaping imagination, might be able to see his lunch-time environment from such a bemused perspective. Even here, he is almost playfully aware of the role or the mask which he must adopt in order to be served in such a place. "I says what I means," he snaps at the waiter, perfectly executing his line.

It is an "act," of course, because once lunch has been served, Segal can withdraw from the scene, so to say, to pursue his own interests: "12:20-12:45--He reads his pocket edition of Shakespeare; and luxuriously thinks." In this next section of "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet," Segal continues to consider his surroundings with his mind full of Shakespeare, and, once again, he ironically invokes the playwright to comment on the state of the modern world. Like Hamlet (and certainly unlike Prufrock, who disclaims any connection between himself and the Prince of Denmark) Segal possesses the kind of intellect that both describes and analyses at the same time. And like Hamlet (but unlike Prufrock) he can speak to himself in Shakespearean blank verse. When he begins his diary entry by looking around the restaurant and commenting "Beneath this fretted roof," Segal again invokes Hamlet's speech to his friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on the "piece of work" that is man. When Hamlet instructs his friends to

look at "this majestic roof fretted,"⁴⁶ he of course means the entire world, both air and sky above him. Segal, in paraphrasing Hamlet, suggests that the "North-Eastern" restaurant where he sits is, in effect, a microcosm of the social order itself--that is, the entire world of capitalist exchange, where poor men eat and drink away their hard-earned salaries in order to forget their troubles, and where they help fill the pockets of the greedy proprietor, the "knave, swag-bellied," who gloats over these "Calibans." Segal imagines the attitude of such a "villain," who "smiles" and so recalls the figure of Claudius, of whom Hamlet says "that [he] may smile, and smile, and be a villain."⁴⁷ If fools be fools, why, let them," this villain who is surely "more knave than fool"⁴⁸ says of his clients. In his speech, this Claudius-like proprietor utters a pastiche of Shakespearean phrases, mixing the language of several plays with the biblical passage (mentioned earlier in relation to the fourth diary entry) from the Sermon on the Mount: "They wake to toil? They sleep to dream of toiling?"⁴⁹ Even these workers, the villain continues, may have "immortal yearnings."⁵⁰

⁴⁶Hamlet 2.2.300.

⁴⁷Hamlet 1.5.108.

⁴⁸King Lear 1.4.337.

⁴⁹A Midsummer Night's Dream 3.2.370; The Winter's Tale 3.3.19; The Tempest 3.2.152; Hamlet 2.2.578.

⁵⁰Antony and Cleopatra 5.2.284.

Yet since, to him, God is the "brimstone brabble of divine looks," even heaven will not provide them with the physical comforts they lack in this life. And even though they are hungry for "such pleasures metaphysical," he knows that they are too willing to spend their earnings on wine and women, on physical pleasures that might relieve them of their hardships. Significantly, these are not Segal's thoughts but the thoughts that Segal imagines such a cynical capitalist proprietor might have while attempting to rationalize his swelling profits at the expense of other men. No wonder then that he is figured most obviously as Claudius, another power-hungry villain with a tendency to rationalize his immoral activities. And no wonder that Segal casts himself in the role of Hamlet. In Segal's imagination, the battle lines between the exploiter and the exploited are clearly drawn. It is also interesting to note that the villain gives the workers a terminology derived from Hamlet. The drunken patrons of his establishment, after "clink[ing] their canakins,"⁵¹ would say "in dark lanes, their bodkins raised:"⁵² "Let me lie in thy lap, Ophelia." Since these words are in paraphrase of Hamlet's⁵³ and would be spoken by the workers, the proprietor unwittingly gives them heroic stature.

⁵¹Othello 2.3.64-68.

⁵²Hamlet 3.1.76.

⁵³Hamlet 3.1.108.

As a whole, the section is another example of the way in which Segal, through his active imagination, manages to affirm his sense of separateness from his surroundings. As already suggested, this is a separateness that only partially points to alienation. More positively viewed, such separateness becomes a way for Segal to create, even to "stage," literature and thus to be saved from Prufrock's deadening inertia. The section also functions in the manner of a pastiche, continuing the pattern of quotation established in the preceding sections of the poem. In this particular case, it is not surprising that the main body of the quotations should be spoken by a villain: even Segal, as hurried and as unhappy as he is, would not mangle Shakespeare's language to the degree that the greedy capitalist does.

After lunch Segal presumably returns to the factory, where more of the same boring routine characterizes the rest of the afternoon. Too good a poet to risk being boring in the repeated description of such a routine, Klein moves ahead to the dinner hour. Segal enters his dinner-time experience next in his diary: "6:30--He eats at the family board." The twelve lines of verse that compose this section bear the metronomic beat of an iambic pentameter which reinforces the description of the formulaic, ready-made ideological systems that console Segal's family members. His father prays to a god who allows him to forget his troubles; his "wedded sister" is concerned with "cash"; his

brother reveres "Herr Karl Marx"; his uncle turns to Zionism ("Herzl"); his cousin "believes both" Marx and Herzl. But Segal, "unlike the ancient bards," cannot find any consolation in any of these men or the systems for which they stand. In a particularly Eliotesque summary statement, he admits that "[his] idols have been shattered into shards." Segal here embodies the dilemma of the modern-day protagonist in The Waste Land whose disturbing and fragmented vision of contemporary life is informed by the knowledge that all the gods have died. The voice of "What the Thunder said" reflects:

He who was living is now dead
 We who are now living are now dying
 With a little patience.⁵⁴

It may be recalled that for Segal, "Providence thunders: 'Clean the kitchen'" in the sixth diary entry. Segal's final line in this eighth section of "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" effectively draws on the whole of The Waste Land inasmuch as Eliot's poem may be described as a collage of "shattered" images which reveal the state of chaotic modern experience.

The theme of modern alienation and despair is carried over into the penultimate section of Klein's poem: "7:15--He contemplates his contemporaries." The diary entry begins with a direct quotation from Mallarmé's "Brise marine." As with the earlier references to Baudelaire in "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet," this quotation from Mallarmé most

⁵⁴Eliot, Collected Poems, 76.

likely finds its way into the poem through Klein's reading of Eliot on the French Symbolist poets.⁵⁵ And, as is the case with the earlier references to Baudelaire, the line from "Brise marine" adds to the rich stock of allusions in a poem which has Eliot at its centre. Since the line with which Segal opens his diary entry is, in fact, the opening line of Mallarmé's poem, the rest of Mallarmé's poem is implied in the rest of the section. The speaker of "Brise marine" expresses the urgent desire to escape from the tedium of his daily life ("Fuir! là-bas fuir!").⁵⁶ This, too, is Segal's wish; "Boredom" (the *Ennui* of Mallarmé and Baudelaire), which bespeaks a near-oppressive spiritual malaise, motivates the central question of "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet." "Where shall I go? What pathway shall I choose?" Segal asks himself at the critical turning point of both his day and the entire poem. For Mallarmé's sad speaker, the answer is given in the title of the poem: to the "sea breeze," to the sailor's song ("le chant des matelots"), which invite him to quit a land-locked world in search of the unknown and the unexpected regions of both inner and outer worlds. But before Segal finds his own answer, he first dismisses several possibilities--the nearby "cinema" (with its false, illusory images of life), the "pool-room,"

⁵⁵Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets" and "Baudelaire," in *Selected Essays*, 281-91; 419-30.

⁵⁶*Oeuvres Complètes: Stéphane Mallarmé*, eds. Henri Mandor et G. Jean-Aubrey (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1945) 38.

the "dance-hall," a "lecturer." None of these holds the possibility of escape for Segal. In an almost playful parody of both Baudelaire and Mallarmé, Segal dismisses his "bitter friends" (presumably the same ones who thump tables in "My Literati Friends in Restaurants"); they "Evoke from [him] the vast abysmal yawn." In other words, Segal is so very nearly defeated by the ennui of his situation that he is liable to fall into the abyss of which the Symbolists so frequently write. Segal notes that the long-haired contemporary poet (unlike the bald Shakespeare), the "theolog" still sermonizing on the relevance of dietary laws, the "dandy," the "lawyer," and the "radical" compose the unsatisfactory group of friends with whom he fails to identify himself:

All, in the end, despite their savage feuds, --
Italic voices uttering platitudes.

(88)

One of Segal's major concerns (and, indeed, one of the central issues of "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet") is that the cliché-ridden, hackneyed language of contemporary life reveals the shallowness and spiritless state of modern culture. The fragmented syntax of the newspaper front page, the hollow utterances of the boss's wife, the greedy rationalizations of the restaurant profiteer, and the empty phrases of Segal's friends and family all add up to a view of modern language as impoverished and lifeless. In a clearly-heard echo of the Symbolist poets and of Eliot, Segal announces that "Life is dead." In fact, as if to

stress the point, the statement continues onto the next line with the word "Echo." The statement itself is an echo of the sentiments expressed by earlier poets. It suggests that life in the modern age is but a ghostly experience, a dim echo of a rapidly fading past.

But herein lies the climax of Segal's "anguish" and the turning point of the poem. Segal, in his moment of supreme and intense alienation from the world, explicitly refers to himself in the third person by name ("So Segal . . ."). The moment of extreme self-alienation is a moment of self-awareness. Such a condition generates the poem's resolution. Segal has not only endured the day's tedium; he has transformed it into something new. The Segal who has borrowed all day from Eliot and others has found his own voice in the process. In effect, Segal's diary is composed, like a macaronic, in two languages--his own and Eliot's (amongst others). The section headings of the diary represent Segal's voice. Segal, the poet, has arranged and ordered the other language(s) of his day into a witty, allusive, emotionally expressive whole. "Life is dead / Echo," he announces, but it is also, he adds, "letters--macaronics washed / From distant shores upon a rocky bed." These lines, which mark the conclusion of this section, are self-reflexive. They also echo Eliot's conclusion to The Waste Land where the protagonist sits upon a shore "with the arid plane behind [him]" and asks what must be a question concerning the possibility of retrieval:

"Shall I at last set my lands in order?" Eliot's protagonist then provides the source of Segal's own re-emergence into life. "These fragments I have shored against my ruins," Eliot's speaker says of both "the lands" he is to put in order and the "fragments" of images derived from Dante's Purgatoria and Kyd's Spanish Tragedy.⁵⁷ These final lines are, as one reader says, "a promise of control."⁵⁸ In recognizing not merely echoes but macaronics, the speaker affirms the creative value of his own voice. He has managed to turn the fragments of the past into an ordered whole which gives shape to the present. Segal's allusion to Eliot's rocky, sterile landscape is clear. Moreover, Segal's "macaronics" are washed ashore by water, the healing element. Up until this point in the day, and in the poem, Segal has had to resort to borrowing his poetic images. His diary has thus far echoed the past, and it has been Segal's complaint that the constraints of modern life have prohibited him from imaginatively recreating his experience. "Life" has been rendered, in other words, through a heap of broken images derived from other poets. But this is Segal's moment of creative insight because here he recognizes the more positive possibility of tradition as a means of escape from prison into a truer creativity. Perhaps even more certainly than

⁵⁷Eliot, Collected Poems, 79.

⁵⁸B. Rajan, "The Dialect of the Tribe," in The Waste Land in Different Voices, ed. A.D. Moody (London: Edward Arnold, 1974) 11-12.

Eliot's protagonist, Segal discovers that he has retrieved something of value from the past and thereby affected his own restoration. More than just a collection of entries, Segal's diary represents his ordering, imaginative reason at work. That this moment in the poem should mark the turning point is perfectly in keeping with the release that Mallarmé's speaker finds in the watery landscape before him at the end of "Brise marine." All of "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" has been advancing towards this edge of renewal. The "letters --macaronics" come from "distant shores": that is, from the past and from Europe, and specifically from lands and times that Shakespeare, Chaucer, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Eliot and others might represent. Segal finally recognizes the correct, creative relation between the tradition to which such poets belong and his individual talent. At the outset of the poem, Segal had neglected to recognize that such a positive relation was possible; yet now it appears that something fruitful has survived from the past. Perhaps even in the modern age that which was valuable and held to be lost has been retrieved--in a decidedly new way.

Confirmation of a new vision is established in the final section of the diary: "9:00--He communes with Nature." The entry marks an experience of personal salvation. Away from the dehumanizing tedium of his job and the nightmarish landscape of the modern city, Segal finally relaxes on a mountain top, a natural oasis or earthly paradise where he

comes to a more integrated vision of himself and his world. If the last lines of the preceding section serve as a point of departure for such a new vision, it is the shared harmony of a love relationship that sustains it. Like Dante entering the earthly paradise atop Mount Purgatory with Beatrice beside him Segal enters the "meadow on the mountain-top" with his "sweetheart beside him." Here he abandons the alienating world below. Everything he now sees is "sweet" and "in comradeship." Gone is the troubling estrangement and the sardonic wryness of the earlier entries: "They see again, his eyes which once were bleak." Again, in a deliberate paraphrase of Eliot, Segal observes himself "nattily" adjusting "his tie." When Prufrock pays attention to his dress ("My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin"),⁵⁹ he betrays his own bourgeois obsession with good appearances, which marks his particularly schizophrenic view of himself and his fundamental fear of being ridiculed. No such fear troubles Segal or informs his gesture. Moreover, Prufrock's failure to ask the question of his loved one--to propose marriage, to "presume" to squeeze "the universe into a ball"--is overcome by Segal, who hears "The bird-song for a prothalamium."

Having conquered any doubts, such as those which Prufrock has, Segal is finally restored to himself. In the final lines of the poem, Segal sees himself comfortably walking

⁵⁹Eliot, Collected Poems, 14.

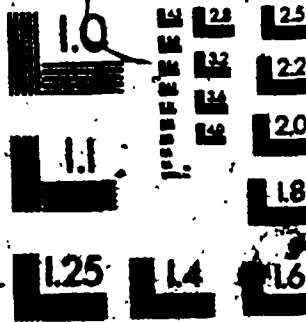
atop the mountain, with "old-time songs" and "old-time poets" in his head. Now Segal gladly "hums" familiar tunes whereas until now he has seen the world through borrowed eyes. Significantly, Segal's last allusion in his diary is to Dante. "Brilliant his shoes with dew, his hair with stars," Segal emerges from the inferno of his day's ordeal. The stars also close each of the books of The Divine Comedy, not just the Purgatorio, which this section of the poem echoes. Physical ascension marks the close of both Klein and Dante's poetic journeys. Both Segal and Dante emerge on higher ground "to see the stars again."⁶⁰ It is fitting that Segal's final echo should be of Dante, for it is now clear just how positively and creatively the past might be brought to bear on the present. Although Klein's poem does not offer, as a whole, a broad redemptive social vision, it does advance towards a personal one. If Segal's "meadow" is an earthly paradise, then he shares with Dante the privilege of a sanctified enlightenment. For a poet beset by the confusion of modernity, this is quite an accomplishment. As a poet, Segal can still remember what the age seems intent on forgetting. The diary, with its network of allusions and layered quotations, testifies to his achievement. The chaos of modern life has been filtered through Segal's poetic, creative imagination--has been ordered through the shaping powers of literature.

⁶⁰The Divine Comedy, 195.

In view of this process, it is easy to see how deliberately and ironically the allusions to Eliot and the Symbolist poets function in the poem. At first--in the opening section particularly--they signal an immediate identification between Segal's urban world and both Eliot's "unreal city" and Baudelaire's sordid Parisian cityscape. But, as Segal's day advances, the references assume a different direction. They become points of departure for Segal's personal progress as he leaves that world of entrapment behind him and moves to a place beyond either Eliot's uneasy fisherman or Baudelaire's neurotic urban dweller. Especially notable is the fact that Segal moves far beyond Prufrock's defeated resignation. And it is significant that Segal would quote Mallarmé's "Brise marine" at the moment before he emerges from his intense anguish, since that poem, with its ultimate promise of the possibility of escape, prefigures Segal's own liberation. But even here, it is clear that Segal goes a step further than Mallarmé's plaintive dreamer, who still remains on the shoreline considering the possibility of the sailor's song but does not sing it himself. Segal ends his day singing, and in so doing, he clings stubbornly to the creative act, which in turn clings to the dimension of past and future. When Segal considers "old-time poets," he is clearly thinking not of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, or of Eliot, but of such men as Shakespeare, and Dante, whose visions of the world presume a harmonious pattern and order at work in the universe. Segal

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finally accepts but he also transcends the fragmented, unsatisfactory visions of his contemporaries. Nevertheless, he is aligned by Klein with Eliot the critic who consistently calls attention to the values of tradition, best represented by Shakespeare and Dante as a way out of modern chaos. B. Rajan might well be speaking of Klein's poem when he writes that "a dead master can instruct a living pupil in what is truly creative in the presence of the past."⁶¹ This is the realization to which all of "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" has been moving. Segal, in his continual reliance throughout the day on Shakespeare as his frame of reference, has been unconsciously, perhaps, demonstrating his adherence to this principle. But it is only in the final moments of the day that he is allowed to see it all clearly. On one level, of course, the Shakespearean echoes function in the same manner that they do in The Waste Land--to reinforce the general contrast between Elizabethan magnificence and modern sordidness (as in "The Fire Sermon" section particularly). But on another level, they demonstrate the possibility of imposing that vanished world on modern experience. That this is the case is evidenced by Segal's use, in the last section of the diary, of the word "prothalamium," which signals not only Segal's marriage to himself, his loved one, and to Nature, but also an association with Spenser's Prothalamium, a poem

⁶¹Rajan, "The Dialect of the Tribe," 13.

which postulates a future golden world.⁶² Whereas Eliot draws on the same Elizabethan source in "The Fire Sermon"⁶³ to add to the texture of ironies and contrasts between the past and the present, Segal intends no irony in his use of the word or the context which it evokes. For him, the past is recreated in the living present.

Indeed, the present for Segal finally is seen to hold possibilities in the context of a natural environment. In The Waste Land, water becomes the element that Eliot substitutes for Mallarmé's blue air--azure--or in the case of "Brise marine," the sea-air. In "Diary of Abraham Segal," it would appear as if Nature is the source of renewal for which the poet hungers. But it should be clear by now that Klein's poem goes beyond even this idea. Nature is not, in Klein's poem, an end in itself; it is merely the place where Segal's enlightened sense of himself is encouraged to find expression. That the entire poem ends with three dots suggests forward-looking possibilities. Presumably, having worked through a creative crisis, Segal will be able to return to his urban world with his new vision intact. (And, presumably, Klein might have been able to carry in his workday world with a similar sense of resolution.) The deep need for a code to

⁶²The Minor Poems of Edmund Spenser, eds. Charles Grosvenor Osgood and Henry Gibbons Lopsplech, 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1947) 257-62.

⁶³Eliot, Collected Poems, 70. See Eliot's first note to "The Fire Sermon," 82.

live by, which is the motive of The Waste Land and of Symbolist poetry, is answered, not merely suggested or ambiguously resolved, in Segal's final diary entry.

Finally, by way of conclusion, the correspondence between "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" and Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," a correspondence already suggested at the outset of this discussion, needs to be made more explicit. If it is true that, as Harold Bloom writes, the Mariner ultimately fails because he, even in his moment of apparent salvation (blessing the natural world "unaware"),⁶⁴ "falls victim to it" so that "its eternal verbal repetition becomes his obsession,"⁶⁵ then it can be seen just how much further Segal adventures. "Had the Mariner been a poet," Bloom continues, "he could have written the Rime he incarnates. He has seen the truth, but the truth does not set him free." But Segal is a poet, and his act of poetic creation--the written diary is the evidence of that act--does set him free. It is interesting to observe, in this connection, one critic's attempt to establish an association between "The Ancient Mariner" and The Waste Land. A.D. Moody finds that the Mariner's moment of salvation marks a movement from lifelessness into life which finds its correspondence in

⁶⁴The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 1 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1957) 186-209.

⁶⁵Harold Bloom, The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry (New York: Anchor Books, 1963) 223.

"The Fire Sermon" passage, where the protagonist's sympathy with rather than cold judgement of the Thames daughters marks a similar change.⁶⁶ But such an interpretation is only partially satisfactory since the Thames daughters sing of sordid love and violation and thus contribute more to the overall irony of the poem than they do to the alleged enlightened perspective of the protagonist. Even if Moody's observations are correct with regard to the possibility of hope in "The Fire Sermon" section of Eliot's poem, they still need considerable qualification in view of the lingering doubts which all of The Waste Land finally raises about the possibility of redemption in modern life. "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" raises no such doubts. In fact, Klein seems intent in his poem on squarely offering an alternative vision of human possibility, one that insists on the hope both of human love and creative enlightenment. In so firmly and so confidently announcing such a vision, Klein deliberately challenges the often ambiguous and certainly the less hopeful views of his contemporaries. So it is that Segal puts his lands in order with the Mariner, the Symbolists, Prufrock, and the speaker of The Waste Land behind him.

⁶⁶A.D. Moody, "To fill all the desert with inviolable voice," in The Waste Land in Different Voices, 58.

III. "Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger"

"Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger" (89-92) appeared in print a few months after the publication of "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" in 1932.⁶⁷ Probably because "Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger" was one of two poems in New Provinces in 1936, it remains the best known of Klein's radical series. Ironically, it is also one of the least understood of Klein's published poems. Dudek simply dismisses it as an "imitation of Eliot . . . obviously and poorly assimilated."⁶⁸ As already noted, Matthews echoes Dudek's appraisal by arguing that since none of the radical poems appeared in Klein's collected volumes of poetry none was to be taken seriously. Such reasoning obviously and conveniently overlooks the fact that Klein considered "Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger" worthy enough to be included in New Provinces, a volume of poetry that, as Michael Gnarowski notes, "was a singular event in a literary process which stemmed from the origins of Canadian modernism."⁶⁹

⁶⁷"Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger," Canadian Forum 12 (August 1932): 424-25; New Provinces, ed. F.R. Scott (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936) 35-38; GH 001581-85; GHP 001821-25; MS 002740-43. The Collected Poems does not present the first, correct published version of the poem (Canadian Forum) upon which this discussion rests. The later, incorrect version of the poem (New Provinces) is logically confusing.

⁶⁸Louis Dudek, "A.M. Klein," in A.M. Klein (Marshall) 70. This article first appeared in The Canadian Forum 30 (1950): 10-12.

⁶⁹Michael Gnarowski, "Introduction" to New Provinces: Poems by Several Authors 1936 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) iv. While it is true, as W.J. Keith acknowledges,

In New Provinces, Klein chose to juxtapose his "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," a long, complex poem set in the past, with "Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger," a long, complex poem set in the present. Although "Soirée" lacks the philosophical weight and the lyrical intensity of "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," it does achieve a notably modern representation of poetic resources. Openly borrowing from Eliot, Klein offers his own view of alienated modern man. Like "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet," "Soirée" is composed of two languages: Eliot's and Klein's own.

The title of the poem establishes a connection between the central figure and Klein himself. But although Velvel speaks on his own behalf, his brother, the "Reb Jew" of the poem, provides the controlling point of view. The disapproving and distancing voice of Velvel's brother thus directs an unambiguous, negative perspective of both Velvel and the modern world to which he belongs. The surname, Kleinburger, identifies Velvel as a burgher. In yiddish, Kleinburger means "little burgher" or, more broadly speaking, "petty

that New Provinces "sold less than a hundred copies in the first year of publication" (Canadian Poetry 4 [Spring/Summer, 1979]: 120), and that with the advantage of critical hindsight, the anthology of new Canadian verse might not appear to have been quite so "new" as the title suggested, "Literary history has come to regard the publication of this volume as the moment when the 'new poetry' in Canada came of age." Regardless of its status as a manifesto of Canadian modernism, New Provinces was a vehicle through which a group of relatively unknown poets (with the exception of the then relatively well-known E.J. Pratt) could present themselves to the reading public.

bourgeois." Velvel belongs to the same struggling lower middle class world to which Abe Segal belongs. But unlike "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet," "Soirée" offers no clear alternative to the Depression-world misery from which Velvel suffers. A tailor, not a poet, Velvel reaches no apotheosis of vision, and he achieves no moment of redeeming insight that would save him from his shabby life. The "Reb Jew" who describes Velvel's "soirée" offers a small measure of fraternal sympathy. He both partially offsets Velvel's aggressive speech and indirectly suggests that Velvel is a victim of a greedy, alienating world. But the unbridgeable gap between the "Reb Jew" and his brother emphasizes Velvel's limited personal resources. Betting his future on a poker game, Velvel debases the value of his life.

As a spectator to the late-night card game--the motive of the soirée--Velvel's brother describes the claustrophobic setting:

In back-room dens of delicatessen stores,
 In curtained parlours of garrulous barber-shops,
 While the rest of the world most comfortably snores
 On mattresses, or on more fleshly props,
 My brother Velvel vigils in the night,
 Not as he did last night with two French whores,
 But with a deck of cards that once were white.

He sees three wan ghosts, as the thick smoke fades
 Dealing him clubs, and diamonds, hearts and spades.

(89)

Probably in 1932, when the poem first appeared, and in 1936, when New Provinces was published, the poem would have recalled both Baudelaire's corrupting urbanscape and Eliot's "unreal

city." Velvel's "two French whores" invite an association between Klein's poem and the night poems of Baudelaire's "Tableaux parisiens" of Les Fleurs du Mal.⁷⁰ Velvel's well-used playing cards evoke Eliot's "wicked pack of cards," the ones that Madame Sosostris spreads before her in The Waste Land.⁷¹ And Klein's intrusive commentary in rhyming couplets ("He sees three wan ghosts . . .") echoes Eliot's ironically rhyming observations in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" ("In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo").⁷² This is the nightmare world of modern impoverishment. Others may sleep "comfortably," but there is no rest for anyone so needy and desperate as Velvel.

Appropriate for a gambler, Velvel's god is "Hope." Vainly he wishes for a royal flush:

O for the ten spade in its proper place
 Followed by knave in linen lace,
 The queen with her gaunt face,
 The king and ace,
 The ace!

(89)

But Velvel's ever-watchful brother observes the futility of Velvel's hope--"He grasps a deuce." The "Rab Jew's" appeal to scriptural authority ("This is no way for a man to do") is mockingly dismissed not only by Velvel but also by his

⁷⁰See Baudelaire's "Des Aveugles," "A Une Passante," "Le Crépuscule du Soir," "Le Jeu."

⁷¹Eliot, Collected Poems, 64.

⁷²Eliot, Collected Poems, 15.

disbelieving ghostly cohort. Although the speaker-spectator calls Velvel's ensuing response a "foot-note," Velvel's passionate defense of his gambling constitutes the centre of the poem. Klein identifies him immediately with Prufrock--another limited, resourceless, urban man. The "butt-ends" of Prufrock's dreary days are matched by Velvel's reductive inventory:

My days, they vanish into circular smokes,
My life lies on a tray of cigarette-butts.

(89)

Such open borrowing from Eliot belies the feebleness of Velvel's imagination. His ensuing charge against his brother's comfortable materialism may be logically persuasive, but it is substantially weakened by the banality of his imagery and the predictability of his rhymes:

For it is easy to send pulpit wind
From bellies sumptuously lined;
Easy to praise the sleep of the righteous, when,
The righteous sleep on cushions ten,
And having risen from a well-fed wife
Easy it is to give advice on life.
But you who upon sated palates clack a moral,
And pick a sermon from between your teeth,
Tell me with what bay, tell me with what laurel
Shall I entwine the heaven-praising wreath,
I, with whom Deity sets out to quarrel?

(89-90)

And Velvel's rickety puns reinforce the shallowness of his language:

O do not make a pack of cards your thesis.
And frame no lesson on a house of cards
Where diamonds go lustreless, and hearts go broken
And clubs do batter the skull to little shards,
And where, because the spade is trump

One must perforce kiss Satan's rump.
 For I have heard these things from teachers
 With dirty beards and hungry features.

(90)

Once again Klein's rhyming couplet recalls Eliot's rhyming refrain in "The Love Song." Velvel, like Prufrock but unlike Segal, is no man of poetic possibility. The flat derivativeness of his speech is telling. Moreover, he finds no comfort in Nature, what he calls the "over-rated dawns" of his brother's observations. Whereas Abe Segal lamented that he lacked the time to praise the dawn properly, Velvel dismisses both the dawn and its poetic celebration completely.

With nothing but contempt for the promise of poetic possibility Velvel sings bitterly of his life:

My meals are grand,
 When supper comes
 I feed on canned
 Aquariums.

The salmon dies.
 The evening waits
 As I catch flies
 From unwashed plates.

And my true love,
 She combs and combs,
 The lice from off
 My children's domes. . . .

(90)

This is his "idyll," he says sardonically and ironically. Hardly an idealized account of the virtues of a simple life, Velvel's verses convey the deadening resignation of his daily deprivation. Moreover, Velvel's borrowed imagery

echoes Eliot's typist in The Waste Land who "lays out food in tins."⁷³ Both the borrowed imagery and, the uninspired meter of Velvel's mock-idyll reinforce the poverty not only of his home but of his imagination as well. Yet Velvel dreams, albeit a disappointingly empty dream:

But I will yet achieve
 An easier living and less scrawny wife
 And not forever will the foreman have
 The aces up his sleeve,
 But some day I will place the lucky bet.
 (Ho! Ho! the social revolutions on a table of roulette!)

(91)

These are Velvel's last words in the poem. His final line betrays his cynical disavowal of social change. Only the right spin of the gambler's wheel will revolutionize Velvel's miserable life.

And so Velvel's brother's attempt to stop the game of chance fails:

My brother's gesture snaps: I spoke.
 His cheeks seek refuge in his mouth.
 His nostrils puff superior smoke.
 His lips are brown with drouth.

Hum a hymn of sixpence,
 A tableful of cards
 Fingers slowly shuffling
 Ambiguous rewards.
 When the deck is opened
 The pauper once more gave
 His foes the kings and aces
 And took himself the knave.

(91)

⁷³Eliot, Collected Poems, 71.

Klein casts the "hymn" that Velvel hums while dealing his hand in the form of "Sing a Song of Sixpence." This time Velvel deals himself "the knave," the lowest court card and the most fitting sign of his unprincipled character. The "pauper," Velvel, compares ironically with the king of "Sing a Song of Sixpence," whose piece of the pie was full of surprises. Moreover, Velvel's final deal returns him to the poverty with which he began and from which he had hoped to escape by a royal flush. Klein suggests that Velvel's dream of escape is all wrong:

A Rolls-Royce hums within his brain;
 Before it stands a chauffeur, tipping his hat,
 'You say that it will rain, Sir; it will rain!'
 Upon his fingers diamonds gleam,
 His wife wears gowns of ultra-Paris fashion,
 And she boasts jewels as large as wondrous eyes
 The eyes of Og, the giant-king of Bashan.

(91-92)

The gaudy materialism that he imagines will be his confirms his impoverished imagination. In the stupor of this vulgar dream, he wanders away:

So Velvel dreams; dreaming, he rises, and
 Buttons his coat, coughs in his raised lapel,
 Gropes his way home; he rings a raucous bell.

(92)

The speaker's final detachment makes Velvel all the more pitiable, but, with such limited self awareness, Velvel must be lost to the world. Like Eliot's Prufrock, whose speech Velvel sometimes echoes, Klein's Jewish tailor suffers from a condition he cannot fully comprehend.

The "soirée" in the title deepens the ironic tension between Velvel's reality--he socializes in a delicatessen--and Velvel's expectations--he dreams of being a socialite. The word also evokes the night-time world of Baudelaire's gambling dens. Probably Baudelaire's "Le jeu," a poem about the seductively sordid world of gambling, stands behind Klein's "Soirée." But whereas Baudelaire's modern inférno ("un infernal fièvre") throbs with the danger of the gambling enterprise, Klein's modern back-room chokes in its smoky, lifeless air.⁷⁴ While it is true that Klein borrows from both Eliot and Baudelaire in "Soirée," he does so as a way of representing Velvel's limited resources. Moreover, the "Reb Jew" who passes judgement on Velvel refrains from the kind of second-hand language that marks Velvel's speech. The authority of the poem rests, after all, with Velvel's brother, whose ordering, observant account of the "soirée" offers an alternative to the randomness of Velvel's card games. Unlike the deliberately free verse passages of Prufrock's wandering thoughts, the consistently rhyming stanzas of "Soirée" impose an order on modern chaos. On the one hand, the cross-rhymed verses of Velvel's argument reinforce his sense of entrapment; on the other hand, they are subsumed by the larger rhyming order spoken by Velvel's brother. This is consistent with Klein's interest in setting

⁷⁴Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal, 106-07.

forth a reasoned, lucid, and unambiguous response to Velvel's limited perspective.

That "Soirée" appeals to a traditional and coherent view of the world becomes even clearer when it is remembered that the poem is set beside "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" in New Provinces. Velvel's negative and cynical belief in the laws of chance can be understood as being far more blasphemous than Spinoza's passionate acceptance of the laws of the natural world. Indeed, Spinoza's attempts to seek the truth of God's existence through the application of geometric "theorems" gain in stature when contrasted to Velvel's attempts to seek material comfort through the luck of the draw. Although excommunicated, exiled, and alone, Spinoza, as Klein ultimately describes him, forgets "consumptive fretting" and ends his days "plucking tulips." Velvel, as Klein ultimately describes him, is sadly and unforgettably alone and consumptive.

IV. "Of Daumiers a Portfolio"

"Of Daumiers a Portfolio" (92-95) the third of Klein's radical poems to be published (it first appeared in 1937), is composed of a series of lyrics that satirize the legal profession.⁷⁵ Klein drew his inspiration from the French

⁷⁵"Of Daumiers a Portfolio," New Frontier 2. 4 (September 1937): 10-11.

painter and caricaturist Honoré Daumier (1808-1879), who created a series of lithographs entitled Les Gens du Justice in the 1840's.⁷⁶ In these drawings, Daumier, who knew the law and the lawyers of Paris as intimately as Klein knew the law and the lawyers of Montreal, depicts corruption in the legal world. The exaggerated postures of Daumier's lawyers and the smug countenances of his judges clearly, and often savagely, betray their moral emptiness. Although Daumier provided captions for his lithographs, one seldom has to rely on these to appreciate the objects of his derision. The black expanse of judicial robes so dominates the space of Daumier's drawings that the victims of the legal profession --the poor and the oppressed--are virtually dwarfed by the formidable presence of such power. Klein's poem is a "portfolio" of verbal sketches composed in the same critical spirit and directed against the same corrupt system as Daumier's lithographs. In the first portfolio entry, "His Lordship," Klein describes a "Mr. Justice Hogarth," whose namesake is the English painter and engraver William Hogarth (1697-1764). "The selection of Hogarth's name," Ira Bruce Nadel points out in his study of Klein's use of portraiture, "is not arbitrary."⁷⁷ Of course, Hogarth shares with Daumier the distinction of having successfully caught in his work

⁷⁶Honoré Daumier: Selected Works, eds. Bruce and Seena Harris (New York: Crown, 1969) 103-41.

⁷⁷Ira Bruce Nadel, "Portraits and the Artist: The Poetry of A.M. Klein," Dialog (1973): 24.

the follies, pretensions, and hypocrisies of his age.⁷⁸ As is the case for both Hogarth and Daumier, Klein aims his criticism at the self-important men who abuse the law. Both judge and lawyer tacitly conspire to corrupt language, to distort the truth, and to serve their own power. They perpetuate a system that neglects the very people they are bound to serve. The poems which compose "Of Daumiers a Portfolio" form a vivid "portrait of legal and courtroom life," as Nadel observes.⁷⁹ Language replaces the visual imagery of Daumier's lithographs and of Hogarth's engravings. It also manages to capture the process of corruption. Under Klein's control, poetic language dramatically exposes the duplicity of a lawyer or reveals, with undigued contempt, the immorality of the adjuncts of the system. Above all, Klein shows that language is itself the instrument of legal corruption. When speciousness replaces reason and sophistry replaces logic, then morality is in question and true justice cannot be enacted.

The main speaker of the series is a critical, ironic, sometimes bitter commentator who is intent on displaying, in his often witty, observational and epigrammatic way, his contempt for the dispensation of the law in the modern world. In the first portfolio entry, he indicts not only

⁷⁸Joseph Burke and Colin Caldwell, eds., Hogarth: The Complete Engravings (New York: H.N. Abrams, 196-).

⁷⁹Nadel, "Portraits and the Artist: The Poetry of A.M. Klein," 24.

"His Lordship," the judge Hogarth, but also the ways in which such a man can assume prominence. Hogarth's crime is deception: a "Magician of costumes," he climbs to the top of the judicial hierarchy by shrewdly observing the rules of success. As a young lawyer he so skilfully dazzles his listeners with "cold logic" that he convinces them of the impossible. After youth follows a marriage of convenience; Hogarth devises a "legal fiction" and marries his wife, "the Corporation." A political career follows in due process; Hogarth, disguised as man of the people, dons "overalls" and gives voice to the lie that he "is the toiler's friend." After such success, his rise to the bench seems inevitable.

Klein structures "His Lordship" in four quatrains, each one marking a different stage in the judge's rise to the bench. Each stage demands its own costume: a lawyer's "gown," a wedding suit, "overalls," and, finally, "robes judicial." Each stage also demands its own language: the "cold logic" of the lawyer, the "fiction" of the corporate man, the blatant lie of the politician, and, finally, the "silence" that surrounds the appearance of the judge. Hogarth's increasing success is ironically paralleled by a decreasing use of language. After so much lying, Klein seems to suggest, it is fitting that Hogarth's entrance into the courtroom should be preceded by a cry of "Silence"; a career based on so much hollow talk leads, in this view, to a kind of speechlessness. The man granted the most authority

in the courtroom has earned the privilege of not having to say anything at all.

Justice Hogarth's chief talent lies in his skilful manipulation of language. In

Again, having eloquently defended on the hustings,
The chastity of three deflowered regimes--

(92)

Klein captures Hogarth's double-talk, which baffles and impresses his audience. The "three deflowered regimes" suggest the three estates of the body politic (the Crown, Senate or House of Lords, the Commons). In the overall context of the poem, the "deflowered regimes" are to be understood as those of the government of Quebec (whose provincial fleur de lys is mentioned later in the portfolio). "Regimes" also implies the tyrannical authority of the ancien régime of Daumier's era. What Hogarth defends, in his equivocating way, is the "chastity" of a raped government; in other words, Hogarth at once defends the government and acknowledges its tarnished reputation. As Klein points out, Hogarth is convincing because he speaks "eloquently." What matters is not necessarily what he says but the way in which he says it. Klein's portrait of the judge looks ahead to his "Political Meeting" (306) in which Camillien Houde is depicted as a successful orator. Both politician and judge share the same qualities; both persuade because they understand the language their audiences want to hear.

When the judge does speak he utters a "sentence," which is both the title and the subject of the next portfolio entry. (Although "Of Daumiers a Portfolio" does not, strictly speaking, follow a narrative line, it does suggest one by the order of its first two poems.) The judge's terse "sentence" is levelled at "robbers" of "electricity," evidently people who failed to pay their utilities bill. If the utilities are the "property" of the state, then it is easy to convict those who cannot meet their payments of "robbery." Of course, in capitalist society, Klein implies, all crimes are crimes "to property."

The ironic title of the third poem, "A Song of Three Degrees," is derived from Psalms 120-34 ("A Song of Degrees"). The main thrust of the irony is clear: the prisoner has confessed under the pressure of police brutality. The "three degrees" of the song--the prisoner's confession, contrition, and "penitence"--partake of the language of religious experience. The connection between Church and State is all too clear. Such is the "word" of the "good policeman" that it relies on the authority of religious language to sanctify "physical force." This theme is carried over into the next poem, "Prosecutor":

Holy, holy, holy,
 Consider the prosecutor;
 Who failing arguments acute
 Finds arguments acuter.

Klein's opening line ironically echoes the thrice-repeated imperative to silence (oyez, oyez, oyez) when court is in session. Like the policeman of "A Song of Three Degrees," the "Prosecutor" commands a reverence not necessarily deserved, especially when he contrives pointed arguments in place of substantial evidence.

In "Public Utility," Klein neatly exposes the social relations of the criminal and the State. Like a clever lawyer's argument, the poem draws its force from the irrefutable logic of its analysis:

The pimp, he pays his fine and costs,
 Which monies go to stock
 The Treasury which builds more streets
 For streetwalkers to walk.
 The wench, alas, must earn her fine.
 So back to her tenement,
 The civil servant toils and spins;
 She keeps the Government.

(93)

The matter-of-fact tone in which Klein voices this terse analysis is aided by the tetrameter lines of two nursery-rhyme quatrains. These serve to reinforce the irony of this less than innocent state of affairs. Prostitution is, in a manner of speaking, a "public utility." If the relation between the pimp and the Government is certain, the relation between the law and justice is not. Such is the subject of the next entry in the portfolio, "La Glorieuse Incertitude":

The law is certain; and the law is clear.
 Having invoked Justinian, exorcised
 That Pothier of the tomes where s is f,
 The five good judges of the higher court,
 Each conning the same gospel, toothlessly.

Splutter their wisdom on the fleur-de-lys.
 Two greybeards, cutting syllogistic dolls,
 Issue their answer: unambiguous Yea.
 Two others, scissoring a similar script,
 With many curlecued wherefores, shape their Nay.
 The fifth, a younger sage, and nimbler, skips
 Trippingly on his hypothetic way
 To halt him, cutely, pendent in mid-air.
 The law is certain; and the law is clear.

(94)

- This is arguably the finest entry in the portfolio. Klein cleverly exploits both the structure and the conventional love theme of the Petrarchan sonnet to convey the circular workings of the Law it--or herself. Personified as "La Glorieuse Incertitude" (which suggests the female figure of Blind Justice), the Law can be as intractable as the Petrarchan lover's mistress. Indeed, it demands as much impossible obedience. The "five good judges" are obliged to adhere strictly to the letter of the law, such as the "Justinian" code (named after the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I's set of laws) and the commentaries of "Pothier" (the French eighteenth-century teacher, advocate, and judge whose writings provided the foundation for the widely used Napoleonic Code of civil law). The judges are trapped in a backward-looking profession. Their authority depends on both old codes and precedents. Consequently, the judges fail to apply the past to the present successfully. Although all five judges rely on the same legal codes, "the same gospel," their interpretations vary widely. The fifth judge, "a younger sage" (perhaps eager to please his elders) fails to resolve the conflict of

"Yea" and "Nay." No decision is made. Just as the judges end where they began, so does the sonnet end with its ironic beginning: "The law is certain; and the law is clear." The fixed and static nature of the sonnet form itself underscores the inert helplessness of the judges. Notable, too, is the way in which Klein deftly caricatures the men of the higher court. They "splutter their wisdom," cut "syllogistic dolls," scissor their judgements, and the youngest among them "skips / Trippingly on his hypothetic way." All of their fussing and active deliberating add up to nothing. As with Daumier's lithographs, a few deftly drawn strokes vividly render the judges at once powerful and ineffective. And like Daumier, Klein directs his satire more pointedly at the men who abuse the law than at the law itself.

In "Sleuth," the next portfolio entry, Klein employs the Shakespearean sonnet form to demonstrate the slippery ways in which "A detective of the modern school" operates:

Dizzy amidst a whorl of fingerprints;
 Playing ballistics; learned; nobody's fool;
 Reading from unseen ink invisible hints;
 Look! A detective of the modern school.
 By sniffing, he could trace a noxious wind.
 He solved The Mystery of the Door Ajar;
 In pride, he framed his cases, --even pinned
 A rap of arson on a falling star.
 So trained, and so instructed, no surprise
 Startled his rapt admirers when he found--
 Because in Hull, tears shone in a servant's eyes,
 And at Quebec, a swabbing sailor groaned,
 A man on relief at Hochalaga wept--
 The province by sedition swept.

Here the sonnet form perfectly conveys the illusion of certainty that the detective contrives with his superficially convincing evidence. In "La Glorieuse Incertitude" the Petrarchan form reinforces the two conflicting decisions of the bench--"Yea" and "Nay"--but, appropriately, avoids clear resolution. In "Sleuth," the Shakespearean form works by exposition towards the expectation, in the epigrammatic couplet, of clear resolution. Here, however, the couplet does not so much illuminate the poem as it states the obvious--that the "province [is] by sedition swept." In fact the grammar undercuts the couplet's clinching effect. In view of the sonnet's account of the suffering of the poor ("tears shone in servant's eyes"; "a swabbing sailor groaned"; "a man on relief at Hochelaga wept") the detective's conclusion comes as "no surprise."

The longest entry in the portfolio is also the most personal one. In "Guardian of the Law," Klein drops his detached and ironic tone for a moment to address the "blue serged hero" of his youth only to return, in the second half of the poem, to his most bitter expression of contempt thus far. The first half adopts an elegaic tone which is conveyed by its uninterrupted rhythmic sentences, closing end-rhymes, and comforting final metaphor:

How have you become not that which you once were,
 Brass-buttoned blue-serged hero of my youth!
 I laid me down, when six, to sleep untroubled
 By dreams of ogres, fearsome and uncouth,
 Or sounds of robbers whispering in the dark;
 And this, because you walked the street and park.

A prober of door-knobs, peerer into glass-fronts,
 From curb to curb escorter of the blind,
 Friendly your smile to me that day I wandered
 Around the corner, and wept, and could not find
 The way back to the apron of my home.

(95)

Klein's shift in the second part of the poem to jagged, shorter lines punctuated by dashes indicates both a new tone and a different kind of policeman:

You held me, dried my tears, and wiped my nose--
 (Your uniform smelled like my own father's clothes)--
 You led me, and I followed, like a mouse,
 Until I suddenly ran, to recognize my house!
 And now have I seen you in your colour, slave,
 Paid hater of your kin!
 Against the unarmed and helpless, mightily brave
 Mightily noble--for a fin!
 For I have seen you grin
 Outside the factory where my father is
 A spool for a spool of thread
 Yes, seen you grin, and strike my father's friend
 With baton on the head!
 So do you earn your bread,
 And butter,
 And good red jam well'-bled!

(95)

Presumably the extremity of Klein's disillusionment with his fallen idol is proportionate to his earlier adoration of him. This changing portrait of the policeman underlines the implicit conflict in "Of Daumiers a Portfolio" between a less corrupt past and an unprincipled modern present. In the control of self-seeking lawyers, judges, policemen, and politicians (who are urged on by profit-motive capitalism), the law is logically abused.

All of these portfolio entries adumbrate a picture of corruption in the modern courtroom. "Of Daumiers a Portfolio"

is Klein's most direct and scathing indictment of the legal profession to which he belonged, as Caplan notes, sometimes reluctantly.⁸⁰ Like Daumier's Les Gens du Justice, Klein's poem spares no member of the courtroom. Yet, Klein goes even further than Daumier by grounding his criticism in a wider context. In the modern age, the law has lost its credibility and its usefulness because the profession has conspired with the big business of the materialist-capitalist state. Behind Klein's sketches stand the poor and the exploited, the unemployed on welfare, the factory man, the servants of the rich and powerful. These men are, significantly enough, not even provided with a speaking voice; they are imaged only indirectly and ironically through the words of the corrupt men of the court or of the main speaker himself. Moreover, the victims of the legal system which serves the capitalist state partake, either in ignorance or in confusion, of the same corruption. The streetwalker both victimizes and is a victim of the government, the detective betrays his own kind, and the policeman beats the very men he is meant to protect. Clearly, the moral focus of the series is provided by the contemptuous voice of the main speaker, who has ostensibly assembled the portfolio. Yet Klein's final words provide a sobering, qualifying consideration of the portfolio. Through his "Corrigendum" he admits the fact that

⁸⁰Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 68.

Judges there be, not only solemn, but wise
To whom their justice is no thing of trade.

(95)

And by making "this fair addendum," Klein shows that fairness --which the law of libel ensures--must and can still function. This is, in a sense, a measure of a hopeful possibility in an otherwise disappointing modern world. Indeed, the law can still work in the service of the right principles--and the right language.

V. "Blueprint for a Monument of War"

Miriam Waddington writes of the next radical poem, "Blueprint for a Monument of War" (96-100) published in 1937,⁸¹ that it is "charged with feeling," but it is "long, cumbersome," and "formless."⁸² Charged with feeling the poem certainly is; in fact, the poem expresses the same sort of strident anti-war feeling of Ezra Pound's "Mauberley" and Wilfred Owen's poetry (to which it owes a debt).⁸³ Long it may also be, although this in itself is no crime. It must be admitted, however, that the final part of the poem, a "P.P.S." entitled "Appendix for the Pious--Isaiah, chapter

⁸¹"Blueprint for a Monument of War," Canadian Forum 17 (September 1937): 208-09.

⁸²Waddington, A.M. Klein, 41.

⁸³The Collected Shorter Poems of Ezra Pound (London: Faber and Faber, 1952) 207-08; Wilfred Owen: War Poems and Others, ed. Dominic Hibberd (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).

sixty-seven," does make the poem somewhat cumbersome. But "Blueprint" is certainly not formless. Like Klein's other radical poems, "Blueprint" is best understood as an experiment in political voice. Like the others, its involved form contains surprising ironies and demanding subtleties.

In "Blueprint" Klein's satire takes the form of a memorandum conceived by the creator of a monument of war. As a proposal addressed to the "Board for Monuments of War," the poem adopts the impersonal language of the modern executive. The speaker's own personal observations (often parenthetically noted) of both the Board members and the blueprint itself provide a cynical, aggressive counterpoint to the professional detachment of the memo. Indeed, the apparent conflict between the speaker's two voices--one officious and matter-of-fact and the other sarcastic and judgemental--forces the poem's disturbing irony. That the speaker instructs his stenographer to include the return address "My Self, Esq." indicates the extent of his crass and unscrupulous manner: no true gentleman needs to call attention to his breeding, rank, or education. In fact, most of the official memo bears the ceremonious shorthand of self-inflated authority evidently appreciated by the Board members who inhabit an unfortunate address: the "Thirteenth residence, Rue de la Mort." Copies of the blueprint for the proposed monument (to WWI) are to be sent to a group of powerful and contemptible men: to "Mr. Algernon B. Brown," the shrewd capitalist who

profited during the war by selling the boots that soldiers died in; to "Sir Alfred Poyns," the self-serving General who managed the good timing to avoid combat and gain a famous reputation as a fighter; to both the Christian "Rev. Smith" and the Hebrew "Rabbi Cohen," religious leaders far removed from the realities of the trenches; and to the "editor" who safely fought the war with words and pictures. The speaker's parenthetical remarks and his openly sarcastic observations on these men reveal his own sense of his moral superiority to them. This attitude is especially evident in his account of the two religious leaders:

Omit not, please, Rev. Smith and Rabbi Cohen,
 The one in his temple, t'other in his church,
 Twin footstools, burnished, of the heavenly throne.
 These men know monuments; it is their perch.
 They also know, as they have always known
 Infallibly what side the Lord was on.

(96)

If there is an allusion here to Cleopatra's "burnished throne," it functions to point up the superficial materialism and the ineffective spirituality of these men's lives.⁸⁴

Particular contempt is reserved for the newspaper editor whose manner of "Mustering the infantry in pica" is mirrored in the lines devoted to his profession:

zooming in paragraphs;
 Throwing his word-grenades;
 featly bombarding
 Big Bertha headlines on the metropolis.

(97)

⁸⁴Antony and Cleopatra 2.1.190. See Eliot, The Collected Poems, 66.

In his concluding parentheses, the speaker continues to vent his disgust concerning the newspaper editor before giving his final instructions:

(His essays did prelude obituaries.
Hinc illae lachrymae, this blueprint packet:
 The editorial we; the obit; the hic jacet.)

By using a pat Latin phrase ("Hence these tears") the speaker distances himself from the really gruesome subject of the blueprint. In instructing the stenographer to use the "editorial we" he unwittingly aligns himself with the editor whom he has just savagely criticized. He has lampooned the newspaper's practice of reducing the war to "headlines," "slogans," and "epigrams," and yet he now uses the abbreviated "obit"; and he sums up his instructions with another convenient Latin phrase ("here lies the epitaph") which shapes all his remarks into epigrammatic form.

The second section of the poem, "Epistle and Enclosure," confirms the speaker's cunning, for here he continues the diction and the tone appropriate to public statement. His letter is both confidently authoritative and breezily personable; it is concise, to the point, and yet calculatingly ingratiating. Clearly, this is a man who knows his audience well. First he writes that they may "skip" his covering letter and proceed directly to the blueprint. This is a rhetorical gesture that is designed, no doubt, to please the board members and, perhaps, to affect humility. Yet for those who read further, a description of the blueprint is provided:

The blueprint's clear, and all who skip may see:
 Gathered the unseamed flesh, the jagged bone
 Of the eclectic-anonymity,
 The valiant alias, the brave unknown.
 Dig, then, the grave, as deep as spade will go--
 Who lived in a trench, may in a trench lie dead.
 Lift up the hero, minus nose, thumb, toe,
 And crypt the treaty underneath his head.
 So is it wiser. Parchment will preserve
 Mortality from the immortal worm.
 The monument? 'Tis simple, but 'twill serve:
 To wit: a stone, a cairn, cemented, firm.
 The corpse, perforce such sure impedimentum
 Never to rise. Execi monymentvm!

(97)

Notable is the way in which Klein shapes this part of the letter into a (Shakespearean) sonnet. Not only do these lines recall specific sonnets by Shakespeare in which the equation between sonnet and monument is drawn (Sonnet 55, "Not marble nor the gilded monuments," and Sonnet 81, "Your monument shall be my gentle verse") but they bring to mind such sonnets as Shelley's "Ozymandias" and Rossetti's "A Sonnet is a Moment's Monument."⁸⁵ In the context of war, however, these allusions are ironic and unsettling. The speaker's plan is to construct a prototype of the unknown soldier, who is described by a series of disturbingly impersonal phrases ("eclectic anonymity," "valiant alias," "brave unknown"). In view of his cynical detachment ("who lived in a trench, may in a trench lie dead") and his clinical description of the "hero, minus nose, thumb, toe," the speaker's sincerity

⁸⁵The Poetical Works of Shelley, ed. Newell Ford (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975) 366; The Poetical Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. William M. Rossetti (London: Ellis and Elvey, 1891) 176.

is forcefully undermined. Moreover, his habit of employing a clipped, no-nonsense bureaucratic shorthand either to assert the rightness of his plan ("So is it wiser") or to direct the reader's attention ("To wit") tells of his moral insensibility. As a whole, the poem employs the sonnet form with considerable wit, while also capturing the speaker's shrewdness.

The speaker continues, now in a more casual if superficial and obviously affected tone, to justify the monument's epitaph. "Our pawn," he writes (sure to use the editorial "we"), requires some "chiselling." Every word in this section of the epistle is calculated to render the subject of the monument coldly unreal and inhuman. Even his parenthetical blessing--("God rest his bones")--is chillingly insincere. The persuasively officious tone of his remarks is managed by short, run-on lines which accelerate the pace of this rather unpleasant piece of information. "So be it," he adds, confidently pausing just long enough to prepare the final stage of his plan. Now he exhorts his readers to accept the required Latin inscription by appealing to Horatian tradition. Like Wilfred Owen before him, and like the Pound of "Mauberley," Klein borrows the patriotic declaration of "Horatius Flaccus" ("Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori") to expose what Owen termed "the old lie"--that war is glorious.⁸⁶ The speaker's ensuing parenthetical remarks, couched in

⁸⁶Wilfred Owen: War Poems and Others, 79.

ironic understatement, rival Owen's attempts to upset reader complacency. When the speaker asks

(What is more beautiful than dying? Think,
More beautiful than flowering into flesh, . . .

(98)

he may be recalling Owen's "Beauty" in which a metaphor of "flowering" figures as well:

A shrapnel ball
Just where the wet skin glistened when he swam.
Like a full-opened sea-anemone.
We both said 'What a beauty! What a beauty, lad!'⁸⁷

And when Klein's speaker mentions the "scientific stink" of the air on the battlefield, he probably refers to Owen's "Gas" and "thick green light" of "Dulce et Decorum Est."⁸⁸ The speaker's cynicism, expressed parenthetically, presumably never reaches the Board members; only the stenographer hears these remarks.

The shock effect of these dramatic asides is obvious. Here the speaker answers his own question--"What is more beautiful than dying?":

Nothing; unless for some wild slogan's sake
To hang in barbed wire i' the light of the moon.
And hear the thunder roll, the thunder break,
And watch the issuing guts until you swoon . . .

(98)

What follows in the epistle is, in fact, a "wild slogan," again borrowed from Horace: "Mors et fugacem persequitur

⁸⁷Wilfred Owen: War Poems and Others, 84.

⁸⁸Wilfred Owen: War Poems and Others, 79.

virva" (Death follows even after the man who runs away).⁸⁹ After a final appeal to his readers to urge conscription, the speaker presents the rest of the Horation epitaph:

Virtvs recivdens immeritis mori
Coelva, negata*temptat iter via

(98)

(Virtue that opens up heaven to those undeserving to die explores a route along a path usually denied.)⁹⁰ In the light of the parenthetical asides of the poem and of the consistently critical cynicism of the speaker, the grandiloquence of Horace rings especially false. The epistle concludes with one more parenthetical remark that confirms the speaker's contempt for the project:

(Behold my brother, sans both legs
A military loss
However, now he ambulates
On a Victorian cross.)

(98)

The "P.S." appended to the letter then instructs the Board members who may "desire English text" to refer to "Rupert Brooke" or "Mr. Tennyson," two poets who "Tell any son / Of battle's benison."

The last section of "Blueprint," the "P.P.S.," an "Appendix for the Pious--Isaiah, chapter sixty-seven," is somewhat clumsy, and it would be safe to say that the poem

⁸⁹The Third Book of Horace's Odes, ed. and trans. Gordon Williams (London: Oxford, 1969) 34.

⁹⁰The Third Book of Horace's Odes, 34.

would probably be more effective as a dramatic piece without it. Perhaps Klein was so intent on exposing the false promises of honour and glory and the shameless vanity that he perceived to be the motive of war that he could not resist the temptation to include the section. (It should be remembered that Klein did not always adopt such a pacifist argument, as his editorials about WWII testify; however, his writings remain faithful to the general spirit of "Blueprint.") Of this "sixty-seventh chapter" G.K. Fischer writes:

The Book of Isaiah had only sixty-six chapters. Here, perhaps, Klein gives us a hint that he regards himself as a prophet in the modern age, a poet who continues where the voices of the Bible broke off.⁹¹

This is true except for the fact that Fischer fails to recognize Klein's use of a dramatic speaker in "Blueprint," who, although he may voice (at least parenthetically) Klein's own view of war in 1937, is conceived as a separate character. It is, in fact, this separation that makes the last section of the poem somewhat problematic, for there is within the poem no explanation for the speaker's final outburst. What can be said, however, is that the tone and the caustic manner of the speaker's earlier asides are now carried over into the address to the "pious," as if he could no longer resist keeping his irony to himself. The men of the Board are even directly implicated in the speaker's charge against

⁹¹G.K. Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem: Religion and Ethics in the Writings of A.M. Klein (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1975) 149. Hereafter cited as In Search of Jerusalem.

the "emissaries of the whetted tongue" and the "manufacturers of bunting." It is also true that this last section seems to be motivated by the need to warn readers, in prophetic parody of Isaiah, that another war is imminent. (It may be noted that Klein's Chronicle editorials of the 'thirties consistently sound the alarm of such a possibility and that in one pertinent early essay Klein draws upon Isaiah to stress his fears.)⁹²

"Blueprint" ends with an analysis of the deplorable circumstances for which wars are fought and a prophecy of the global strife that seems part of the world's destiny. Once again, Klein maligns the heroic expectations of Rupert Brooke, to whom a direct allusion is made in the last lines of the poem. Whereas Brooke's "The Soldier" would console the brave with the thought of an honourable grave in "a foreign field," "Blueprint" clearly undercuts such a possibility:⁹³

For your brothers shall lie in foreign fields,
where the crow may bring them the tidings, and the
worm whisper the news.

(99)

⁹²See Beyond Sambation: Selected Essays and Editorials 1928-1955, ed. M.W. Steinberg and Usher Caplan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 33. Hereafter cited as Beyond Sambation.

⁹³The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke, intro. by George Edward Woodberry (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1932) 115.

Isaiah's exultant promise that good shall follow from evil, that the "worm" of the "carcasses" of transgressors "shall not die" (66.24), is grimly evoked. Indeed, the whole effect of the "Appendix" is to undermine the Old Testament prophet's rich poetical verses. Klein's humorously colloquial phrases ("And shall discover yourselves in the midst of a strange people, who have never lifted a little finger against you"), his deliberately banal imagery ("and you shall remember with great longing a pair of slippers and a chair"), and his unsettling use of syllepsis ("Signals of victory, honour, and inches of land") radically depart from Isaiah's elevated oracular pronouncements. The effect is at once comic and disturbing. The satire works here (as it does in Klein's Hitleriad) to deflate the exaggerated glories and to reveal the uncomfortable truths of war. If the satire fails to fit neatly with the rest of the "Blueprint" it does succeed on its own as a piece of biblical farce. Yet, as a whole, "Blueprint" does reflect Klein's determination to write a kind of popular poetry that would, in effect, promote a moral response to a human tragedy. Moreover, "Blueprint" represents one of Klein's sustained experiments in the 'thirties with political and social satire. Here, the urge to challenge the modern sensibility, the sensibility which conceives of the human condition as a suitable subject for a bureaucratic memorandum, searches for an appropriate form of expression.

VI. "Of Castles in Spain"

In 1938, Klein published a group of three poems under the general heading "Of Castles in Spain" (100-102). The poems were written in response to the Spanish Civil War, an event that rallied many intellectuals, artists, and poets to the side of the republican fighters against the fascists, led by Franco. The war even drew one of Klein's oldest friends, Samuel Abramson--the "S.H.A." to whom the poems are dedicated.⁹⁴ In a letter to Klein (July 13, 1938), Abramson comments on the poem which he had received "somewhere in Spain with the Army." He advises Klein, who regretted not being able to join the republican forces, to keep faith in the cause of freedom:

. . . don't become discouraged and give up hope.
Work for Spain, because the hope of world freedom
lies here in Spain.⁹⁵

In "To One Gone to Wars," the first of the group, Klein humbles himself before the heroic bravery of his friend, the man of action. The first three cross-rhymed quatrains of the poem describe the limited, circumscribed existence of the poet. The pronounced and deliberately euphuistic Latinisms of the first stanza ("Expectorator in learning's cuspidor")

⁹⁴"Of Castles in Spain," Canadian Forum 18 (June 1938): 79. Note that all of the poems are dedicated to Abramson, not just the first one as The Collected Poems incorrectly has it.

⁹⁵S.H. Abramson, Letter to A.M. Klein, 13 July 1938, Public Archives of Canada 000060-63.

also playfully demonstrate that the poet is, indeed, "the nobler talker / The polisher of phrases, stainer of verbs," and not the man of action. In the final section of the poem, however, the poet abandons the quatrain formula and its attendant artificial sonorousness for a more familiar manner of diction and a more expansive rhyme scheme. Now he drops his self-conscious flashiness and speaks personally and sincerely to his friend. All he can offer, he admits, is a "meek sacrifice, unvaliant gift," his "non-liturgic prayer." He appropriately strips his poetry of all but the most necessary expressions of his good-will:

For that your aim be sure,
 Your bullets swift
 Unperilous your air, your trenches dry,
 Your courage unattainted by defeat,
 Your courage high.

(101)

Although "shamed" to admit it, he is, after all, a poet, and these concluding lines, which include the gracefully rhythmic repetition of "Your courage" and the resolving rhyme of "dry" and "high," affirm in their simple elegance the nobility of his craft.

"Toreador," the second poem of the group, returns to the cross-rhymed formula of "To One Gone to the Wars." But while the eight lines of "Toreador" are arranged into two quatrains, the poem is quite different in form: the five-foot then two-foot lines give a radically different effect from the previous poem's quatrains. The syllabics of "Toreador"

are muscular, strong, and staccato (recalling Bizet's song of the Toreador in Carmen, perhaps.) They image the traditional contest between bull and toreador as the current war between the black-clothed, blood-thirsty fascists and the peace-loving republican forces. Here, too, Klein uses Latinates ("bicornate" and "taurine") but sparingly and in the service of precision, not ornamentation. And here, too, he extends the metaphor established in "To One Gone to the Wars" of the enemy as "beast."

The title of the third and final member of the group, "Sonnet Without Music," calls special attention to the poet's choice of poetic form. In fact, the poem contains fourteen unrhymed lines which sound a distinctively dissonant if not an entirely unmusical chord. It now seems as if the poet is both reasserting his identification with his craft and acknowledging that the subject of the sonnet, the inevitable victory of the "peon" over the "aristocratic" ruling class, demands a new and unrestrained manner of representation. Consider the opening two lines:

Upon the piazza, haemophilic dons
delicately lift their sherry in the sun.

(101)

The startling observation after the caesura in the first line--which arrests the pace of the sentence and evokes the slow-motioned, heat-infused experience on the piazza--has an Eliotesque ring to it. The image of the piazza also recalls the haunting landscapes of Chirico or the surreal canvases

of Dali. Following these surprising lines, the poem turns directly to its object of criticism: the aristocratic class of Spain, which includes the capitalist "magnate," the well-fed priest (he cups "plumpish hand"), and Klein's paradigm of all aristocrats, "Don Pelf" (as "pelf"). The sonnet thus moves abruptly from the curious opening description to straightforward social analysis and ends with the resounding conviction in the concluding three lines that the "peon" will triumph over these "dons" of fascism. The tension which begins the poem, emerging out of the initial juxtaposition of tones, accelerates until it finds release in the closing lines of the sonnet. The commas which separate the prophetic phrases of the twelfth line ("will stir, will rise, will stand") and of the thirteenth line ("lift arm, clench fist") convey the steady beat of a rising republican army marching forward. With the final exclamatory "death!" the poem reaches its most certain expression of forcefulness.

In a significant way, "Of Castles in Spain" is less about the Spanish Civil War than it is about poetry. Or to put it another way, the grouping addresses itself to the question of what poetic forms best accommodate political statement. The three poems answer Abramson's imperative to "work for Spain" in the only way that the poet can. On the one hand Klein appears to acknowledge his allegiance to his craft by drawing on traditional verse forms to express his commitment to the political cause. On the other hand he

recognizes the need to experiment with poetic tradition by stretching those verse forms to express his sympathy with the freedom fighters. Although he admits to being "fettered and bound" by traditional, even "rusty" obligations, he nonetheless insists on making the most of his limited situation. "Of Castles in Spain" remains, in some ways, a symbol of the Klein of the radical poems, but it also marks, in its search for a distinctively modern expression within a traditionally formal context, a point of continuity with all of Klein's work.

VII. "Barricade Smith: His Speeches"

The last of the radical poems of the 'thirties to be published (1938) "Barricade Smith: His Speeches" (102-110),⁹⁶ is composed of ten poems, each of which satirizes a different feature of modern capitalism. The series marks Klein's most sustained assault on the ruling classes in Marxian terms. As is the case with the other poems discussed in this chapter, the critical response to "Barricade Smith" has been chiefly negative. More to the point, perhaps, the poem has been virtually ignored. Waddington does remark that, as a whole, the poem "is the most openly revolutionary of all Klein's

⁹⁶"Barricade Smith: His Speeches," Canadian Forum 18 (August 1938): 147-48; (September 1938): 173; (October 1938): 210; (November 1938): 242-43; MS 002195-2212; MS 002498-99 (part only: "Of the Lily Which Toils Not").

radical poems,⁹⁷ yet she only briefly speaks of how this is managed. Fischer, on the other hand, writes that the ten poems are far from Klein's "best achievements," concluding that they suffer from "ambiguity" and lack the "conviction of the true violent revolutionary."⁹⁸ She, too, speaks to the poems only briefly. Peter Stevens, however, asserts that "Barricade Smith" is Klein's "best sequence of political poems" and proceeds to demonstrate, if again all too briefly, why this is so. Stevens's achievement is that he invites, if not thoroughly explores, the possibilities of the poem--

. . . its consistent vision, its acknowledgement of working-class failure, its real exuberance of language and variety of forms, its irony, and its use of persona as a centre about which passages of self-mockery can play in order to prevent a god-like attitude of knowing all the solutions to all the social problems . . .⁹⁹

Like "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet," "Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger," and "Blueprint for a Monument of War," "Barricade Smith: His Speeches" is spoken--as Stevens mentions--by a persona who conveniently voices Klein's own moral, political, and aesthetic convictions but who also figures as a separate character, allowing Klein to put distance between himself and the speeches, thus inviting a more complex exploration of dramatic irony within the poem. As Stevens points out,

⁹⁷Waddington, *A.M. Klein*, 46.

⁹⁸Fischer, *In Search of Jerusalem*, 141, 142.

⁹⁹Peter Stevens, "Radicalism and Jewishness in the Poetry of A.M. Klein," *Dialog* (1973): 40.

the "name Smith implies [that the persona] is a member of [the working] class but he has risen above it and does not retain its ignorance or its inabilities to pull itself out of its wretched conditions."¹⁰⁰ The name is also unavoidably associated with Klein's friend and fellow poet, A.J.M. Smith, and, as is the case of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" where the name also figures ("a Mr. Smith in a hotel register"), its literary association serves to characterize Smith as both an Everyman and a man of poetic sensibility. Perhaps nothing indicates Klein's dramatic use of Smith so much as this passage from a letter to his Montreal friend, Joseph Frank:

/ The Forum has also accepted a series for publication in future issues, dubbed "Barricade Smith; his speeches"--intended as revolutionary, but remember, I am only a snuff-tobacco bandit armed with tzitzith and tfillin.¹⁰¹

Klein's acknowledgement of his separation from Barricade Smith is reinforced by a passage from an even earlier letter to Frank in which Klein mentions the "lines of a play in verse" that he is writing--"on industrial strife--dubbed 'Barricade Smith.'¹⁰² It is interesting to speculate that if Barricade Smith's speeches were originally intended to

¹⁰⁰Stevens, "Radicalism and Jewishness in the Poetry of A.M. Klein," 120.

¹⁰¹Letter to Joseph Frank, 5 October 1938, Public Archives of Canada, n. pag.

¹⁰²Letter to Joseph Frank, 8 January 1938, Public Archives of Canada, n. pag.

form part of a "play," then "Barricadé Smith: His Speeches" evolved as a dramatic experiment in which Klein attempts to represent the several voices of the modern revolutionary.

The opening poem, "Of Violence," establishes the method of the series. Smith is speaking, not to the "rich, ■ug, and emotionally obese" as Fischer curiously suggests,¹⁰³ but against them. In fact, Smith is addressing himself to "the meek, the docile, the none-too-bright" working (or lower middle) class. These are people in need of enlightenment, people ready for someone like Smith to lead them to it. Klein cleverly imitates the necessarily cautious and heavily oratorical voice of the revolutionary speaker who must convince the audience of its own unknowing victimization without giving offense. Smith is too shrewd a political being to do otherwise, so he subtly shames his listeners into an awareness of its own docility. In so doing, Smith does not necessarily call them to arms so much as he urges them to notice their enslavement to the ruling classes. Such a plan requires a wise rhetorical strategy. He, therefore, begins his speech with a series of questions which in their suggestive use of word play invite careful thought:

What does the word mean: Violence?
 Are we not content?
 Do not our coupons fall, like manna, from the bonds?
 Are we not all well-fed?
 Save for twelve months of Lent?

(102)

¹⁰³Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 141.

Both "bonds," which puns on the meaning of bindings, and "Lent," which suggests the heavy debts accrued to the working class, are meant to prey unconsciously on the minds of the audience. Likewise, Smith, through a slippery syntactical manoeuvre, suggests in the next few lines that the "Boss" holds "embezzled dollars in his delicate hand," although it would be "slander" to say so. The last question of this stanza--"Is there not heard a sound / Of belching in the land?"--now suggests that the "belching" is emitted only from the "well-fed" stomach of the "Boss." The ironic allusion here to the Song of Songs 2.12 ("The time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land") effectively exaggerates the unholy noises of the rich.

In the next stanza, as Stevens points out, "Smith is not only ironically stating the cause for violence but also blasting the underprivileged for their meekness":¹⁰⁴

Who, then, would speak of violence, uncouth and impolite?
 Surely not we, the meek, the docile, the none-too-bright!
 The askers with cap-in-hand, the rebels, a Emily Post
 Who know too well our place, our manners,
 and our host!

(102)

These four lines composed of two rhyming couplets obviously intend the opposite of what they say. Having provided sufficient justification for anger, Smith can now proceed to state his argument and analysis more openly. His rhetorical

¹⁰⁴Stevens, "Radicalism and Jewishness in the Poetry of A.M. Klein," 41.

strategy involves the notion that violence is bad manners, but he actually intends to expose the rich--the "well-fed belchers"--as rude and crude. The poor, he ironically implies, would be "churls" to doubt the "boast / Of Labour and Capital." To "boast" is surely a sign of bad manners, so it is understood that the ruling classes are even ruder than the poor. Moreover, Smith ends the third stanza of the poem with a blatant condemnation of both "Labour and Capital," the interdependent principles of the current economic state which are inseparably linked like a "Siamese twin": "One of whom eats, the other defecates." So while Smith cunningly criticizes his audience for its complacency by pretending to praise its good manners, he simultaneously charges the "well-fed" rich--who eat, belch, and defecate--with "uncouth" behaviour. (Smith's satire here recalls Jonathon Swift's own satirical, scatological emphasis.)

The "Board of Directors," he goes on to say, safely "sits" counting its profits "At cost of life and limb" (like the Board members of "Blueprint for A Monument of War"), yet it manages to escape the charge of violence. That the Board is here figured as "Unviolent as a hymn" raises the question, so often asked throughout the radical poems, of an insidious association between the Church and the State. The italicized portion of the poem that follows functions as a whispered aside in which Smith, for a moment, allows himself to speak directly, and without irony, to his

working-class listeners. Here he explicitly states the relation between labour and capital: the "muscles" of the poor shape the luxuries of the rich; the "seat" of one group fills the "cocktail shakers" of the other. Again, Smith manages to point out the lie that the rich practice good manners. They are worse than rude; they are cannibals who devour "life and limb," "muscles," and "sweat." Then returning to full voice, Smith repeats his official public statement--that the rich are "not violent"--for to say so "simply is not cricket." This is a deliberately odd and English phrase for a defender of the working class to use but an effective one, for it cannot but force his audience into an awareness of the distance between them and the men in charge of their lives.

The final stanza of the poem is the most forceful one. Charged with aggressive irony, it is aimed directly at the passivity of the workers who Smith hopes will abandon their self-effacing cowardice and their unquestioning enslavement to a system that leaves them "breadless." Yet, as a whole, "Of Violence" does not so much advocate that the workers should use force to break free of their situation so much as it urges a self-awareness that would not rule out violence as a means of social reform. In its attempt to answer the initial question ("What does the word mean: Violence?") the poem offers a new definition of the word "Violence." It is the rich who are truly violent, Smith wants to say, and the

poor who are the ignorant victims of such force. In order to persuade his audience, with reason and not with hysteria, Smith must be careful to maintain its attention and to strike a careful balance between impassioned expression and discursive analysis. The variety of rhetorical devices, metrical shifts, and tones, and the unpredictable use of rhyme patterning in Smith's "speech" testify to his well-considered strategy. The opening series of questions immediately engages his audience; the two quatrains that follow further his critical irony and confidently assert the rightness of his analysis; the sudden rhythmic shift that begins with "The Board of Directors sits" effectively takes his audience off guard as does the ensuing italicized portion of the poem; and the final summation and ironic retraction ("Because you must be above all things, well-behaved") thinly disguises Smith's rage and indignation.

The second of Barricade Smith's "speeches," "Of Dawn and its Breaking," continues the central theme of the first poem. Again, through a series of questions, Smith manages to confront the audience with its own complacency without insulting them. Here, too, the poem skilfully avoids directly recommending the use of violence; instead, it attempts to shame the working class into assuming responsibility for its own destiny, a destiny which the poem prophesies will bring about "that great genesis"--ostensibly a social revolution. Here the repetition of the opening question, "Where will you

be?", together with the use of a loose but recognizable rhyme pattern, lends a rhythmic intensity to the revolutionary's speech, which mounts to a surprisingly restrained climax in the final verses:

Or will you be--O would that you should be!--
 Among those valiant ones returning to their homes
 To tell
 Their daughters and their sons to tell posterity
 How they did on that day,
 If not create new heaven, at least abolish hell.

(104)

The last line of the poem aptly expresses Smith's guarded optimism. The achievement of this speech is what Stevens describes as "its control of tone."¹⁰⁵ Smith's anger is felt but never forced. His line of questioning, which comprises most of the poem, carefully points out how trivial are the unthinking activities of life ("Waiting the call of next in a barber-shop," "practising some negroid hop") in view of the important business of changing the social structure. Perhaps the indifferent gambler, "Holding a pair of aces back to back," is meant to recall Velvel Kleinburger, the deluded factory hand who turns his back on the possibilities of social revolution.

In his third speech, "Of the Clients of Barnum," Barricade Smith speaks to his audience in the slangy shorthand of the American impressario, author, and circus man, P.T. Barnum (to whom are attributed the lines "There's a sucker born

¹⁰⁵Stevens, "Radicalism and Jewishness in the Poetry of A.M. Klein," 41.

every minute" and "Never give a sucker an even break"). Smith's speech is an obvious parody of the con man's crude philosophy of self-interest. Like a circus ring-master, Smith barks loudly at his audience:

Sucker, you stand no choice; the cards are nicked,
The factory, believe you me, is one clip joint;
The sadness is you know not you are licked
Come from the cleaners, you have missed the point.

Buffalo'd, taken for a ride, you gape;
Say dirty work at the cross-roads, but can not
Articulate its manner, form or shape.

(104)

Smith wants to educate. The "client" knows that he is being deceived, but he lacks the language necessary to resist the hard sell. An easy mark, defenceless against the fast-talking Barnums of the world, he is bound to remain a victim of his own inadequacy. Shrewd salesman that Smith himself is, he draws a vivid picture of a three-ring circus occupied by the "Politico," the "Pedagogue," and the "Pulpiteer" (the politician, the pedant, and the priest). As they enter their rings "p.d.q." (pretty damn quick), they conspire to form a formidably persuasive band of entertainers. In this poem, as in the preceding speeches, Smith's rhetorical control serves to challenge the passivity of his audience. Smith tends to begin with a forceful, obvious irony, relying on exaggerated word play or on provoking questions to draw his listeners' attentions. Then he proceeds by exposition to detail the social relations of labour and capital. In "Of the Clients of Barnum," the extrusive rhymes of the opening

quatrains underscore his irony. The more relaxed rhymes of the exposition ("For deadheads . . .") are appropriate to Smith's more directed analysis. The concluding lines here, as in the preceding speeches, convey an admirable restraint. With the voice of irrefutable reason, Smith squarely challenges his audience to take charge of its own destiny:

Is it not time
 Before they shove you on an unemployment shelf,
 Or freeze you in a pension-frigidaire,
 That you do get
 Wise to yourself?

(104)

The idiomatic play of the final--or bottom--line achieves the effect of an imperative: "get wise," Smith urges.

In "Of Psalmody in the Temple," the next poem in the series, Smith condemns not merely the false romantic images of the movie theatre but also those men who seek to escape from reality into its illusory pleasures. As the title suggests, in Smith's view the movie house is a modern place of worship. In the course of the poem, echoes from Psalm 23 figure in ironic counterpoint to the slangy, prosaic speech of the movies. The poem begins as an elegant lament (with echoes of Job 5.18) of the weariness of both "spirit" and "flesh" but then abruptly shifts to a command to the "triple-purgatorial soul" to "Scram" so that the body may fully indulge in sensual gratification. This principle of opposition informs the rest of the poem, which proceeds by alternating

long lines describing the oversimplified narrative on the screen with short end-rhyming lines that expose, through understated irony, the superficiality of the movies:

Also, a well-groomed esquire saying I love you--
 Fade out, fade in;
 Shots of a lot of legs, and a couple of stooges,
 Close-up, a grin.
 The decent, the fair, win prizes; the wicked
 Their just deserts.
 The prince weds Cinderella, and virtue triumphs
 Until it hurts.

O these felicitous endings, sweet finales,
 They comfort me--
 O bodies' beautitude, O soul's salvation,
 Where this can be!
 Most surely I shall dwell in this great temple
 And take my bliss
 Forever out of scenes which end forever
 In an eight-foot kiss.

(105)

The allusions to Psalm 23 serve to reveal the hollow promises of the motion picture house. In the context of such cheap thrills, religious lyricism is easily debased. Moreover, the allusions echo a running theme of the radical series: that the Church is an accomplice to the crimes of the capitalist State. The Church either reinforces the status quo or (as implied in both "Of the Clients of Barnum" and "Of Psalmody in the Temple") deceives men into believing its false promises of a better afterlife. The movie screen projects powerfully unreal possibilities: "felicitous endings," and "an eight-foot kiss." The Church promises (through its mouthpiece "Don Pulpitser" of the preceding poem) an equally unavailable reality: "Not earthly dwellings--no--celestial bowers"

(104). Such happy "finales" do not exist for the poor and the exploited, Smith implies, but they nonetheless seek consolation in glamorous illusions.

Whereas "Of Psalmody in the Temple" implicates the Church in the illusion-making machinery of the movie theatre, "Of Faith, Hope, and Charity," the next poem in the series, implicates the Church in a diseased sexuality. Like "Public Utility" in "Of Daumiers a Portfolio," this poem sums up in epigrammatic form Klein's view of the debased social relations of his age:

Beware, --spiritual humankind, --
 Faith, contraceptive of the mind;
 And hope, cheap-aphrodisiac,
 Supplying potency its lack;
 And also that smug lechery
 Barren and sterile charity.

(105)

Klein's metaphorical equation of sexual and social poison partakes of a long literary history. (Consider Shakespeare, Blake, Eliot, Auden, F.R. Scott, and so on.) "Faith" is a "contraceptive" because it blocks the creative process of rational thought; "hope" is a "cheap-aphrodisiac" because it stimulates a false optimism; and "charity," like "smug lechery," is informed by immoral impulses which rob man of dignity and self-government. This brief poem also reiterates another central theme of the radical series: man's reluctance to escape the grim realities of his condition. (It will be recalled that an unenlightened Abe Segal resorts to dreams of the past, Velvel Kleinburger escapes in a game of chance,

and the planner of a war monument hides in the language of an official memorandum.) By submitting his reason to false masters--or three heavenly Graces (1 Corinthians 13.13)--man surrenders control of his destiny.

"Of Beauty," the next poem in the series, considers the relative significance of "beauty" itself. As he does in "Of Violence," Smith explores a commonly understood word in order to provide it with a commonly ignored context. The ottava rima stanza in which "Of Beauty" is cast appropriately suits Klein's subject, for one of the traditional applications of the form--as in Byron's Don Juan--is in the service of irony and satire. Here the form serves well the central thematic opposition between nineteenth-century and modern definitions of beauty. The first six lines pose a question: if, in the technological age, the natural world has evolved into a "well-oiled" machine, then where is the traditional appreciation of natural beauty to be found? This world has neither the time nor the place for the kind of aesthetic enjoyment once enjoyed by Shelley, who had the luxury of speaking to a "skylark." (This theme recalls Abe Segal's lament upon arising to the sounds of a blaring alarm clock.) Moreover, Smith's speech conveys a horror that the natural world has been mechanically transformed in the factory which turns night into day.¹⁰⁶ The rhyming couplet which concludes

¹⁰⁶Compare with Lampman's "The City of the End of Things." Klein's poem shares the nineteenth-century fear of a dehumanizing technology which Lampman's poem represents. In Klein's own time, Pratt's poetry most obviously voices this theme.

"Of Beauty" stands in marked opposition both to the cross-rhymes of the preceding lines and to the images which they conjure up. For working men,

. . . there is but one beauty; put it on a table:
A loaf of bread, some salt, a vegetable.

(106)

This is a verbal still life, set elegantly against the aggressive movement described above. In its natural simplicity, the final image returns Smith's audience to a traditional, pre-technological appreciation of "beauty." For Smith, the revolutionary orator, the most basic and natural requisite of life--the food to survive--fulfils a moral and so an aesthetic need.

"Of Poesy," which follows "Of Beauty," elaborates the theme of that short poem, but it also departs somewhat from the series in that it directly addresses itself to the writer of poetry, not the man of labour (although it is safe to say that in Klein's view both are victims of social oppression). "Of Poesy" is a less than gently worded declaration of the irrelevancies of nineteenth-century poetry in the face of twentieth-century realities. Smith exhorts his audience, the "bard" of the first verse, to descend from his ivory tower ("Abandon now the turret where you cower.") When Smith/Klein orders "Descend the winding staircase," he

probably has Yeats's "Winding Stair" in mind.¹⁰⁷ Smith's revolutionary enthusiasm urges a turning away from stale images, irrelevant concerns, and lofty preoccupations--from such romantic subjects as "the thrush's note" (a note sung by such obviously English birds as Shelley's "skylark" and Keats's "nightingale"). Write "of the Real, alive upon a floor," Smith advises. And his reference to the "speech" of poets reminds his audience that his own "speeches" fulfill the demands that he makes of the modern poet. The second stanza carries this idea further by arguing against the quaint but sadly insufficient songs of poets like Keats, Wordsworth, and Tennyson. Of the modern poet, Smith asks in the third stanza

But you, O streamlined laureate,
 What's Hecuba to you?
 How long will you yet bind your fate
 With spars archaic and with obsolete dew?

(106)

Poetry must be trimmed sleek and neat to suit a modern context, the verse implies. And when Smith echoes Hamlet (and Hamlet's celebrated question to the actor who so convincingly assumed a character to whom he had no relation)¹⁰⁸, he indirectly condemns the poet who continues to sing of

¹⁰⁷ Yeats' The Winding Stair and Other Poems was published in 1933. Klein's "Alive upon a floor" may be an allusion to Yeats' "The Magi," "the uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor," The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1965) 141.

¹⁰⁸ Hamlet 2.2.584.

things to which he has no relation. Ironically, Smith's allusion to Shakespeare demonstrates the relevant use to which older poets, if not their subjects, can be put. The fourth and fifth stanzas offer some sobering advice:

Go out upon a roof and laud the moon!
 Your words are sweet and flattering, as if
 The moon were a good corpse, a threnodied stiff!
 O idiot bard, O frenzied loon,
 Such words to blow
 Upon that smooth hydraulic dynamo!

For soon, O sooner than the laurel grows--
 Will come to you, superior of the mass,
 The foreman Death.
 To push you into one of many rows
 And bodily have you manufacture grass,--
 Of your sweet immortality, true token,
 Wage of the foreman Death
 His time-clock, broken.

(106-107)

Like the factory worker, like everyone else, the poet is subject to death. He had better, therefore, change his ways quickly. Time is running out, Smith warns. But "Of Poesy" demonstrates by its own example just how effectively the material of real life--"foreman," "Wage," "time-clock"-- can be coined as metaphor. Smith already knows what Abe Segal comes to learn in the course of his day--that the literary past, a past inhabited by Shakespeare, Yeats, Keats, Wordsworth, and Tennyson, can be successfully accommodated to a modern context. To view the present one must know the past, Smith implies. But to sing of a moon which has become a "dynamo" is to be lost in that past. The new poet, like Smith, must stop paying with the "old coin of hoarded metaphor" of the

first stanza. He must recognize the world as it really is and invent a new language with which to describe it.

If the old subjects--moons, stars, dew, and thrushes--are to be abandoned, then the old forms are to be saved. "Of Soporofics," the next poem in the series, reiterates a central theme in Petrarchan sonnet form. Typically, Klein maintains his grip on the time-honoured virtues of traditional verse forms, as if to underline the view that regardless of the changes necessary in society, order must persist. Here the sonnet condemns the instruments of propoganda in capitalist society:

These be repasts lethean of your kind:
 the tabloid whispering, the penny sheet
 scouting the scoop that even the richest meet
 with mésalliance, murder, maddened mind;
 the sermon showing corpses wine and dined;
 the radio hour and its jovial bleat;
 the circus come to town, a breadless feat;
 two weeks of grace for fifty weeks of grind.
 These are the brews that are allowed to mull
 in crucibles of bone one would call sane;
 these are conconctions patented to dull
 the too-keen edge of the too-querulous brain,
 persuading the cockerel dung is beautiful,
 and the bespatted, spit is only rain.

(107)

Smith has thus far demonstrated how religion, the movies, and even poetry fail to meet the realities of the poor. Here he adds to his list by citing other "repasts lethean" on which the poor are fed: the "tabloid" which, as "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" shows, feeds sensationalism; the "sermon" which as "Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger" notes, offers false promises of a better afterlife; the "radio hour" which

signals a "jovial bleat" to the sheepish; the "circus" which lulls the senses by its mindless tricks; and the sadly insufficient consolation of two week's vacation "for fifty weeks of grind." The octave of the sonnet thus repeats most of Smith's claims against the forces of "Capital" and its instruments of mind control.

The sestet of the poem extends the central metaphor of soporifics as food for thoughtlessness. These things, Smith goes on to say, are "brews" and "concoctions patented to dull" the inquiring mind. In effect, Smith's metaphor elaborates Marx's well-known declaration that religion is the opiate of the masses by including other sanctioned features of the state. As is the case of all Smith's speeches, here the real object of his social analysis is the language that the state devises to defraud the poor. Abused and trivialized, or charged with lies, language in the mouths of the controlling forces of society erodes the faculty of reason and renders the poor meek, defenceless, and ultimately ignorant of the powers that enslave them. They are too easily "persuaded" that "dung is beautiful" and that "spit is only rain."

"Of Soporifics" also demonstrates what "Of Poesy" proposes: a new metaphor for a new social reality. By informing his audience that they are fed "repasts lethean" Smith manages to remind them that they are undernourished. The subject of food dominates this poem as it does so many

of Smith's speeches, thereby alerting the poor to the fact that the rich are well-fed at their expense. Clearly his strategy is aimed at preventing the exploited labourers of society from contributing to their own impoverishment. The choice of the sonnet form also testifies to Smith's insistence on harnessing the faculty of reason to counter the "soporifics" of senselessness. While the octave concisely and forcefully raises a cry of indignation, the sestet summarily and logically answers the cry with the realization of Smith's vision. The very power of the form's logical pointedness should help to convince the audience of the rightness of Smith's argument.

The penultimate poem of the series, "Of Shirts and Policies of State," also proves the effectiveness of using the past as a point of departure for the invented metaphors of the present:

A shirt! a shirt! a kingdom for a shirt!

Smith's allusion to Shakespeare's Richard III begins a poetic exposition of the dress codes of modern political regimes.¹⁰⁹ With the same kind of satirical outrage that he voices in "Of the Clients of Barnum," Smith here reveals his contempt for the modern world's varied political wardrobe. By the colours of their shirts, he announces, political states may be known. The device, which is an inventive form of synecdoche, prefigures Klein's Chronicle editorial of 1939 ("Comrade Hitler and Fuehrer Stalin: Heil Tovarish") in

¹⁰⁹Richard III. 1.1.7.

which he criticizes the notorious Berlin-Moscow non-aggression pact:

. . . the Russian Bear and the German Eagle do lie down together. The red dictator has found his soul-mate, the brown one; the totalitarian colour scheme is complete.¹¹⁰

This kind of political symbolism appealed to Klein's imagination as so many of his Chronicle editorials testify. In "Of Shirts and Policies of State," Barricade Smith is obviously amused as he observes some national real estate:

Open your paper; bargains, if you please!
A principality goes for less than dirt,
The palmiest state for any pied chemise.
A red blouse buys the franchise of the czar;
The brown habergeon claims an Arian realm.
Where once were candid togas, blackshirts are;
Shirtless is but mahatma at his helm.

(107)

Notable is Smith's exception of Mahatma Gandhi, the only "Shirtless" leader of a nation and thus the only democratic example.¹¹¹ The concluding ten lines of the poem instruct the would-be politico how to acquire the proper wardrobe of power, with ironic reference to Machievelli's The Prince. The new "Machievel," Smith advises, will command fear and respect if he dons a "rag, a shoulder strap or a brassiere" --that is, a costume so primitive that "kings" and "peoples" will be "obedient" to it. Appropriately enough, such dress

¹¹⁰Beyond Sambation, 58.

¹¹¹See in Beyond Sambation: "The Mahatma and the Jewish Question," 39-40; "Gandhi's Fast," 311-12.

should be of "rainbow silk, of motley linen," all the colours of all the totalitarian regimes on a fool's motley coat.¹¹²

The two cross-rhymed quatrains which compose the first part of this section mark a point of continuity with the rest of the poems in the series, for this is the most dominant verse form in all of "Barricade Smith." The second part of the poem ("Wherefore, O Machiavel . . .") loosens the establishing rhyme pattern and so also marks Klein's practice of breaking away from an initial scheme. (Examples of this may be found in "Of Dawn and its Breaking," "Of the Clients of Barnum," and "Of Poesy.") By the time, therefore, that Smith concludes his speeches, he has managed a delicate balance between formal discipline and poetic freedom, between oratorical passion and reasoned argument. Klein never, it should be noted, allows Smith to break into free verse: A rhyme scheme is always in evidence, no matter how loosely arranged, as if to check hysteria and suggest the need for ordered social change.

The last section of "Barricade Smith" is both the longest and the most problematical of the speeches. "Of the Lily Which Toils Not" departs significantly from Smith's other speeches, and it is, perhaps, telling that the poem is entered separately in Klein's manuscript papers. This suggests that it may have been conceived at a different time from the rest of the series. The poem, however, does link

¹¹²See As You Like It 2.7.13.

with a recurring motif of the entire radical series of the 'thirties, a theme that emerges out of its references to the parable of the "lilies of the field" (Matthew 6.28; Luke 12.28.) The allusion first appears in "Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet" (in the sections headed "9:05 . . ." and "12:20-12:45 . . .") It is then echoed in the portrait of "His Lordship" who, in "Of Daumiers A Portfolio," campaigns "among the paupers" announcing that he is "the toiler's friend." Again in that series (in "Public Utility") Klein writes that the street-walker-civil servant "toils and spins." The lily may even figure in a particularly subtle reference to the biblical parable in "La Glorieuse Incertitude" where the high court judges "Splutter their wisdom on the fleur de lys." In the final section of "Barricade Smith" the reference finds its most sustained expression, where the ironic effectiveness of the entire poem depends upon knowledge of the biblical source.

Klein's original source for the character of "Tillie the Toiler" was a popular Depression comic strip character. His readers would therefore have been instantly familiar with her name and her working-class situation. He obviously recognized the possibility of deepening the irony of Tillie's plight by associating her epithet, "the toiler," with the biblical passage in which toiling so prominently figures. This is immediately apparent in the opening lines of the

poem in which Smith exhorts both Tillie the Toiler and Winnie the Worker to "consider"

This fabulous lily--and her milk-fed pride,--
She toils not, no, and neither does she spin!

(108)

Smith's words thus directly echo the biblical injunction-- "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin" (Matthew 6.28). The effect of evoking the biblical source is the same here as it is in the other references to the parable scattered-throughout the radical series: to acknowledge the insufficiency of the religious advice to the poor to keep faith in the certainty that God will provide. This theme finds reinforcement in all of the poems in the radical series which, either in passing or more directly, mock religious promises of a better life after death. The most vociferous spokesman of this point of view is Velvel Kleinburger, who, for all his limitations, convincingly asserts that "it is easy to send pulpit wind / From bellies sumptuously lined." Taken together, the various critical remarks against religious promises of future well-being add up to a scathing indictment of the Church's conspiracy with the capitalist State.

All the more bitter, then, is this last poem's portrait of the "fabulous lily," the social debutante, who, by a sheer accident of birth (certainly not because of any religious faith) inherits the idle life of the rich. In fact, this debutante suffers from the deadliest sin--"pride"--as the

second line of the poem suggests. Another meaning of the word identifies the socialite as a lioness with her "epidermis gilt-edged, [and] bonded hide." The second and third stanzas of the poem provide the details of her privileged upbringing:

For she has been a child most delicate,
 Bathed in milk, filched from the wild goat's haunt;
 She has thrived, has grown, has come to man's estate,--
 She is the season's worthiest debutante!

Her grandfather sold cheap gawds in quantity;
 Non-lilies in their hundreds toiled for them.
 Now dough is not consideration, see,--
 The girl must have her court and diadem.

(108)

Unlike Tillie the Toiler or Winnie the Worker, Lily is the queen of her social class. Her ample leisure time is filled with photographic opportunities:

Call the reporters, call the photographers!
 Here, for the Sportsman, a snap of Lilia
 Patting the groomed posterior of a horse;
 And for the Social Star,
 Lily and jaguar.
 And please, good fellow, print this one apart,--
 (It goes to show our hot-house Lily has
 Not only a big bosom, but a heart.)

(108)

Smith's unambiguous irony not only mocks Lily's membership in the horsey set, but it also equates her with a dangerous predatory animal. His sarcasm intensifies with each passing stanza:

Photo of limousine, and background-slums,
 Lily dispensing to the poor unmentioned sums,
 Already titled for the typesetter:
 Deb and debtor.
 Isn't that cute?
 Also do not forget to comment on the style of her
 spring-suit.

Have a drink; drink hearty;
Here are passes to the party.

And what a party! Outré à l'outrance!
Strawberries from the Himalayas, and
Fowl hatched somewhere in some uncharted land
And other tidbits, costly all, and all
Prepared by (trumpets!) Oscar Cinq of France.

(109)

Interestingly, Smith's description of Lily's Gatsby-like party continues for two more stanzas. Although consistently ironic, the revolutionary orator's detailed report to Tillie and Winnie suggests the irresistible lure of the rich. Moreover, his notably lengthy account of the party prepares his audience for the next stanzas:

Of course, I did not see it all myself;
Sadly, I lacked, what millionaires call pelf,
And so I must, in honesty, relate,
That Barry-Cade Smythe did not crash the gate.

But Barricade Smith did love her from afar,
Watched her, in due time, go upon a cruise
And come back, headlined in the nation's news,
As wife of the tenth cousin of the Czar.

(109)

Smith's humorous, pretentiously hyphenated alias indicates his critical distance from Lily's glamorous social whirl. But his "love" of "her from afar," like the love of a movie queen, suggests the degree to which he has been obsessed with her image. Unable to stop watching her life, he reports her movements with the gossip columnist's newsy interest. No surprisingly, perhaps, Smith admits to this interest with a liberal measure of irony. But that he has such a fascination with the rich intensifies the complexity of his own social

situation. The public oratorical voice sounded in all the preceding speeches now acquires a more vulnerable, human dimension. Here too the very separateness of his character is most fully and dramatically realized. He is, after all, not Klein but a distinctive persona whose own limitations are brought to light to distance the reader (and Klein) from him, thereby encouraging a thoroughly critical consideration of his modern condition--a man almost helplessly enthralled by the glitter of the rich.

Smith's final lines, however, return to the sarcastic tone of the earlier stanzas:

And still to-day, Tillie, if you have the time,
 And Winnie, if you care, you may,
 Ahunting go to Africa, or climb
 Some hills Helvetian, yodelling, and find
 Lily at play;
 Or on the Riviera, or shooting birds of clay,--
 Perhaps, however, you cannot get away.

(110)

The conclusion of "Barricade Smith," and particularly the final throwaway line, reminds Tillie and Willie of their entrapment. They can no more get away than Barricade Smith can become Barry Cade-Smythe. The critical confidence which marks the opening of the series in "Of Violence," and which extends through Smith's speeches, is set in relief to the more guarded critical uncertainty of "Of the Lily Which Toils Not." It is, perhaps, telling of Klein's own unwillingness to embrace Marxist political theory completely that this should be the case, because, for all of its anti-capitalist

rhetoric, "Barricade Smith" finally resists a full endorsement of a Marxist solution to the complex problems of the working class. The primary motive of Smith's speeches is to educate that class, not to urge it towards violent revolution. This is why Fischer, for one, finds the series "ambiguous." Yet none of Klein's radical poems, no matter how critically aggressive, presumes to offer an easy solution to the social and political ills of the 'thirties. What they all share is the insistence on defining the problems first. Redemption, when it is realized, fails to move beyond the purely personal, as is the case with Abe Segal. But one thing is certain in all the radical poems: Klein's faith that reason, and a reason firmly linked to a strong moral code, is the only weapon to use against the forces of modern exploitation.

Klein's reliance on traditional poetic forms, his obvious delight in the expressive potential of language, and his often complex and challenging use of critical irony in the radical poems, reveal both his belief in the power of poetry and his continued resistance to modernism itself. Although obviously under the influence of Eliot (especially in the early 'thirties) and even awed by the modern revolutionary experiments of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and The Waste Land, the Klein of the radical poems resolutely resists uncritical imitation, ~~it~~ is most significant that while Klein admires Eliot's innovative attempts to document social ills, Klein himself maintains a firm grip on the literary

tradition from which Eliot so radically departs. Even though Klein may adopt Eliot's critical view of the modern world and the spiritual impoverishment that informs its alienated inhabitants, he never once breaks away from the traditionally formal considerations of poetry. What is remarkable is that critics, when studying the radical poems, have failed to recognize the recurrence of closed stanza forms--the end-stopped couplet, the ottava rima stanza, the Petrarchan or Shakespearean sonnet, the cross-rhymed quatrain--which testify to the degree to which Klein actively resisted more modern formal trends. In fact, nowhere does Klein, in any one of the radical experiments, write either a line of free verse or an Imagist poem. Moreover, the most frequently addressed poet in all of the series is Shakespeare, and not Eliot as critics have charged. To say, therefore, that Klein was writing a kind of "anti-poetry," as both Dudek and Matthews have asserted, is curious at best and inaccurate at worst. The Klein of the 'thirties who was writing the fairly traditional verses that later comprised Hath Not a Jew was, in many ways, the same Klein who was writing the radical poems. The difference, such as it is, is between the more traditional and culturally specific contents of the former and the modern and culturally general contents of the latter. Klein was neither capable of compromising or willing to co-operate with the very modern sensibility which the radical poems lament and which his best instincts resisted.

What is finally most remarkable about the radical poems, then, is not the degree to which they mark an aberrant "stage" in Klein's work or an immature attempt to imitate Eliot or the moderns, but the extent to which they are so thoroughly consistent with Klein's moral-aesthetic principles.

THE POETRY OF A.M. KLEIN

VOLUME II

by

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Chapter Four

Poems (1944) and The Hitleriad

In Canada, the critical response to Klein's first volume of poetry, Hath Not a Jew..., was unanimously favourable.

E.K. Brown, for one, sent congratulations and unqualified praise:

It has always been my idea, in private, that you had the making of the greatest poet this country has ever had, and, in public, that you have actually done more good things than anyone but, perhaps, Pratt.¹

Pratt, for that matter, sent Klein a short note praising the accomplishments of Hath Not a Jew...² and Leon Edel, with whom Klein was more personally familiar than either Brown or Pratt, encouraged his friend to try and reach a wider reading audience:

Send copies to your favourite poets--especially young ones--like Auden etc. . . . because they might like you well enough to talk about you in the right quarters . . . you might even try the dope T.S. Eliot--your poetry might even do him some good.³

Edel, his playfully derisive manner notwithstanding, obviously recognized the authority that Eliot commanded in 1940 and so urged Klein to bring his work to Eliot's attention. No doubt, Klein desired such attention, but by 1939 he had

¹E.K. Brown, Letter to A.M. Klein, 11 October 1940, Public Archives of Canada 000105.

²E.J. Pratt, Letter to A.M. Klein, 23 December 1941, Public Archives of Canada 000149.

³Leon Edel, Letter to A.M. Klein, 30 April 1940, Public Archives of Canada 000081-82.

taken charge of the Canadian Jewish Chronicle, and his primary concern, both as editor and as poet, was with the accelerating horrors of a global war. In the same year that he became editor of the Chronicle Klein began composing the poems that would constitute his Poems collection of 1944.⁴ When Poems was finally published, it reflected Klein's growing response to the events of the entire war-time period.

Through his editorials in the Chronicle, Klein could address himself to contemporary events which, as he fearfully recognized, threatened to annihilate the whole of European Jewry. Klein had read Hitler's Mein Kampf in the 'thirties and recognized the dangers that awaited Jews should Hitler be given the freedom to carry out the campaign of his autobiography. As editor, Klein's role as spokesman for the Jewish community of Canada facing such dangers was firmly established. As M.W. Steinberg notes,

Anyone who was interested at all in Jewish affairs used to read the Chronicle. It expressed very vigorously, very clearly, the Jewish position vis-a-vis the growing anti-Semitism and Fascism in Canada, and the failure of the governments to act. It appealed also to the Jewish conscience, stirring it on behalf of many causes. Klein spoke to us in terms of our historic sense, or mission, our tradition of charity and responsibility. He was our spokesman to the non-Jewish community, expressing our bitterness, expressing our fears, our determination.⁵

⁴In a letter to Leo Kennedy, 31 October 1940, Klein writes that he is "presently working on a book of psalms--some more escapist writing," Public Archives of Canada 000107.

⁵M.W. Steinberg and Seymour Mayne, "A Dialogue on A.M. Klein," Dialog (1973): 14.

The Chronicle provided Klein with the opportunity to speak in a public voice, a voice confident in its commitment to the traditions of the Jewish community. A 1939 editorial, for instance, conveys the rabbinical resonances and the impassioned argument characteristic of Klein's public style:

Jews of the lands of freedom must meet the enemy with a battlecry!

Our loyalty to our country demands it! Our loyalty to ourselves insists upon it. The fight that the British Empire is today waging is a fight for freedom, for tolerance, for liberalism. It is our fight! We shall not survive a British defeat! We desire not the enslavement that such survival would mean!

Past wars have seen our people, brave and loyal, fighting in opposing camps. No such divided allegiance disturbs us now. In the ranks of the enemy there are no Jews, save hostages, prisoners, and cadavres.

The issue is clear! Clear is the answer of Canadian Jewry. Every effort will be bent, every ounce of energy will be spent, every sacrifice will be made, to see to it that we--all of us--people, and country, and Empire--emerge victorious. The challenge has been made, and the answer will be given. We are fighting a fight for survival, and our courage will be as high as our stake is great.⁶

Editorials such as this one consistently expressed both the urgency and the seriousness of the contemporary situation throughout the war. As this example demonstrates, Klein strove for emotional lucidity by imitating the very rhythms of Old Testament prophecy. Klein's Chronicle practice was to combine the thunder of Hebrew prophetic statement with

⁶"The Issue is Clear" (8 September 1939), in Beyond Sabbation: Selected Essays and Editorials 1928-1955, eds. M.W. Steinberg and Usher Caplan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 61. Hereafter cited as Beyond Sabbation.

flashes of hope and guarded optimism in the service of rallying his readers to the allied fight against fascism.

The poems written during the war-time period were conceived in the same spirit and, as shall be further demonstrated, they often directly echoed in poetry what the editorials sounded in prose. But, not surprisingly, perhaps, they differ from the Chronicle editorials in significant ways. Most obvious is the deliberately personal, even confessional tone of the poems of this time. It is plausible to suggest that in writing poetry, Klein found some relief from the public responsibilities demanded by the Chronicle; in poetry he could freely voice the personal doubts and fears that he could not afford to express in his editorials. It is also plausible to suggest that Klein kept working on and revising the poetry that would become Poems throughout the war period. As Caplan notes, for "two exasperating years [1942-43] Klein and his editors at the Jewish Publication Society [Philadelphia] haggled over the revision or exclusion of numerous poems in the manuscript."⁷ That his editors, in what Caplan calls their "prudishness,"⁸ insisted on substituting euphemisms for colloquialisms or "admittedly vernacular"

⁷Usher Caplan, Like One That Dreamed: A Portrait of A.M. Klein (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982) 90. Hereafter cited as Like One That Dreamed.

⁸Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 90.

words⁹ must have disappointed and frustrated Klein, but he held firmly to the principle, as Barricade Smith describes it in "Of Poesy," to write the "Speech . . . not of the thrush's note, long sour / But of the Real, alive upon a floor."

While it is true, as Caplan remarks, that "Klein consented to many of the changes [the editors] insisted upon,"¹⁰ it is also true that he would not concede on all points. As his letters to the Publication Society show, in several instances Klein decided to withdraw poems from publication rather than compromise their integrity. The end result was that fewer poems than originally intended were published in Poems; however, once the number of poems was established Klein saw to the careful ordering of the volume, devised the proper sequence of the entries, and repeated, to the end, the rightness of his decisions. When it was finally published in 1944, Poems reflected Klein's aesthetic and moral considerations of the war period in ways that the weekly Chronicle editorials, which were written quickly and often roughly, did not.

The volume certainly attracted attention when it was published, but not all of the reviews were favourable. One of the first to comment was the young Irving Layton, who recognized that Poems has "virtues" but felt that the volume failed to recognize the existence of evil. "To know God

⁹Klein uses this phrase to describe his technique in a letter to the Jewish Publication Society, 1 July 1943, Public Archives of Canada, 000217.

¹⁰Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 90-91.

truly," Layton wrote, "one must have known Satan; Klein gives no evidence of ever having been within a hundred yards of that versatile gentleman."¹¹ Desmond Pacey, partly in answer to Layton's charge, defended Poems, particularly the psalms of the first section, as "frank, natural, easy, and brilliant." Pacey remains the leading exponent of the view that Poems indicates not only some of Klein's "best" work but also his "vigorous optimism."¹² But most critics have aligned themselves with Layton's view that Poems is, as a whole, deficient. In 1946, John Sutherland dismissed the work as "not very convincing and certainly very dull."¹³ Louis Dudek, in his 1950 review of Klein's work, did not even bother to mention the volume.¹⁴ Miriam Waddington, ordinarily positive about Klein's work, challenged Pacey's earlier assessment of Poems by insisting that the work

¹¹Irving Layton, rev. of Poems (1944), in A.M. Klein, ed. and with an intro. by Tom Marshall, Critical Views on Canadian Writers (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970) 24. This review is reprinted from First Statement 2 (1945): 35-36.

¹²Desmond Pacey, Ten Canadian Poets (Toronto: Ryerson) 283-84.

¹³John Sutherland, "The Poetry of A.M. Klein," in A.M. Klein (Marshall), 48. This article is reprinted from Index (August 1946): 8-12, 20-21.

¹⁴Louis Dudek, "A.M. Klein," in A.M. Klein (Marshall), 66-74. This article is reprinted from the Canadian Forum 30 (1950): 10-12.

expresses "grief and doubt, and beyond that a kind of spiritual bankruptcy."¹⁵

It is clear that what characterizes these views is the limited attention actually given to the Poems volume. Whether praising or dismissing the work, no one critic devotes much space to specific poems, or even to the work as a whole. Most obviously absent from any of these discussions is any extended commentary on the formal aspects of the poems, aspects which, as Klein's letters to his editors indicate, he considered as thoroughly as one would expect of so serious a craftsman. In effect, Poems has been evaluated, and then only briefly, solely on the basis of the degree of optimism that it is thought to contain. So it is that Pacey, who hears encouraging news, deems the work brilliant and that Waddington, who hears doubt and despair, considers the work weak. In addition to the neglect which the work has suffered, the very fact that this slim volume has generated such divergent interpretations indicates that a detailed response to Poems should be pursued.

That Klein struggled with his publishers for two years to bring Poems into being indicates the extent of his aesthetic and moral investment in the project. In one letter to his editors, Klein firmly challenges their recommendation to temper the strident criticism of Poems:

¹⁵Miriam Waddington, A.M. Klein, Studies in Canadian Literature (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970) 63.

I note, for example, that the disapproval of certain poems is based upon one of two considerations:

(a) That the poem is either too vigorous in its criticism of Jews, and accordingly, the J.P.S. which know not who its eavesdroppers are, cannot afford to give its imprimatur to something which the enemies of Israel might use against us. We have indeed come to a sorry pass when we cannot afford the luxury of self-criticism, lest the foe seek to confound us out of our own mouths. This viewpoint I can understand, occupying as I do in the local Jewish community some positions which entail a responsibility greater than that usually felt by the skylark poet.¹⁶

Klein's second point was that some poems were deemed "not as good as those which remain" and so he agreed to delete them. But his allusion to Shelley, the "skylark" poet in the first point, says a great deal about Klein's sense of purpose. It may be recalled that in the radical poems, and particularly in Barricade Smith's speeches, Klein calls on the modern poet to voice new concerns, not the "old coin of hoarded metaphor" minted by nineteenth-century poets. In Poems, Klein strove to satisfy his own modernist demands by directly confronting, not avoiding, the problem of evil and by insisting that the modern experience itself made all men vulnerable to grief and despair. Moreover, as his remarks to his editors indicate, Klein acknowledged his "responsibility" to his community which, in his view, unwittingly participated in the modern dangers which threatened to destroy it. The highly personal voice of Poems, when it does express grief and doubt, describes the malaise of the modern condition,

¹⁶Letter to Judge Louis E. Levinthal, 1 July 1943, Public Archives of Canada 000214.

but it does so in order to seek a way out of such spiritual entrapment. A careful examination of the well-considered arrangement of Poems, of its thematic patterning, and of its remarkably traditional formal concerns may prove to be the most fruitful way of establishing not only Klein's recommendations for survival in the war-time period but also his response to the question of modernism itself.

I. "The Psalter of Avram Haktani"

In his letters to the editors of Poems, Klein repeatedly insisted on dividing the volume into three sections: "The Psalter of Avram Haktani," "Series of Single Poems" (which became "A Voice Was Heard in Ramah"), and "Yehudi Halevi, His Pilgrimage." Each structural division reflects a specific set of themes and a specific application of poetic forms. Yet each also works to complement and to illuminate the central questions of the entire volume which the first poem in the collection raises:

Where in these dubious days shall I take counsel?
Who is there to resolve the dark, the doubt?¹⁷

¹⁷"A psalm of Abraham when he hearkened to a voice and there was none," First Statement 1.14 (1943): 2; SP 002112 ("Psalm"); MS 002572 ("Psalm"); Poems (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1944) 1; The Collected Poems of A.M. Klein, ed. and with an intro. by Miriam Waddington (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974) 210. All references which follow in parentheses are to Poems and The Collected Poems respectively. Readers should also consult Zailig Pollock's "Errors in The Collected Poems of A.M. Klein," Canadian Poetry 10 (Spring/Summer, 1982): 91-99.

Since these questions come so early in Poems, it is understood that the rest of the work will attempt to answer them. The titles of the three divisions, which allude to religious and historical sources, suggest that the answers to the questions might be provided in religious and historical traditions.

The "Psalter of Avram Haktani," which marks the first section of Poems, points to the possibility that prayer is, at least, one way in which "counsel" might be taken. By using his Hebrew name in the title ("haktani" is the Hebrew word for the Yiddish "klein," which means "small"), Klein deliberately identifies himself as both the speaker of the thirty-six psalms which constitute the psalter and as the cultural representative of the Jewish community. As Sydney Warhaft once observed, "[Klein's] Jew is always living on two levels: as a symbol and as a man."¹⁸ This is certainly true of Klein's psalter inasmuch as he draws on the reader's appreciation of the Old Testament psalms, which are generally regarded as being both the personal expressions of King David and the general fears and longings of the people whom he represents. Klein's psalms only occasionally echo some of the one hundred and fifty biblical psalms but each of his titles is numbered and described according to scriptural practice. Some are called "maschils" (a term which may mean "insight giving"), some are addressed to specific subjects

¹⁸Sydney Warhaft, "Universality in the Poetry of A.M. Klein," Creative Campus [University of Manitoba] (Spring 1950): 43.

or to specific historical characters, and one is titled a "shiggaion" (the meaning of the word is uncertain). The variety of poetic forms employed in Klein's psalter also mirrors the variety of expression evident in the Old Testament book. Klein also relies on traditional English models of versification, and not on Old Testament ones, to sing his psalms. Klein's method, therefore, seeks to accommodate an ancient manner of worship to a decidedly new context. To write psalms at all, of course, presumes an allegiance to the traditions of the past. The challenge of the modern psalmist, however, and indeed one of the central themes of Klein's psalter, involves the problem of finding meaning in a world which has moved so far away from the time in which the original psalms were written.

The first two psalms of Avram Haktani's psalter are, in every way, central to all of the Poems collection, for the first establishes the major quest of the work while the second provides a clue to the resolution of that quest. "Psalm I" squarely sets forth the nature of the psalmist's personal condition--the modern condition itself. The poem is remarkably Eliotesque in both its diction and imagery. Klein's lament, that "prophecy has vanished out of Israel" and that "open vision is no more," unavoidably recalls the complaint of The Waste Land that the modern world is devoid of spirituality, unity, and wholeness of vision. Particularly notable is Klein's use of "noise" as a metaphor for chaos.

Such noise may echo the troublesome "sounds of horns and motors" of "The Fire Sermon"¹⁹ or the "shouting and crying" and the "dry sterile thunder" of "What the Thunder Said."²⁰ It is also likely that Klein reaches beyond Eliot to Milton for his literary sources. Certainly the implied contrast in "Psalm I" between modern noise and ancient music finds a precedent in Books I and II of Paradise Lost, where Milton elaborates an explicit contrast between the "noises loud and ruinous"²¹ of Hell and the "sound / Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet", of Heaven.²² Klein extends the traditional metaphor to deepen the critical irony of his poem. Whereas in Paradise Lost there is heard a clear distinction between two kinds of noise--one "ruinous" in Hell and one "sweet" in Heaven--and in The Waste Land there is heard only the disturbing noise of modern times, "not even silence in the mountains,"²³ in Klein's modern world there is noise "only in the groves of Baal" and silence "among the holy ones." The horror of Klein's predicament is given in the title of the poem: "A psalm of Abraham, when he hearkened to a voice, and there was none." Most terrifying is the realization that those

¹⁹T.S. Eliot, Collected Poems 1909-1962 (London: Faber and Faber, 1963) 70. Hereafter cited as Collected Poems.

²⁰Eliot, Collected Poems, 76.

²¹Paradise Lost 2.921.

²²Paradise Lost 1.711-12.

²³Eliot, Collected Poems, 76.

who should be speaking, or singing, are not. But Klein's two questions,

Where in these dubious days shall I take counsel?
Who is there to resolve the dark, the doubt?

(1/210)

and, in effect, all of "Psalm I" challenge both the "noise" of the heathens and the silence "among the holy ones." It is difficult not to hear the poem itself as at least a partial answer to the questions.

It is also true that Klein orders his opening lament according to a distinctive rhyme scheme which partially challenges both the "franzied clamouring" of the heathens and the silence of holy men. The psalm is divided into three stanzas: a sixain, a tercet, and a quatrain. The first six lines, which establish the loss of "open vision," are rhymed so loosely (abcbad) and with such a degree of strain that they manage to convey the difficulty that Klein has in making himself heard. After voicing the questions of the sixain, however, Klein breaks into the more controlled verses of the tercet (aba) and of the cross-rhymed quatrain. Both stanzas, while radically different from each other, tend to assert order and pattern in defiance of the "noise" and the silence about him. The awkward stanzaic variation of "Psalm I" deliberately mirrors the loss of "open vision" in the modern world but, in spite of this, Klein insists on presenting the pattern of his thoughts. Since he hears no "voice" he answers himself by way of consolation. Implicit

in this opening psalm is the idea that Klein is a lone voice crying out in and trying to make sense of "these dubious days."

"Psalm II" (2-3/210-11)²⁴ both complements and extends the theme of "Psalm I" by insisting, with the confident support of tetrameter couplets, on the necessity of speaking. The openly autobiographical subject of the poem serves to provide all of the psalter with a convincing and deeply felt humanity. Here Klein admits how much he has changed "in this [his] thirtieth year" from the days when he "in his youth did battle with/The wicked theologic myth." The "myth" was "wicked" because it involved the belief that a wicked world could not but be run by a "wicked" god and because it led him to state, along with Nietzsche perhaps, that "God . . . did not exist." At least, in this view, a benevolent God did not exist. The implied allusion to Nietzsche here is pertinent, for further in the poem Klein describes himself as

This XXth century scientist,
A writer of psalms, a liturgist;
A babbling pious woman, he
Who boasted that his thoughts were free;
And who at worst did nullify
By ignorance the deity.

(2/210-211)

As a young, self-styled "hero," Klein believed that he was "free" to exercise his will in life, and so partook of the

²⁴"Maschil of Abraham: A prayer when he was in the cave," Reconstructionist 6.18 (10 January 1941): 12; MS 002745 (pp. 2-3), 002746 (pp. 2-3).

modern myth, elaborated by Nietzsche, that man is master of his own destiny. Now a "XXth century scientist," as he mockingly describes his status as a poet, he rejects his former view and acknowledges, instead, the existence of a power outside of himself. And now he confesses that even his former "blasphemies" were insincere, the posturings of arrogant youth:

O Lord, in this my thirtieth year
 What clever answer shall I bear
 To those slick persons amongst whom
 I sat, but was not in their room?

(2-3/211)

In directly addressing the "Lord," Klein prays for the ability to communicate to others the "music" that he now hears. Such sounds are heard in direct contrast to the "twitterings" of the sceptical in this poem and to the noise and the silence of "Psalm I."

The religious paradox on which "Psalm II" centres is that whereas Klein once "boasted that his thoughts were free," he now understands that he was, in truth, ignorant, and so not free. Freedom resides, in his mature view, in the recognition of

The undebatable verity,
 The truth unsoiled by epigram
 The simple I am that I am.

(3/211)

So Klein acknowledges that "the truth"--that is, the existence of the Absolute--is revealed in God's "simple" statement, unassisted by epigrammatic flourishes. Fear of God (now

Klein is "trembling before the Throne") is the condition of emancipation, and in this condition he hears "music" that "sings." This is the music that he desires to express to others who fail to hear it. The concluding lines of "Psalm II" not only plead for the ability to express what he hears, but they also directly refer to Milton--to whom an indirect allusion is made in "Psalm I"--at their close:

Do Thou the deed, say Thou the word,
And with Thy sacred strategem
Do justify my ways to them.

(3/211)

In reversing the Miltonic verse concerning "justifying the ways of God to Men,"²⁵ Klein places the burden of responsibility squarely on himself. Klein knows that God exists. He recognizes the presence of a "sacred strategem," a phrase that presumes the presence of a divine order and a divine strategy. What he desires is the "word" from God which he would, in turn, use to convince others of what he already knows. By shifting the emphasis from God's "ways" to his own, Klein implicitly draws an analogy between God and the poet-creator which is so central a theme of his writing. It should be understood that these are not the words of a boaster; rather, they show that the poet might best serve God by willing only what it is that God wills. The difficulty, therefore, rests not with the question of faith in God, but with the problem of how to communicate such faith.

²⁵Paradise Lost 1.22.

Both "Psalms I" and "II" centre on this very modern problem. Klein seems to be saying that in the present state of unbelief, men are "scoffers" who insist on the primacy of human will. This leads, in turn, to the "wicked theologic myth" of the first psalm and to the justification of torture and the will-to-mastery of the second. ("O these are the days of scorpions and of whips.") Lurking in the psalms is a charge against Nazism: the "scorpions" suggest swastikas, and the "whips" are surely instruments of torture associated with the Nazis. Moreover, the paraphrase in "Psalm II" of Nietzsche's announcement that God is dead is clearly associated with the Germany of the late 'thirties and early 'forties. Klein's argument is not merely with Nazism but with the direction of the modern world itself. Either by its silence or by its acceptance of a non-sacramental universe, the modern world endorses the view that man is "free" to do what he wills. And this is the view with which Klein takes issue and which he suggests allows Nazism to flourish.

The authority for Klein's point of view rests primarily on his open confession of his faith. He hears God speaking to him, and so vows, in spite of the acknowledged difficulties of communication, to enlighten others with a vision of unity that he sets against the chaos of the modern world. Perhaps further authority accrues to his point of view through its similarity with that of Eliot in The Waste Land. There, too, "prophecy has vanished" only to be replaced by the

likes of Madame Sosostris; there, too, modern man laments the death of God: "He who was living is now dead."²⁶ Moreover, Klein's acknowledgement of the nature and importance of belief is shared by the seventeenth-century metaphysical poets whom Eliot so strongly recommended.²⁷ Klein's method in "Psalm II," for instance, recalls George Herbert's "The Collar," where one gentle word from God ("Methought I heard one calling, Child!")²⁸ dispels all the tortuous doubts of the speaker just as one "simple" statement from God dispels all of Klein's youthful boasts. And the religious paradox which stands at the centre of both "Psalm II" and Herbert's "The Collar"--that man is free only in the service of God--is given familiar expression in Donne's "Holy Sonnets."²⁹ Of course Paradise Lost, which remains the most elaborate treatment of this view, stands solidly behind Klein's poem.

Klein's problem, however, more closely resembles Eliot's, at least superficially, in that both poets directly raise the question of how best to communicate the possibility of unity in the face of modern chaos. This is a burning issue for Prufrock and one of the major themes of The Waste Land.

²⁶Eliot, Collected Poems, 76.

²⁷See "The Metaphysical Poets" in Selected Essays by T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1951) 281-291.

²⁸The Works of George Herbert, ed. F.E. Hutchinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1941) 153.

²⁹The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne, ed. and with an intro. by Charles M. Coffin (New York: Random House, 1952) 247-254.

But Klein, as is usually the case, sets himself apart from the early Eliot both by insisting on the reality of a power outside himself and by refusing to surrender to the pressures of the modern climate. The very form in which "Psalm II" is cast testifies to the degree of difference between the two poets, for here the tough tetrameter couplets confidently reinforce Klein's commitment to ordered design, to the reality of unity, and defiantly prove wrong his earlier boasts that his "thoughts were free." The mature man speaks in rhyming couplets which give body to his vision. In fact, the form of the poem has more in common with the carefully patterned rhyming lines of Herbert's "The Collar" or with the tightly controlled divisions of Donne's "Holy Sonnets" than it does with the superficially disjointed free verse fragments of The Waste Land. "Psalm II" provides a partial answer to the questions of "Psalm I"--and of the entire psalter--in the pattern of unity which the poet so carefully and confidently constructs. Although Klein seeks a way to communicate, the poem itself suggests that a way has been found.

Almost all of the remaining poems in the psalter prove the point that Klein, as the post-speaker, seeks to pattern his thoughts in spite of the difficulties of communication announced in the first two psalms. "Psalm III" (4/211),³⁰ for instance, makes effective use of a cross-rhymed octave

³⁰"A psalm of Abraham when he was sore pressed," Opinion 11.12 (October 1941): 28.

to describe the burden of consciousness that separates man from "beast." Here the poem, which is made up of a chain of cross-rhymed lines, well serves Klein's lament against the "weight of thought" and the "harnessed heart"--that is, against reason and feeling which prohibit man from being as "content" as "the least" of God's creatures. But Klein's claim in "Psalm II," that he is free only precisely because he is conscious of the existence of God, somewhat qualifies his envy of the beast in "Psalm III." Implied in his lament is the loss of unity, or even identity with the natural world "of the field." If there is anything divine in man, as so many of the psalms in the psalter point out, it is his consciousness of himself. But, perhaps in further echo of Paradise Lost, Klein acknowledges the alienation and the loneliness that is the price of such consciousness. Because of his ability to think and to feel, man is free to love God. Such knowledge also separates him from original unity, which is attended by feelings of discontent. The "harness" formed by the rhyme scheme of "Psalm III" both proves that Klein's "thoughts are not free" and evidences the difficulties inherent in being part of mankind.

"Psalm IV" (5/212)³¹ deepens the irony of Klein's double-edged awareness. Here, too, Klein speaks in cross-rhymed verses, but this time he identifies himself as part

³¹"A psalm of Abraham, touching his green pastures," Poetry 58 (April 1941): 6 ("Psalm").

of, not severed from, the natural world. In echo of the twenty-third psalm he situates himself in "pastures green" and "Beside still waters." But he "lift[s] hosannahs to the sky"

Only to see where clouds should sit,
And in that space the sky should fill,
The fierce carnivorous Messerschmidt,
The Heinkel on the kill.

(5/212)

The complaint here is not with consciousness (which, after all, allows him to praise the organic world) but with the men who are like beasts--"carnivorous" and "on the kill." Clearly Klein is charging Hitler's Nazis, who "fill" the organic world with the weapons of technological warfare, with a kind of barbaric primitivism. The "Messerschmidt" and the "Heinkel" are instruments of the will-to-conquer the organic world--replacing "clouds" with machinery and ultimately obliterating Klein's "pastures" of "peace." "Psalm IV" qualifies the lament of "Psalm III" by distinguishing Klein, and the community for whom he speaks, from the "fierce" Nazi "beasts" intent on destroying the earth. And what was the harness of "Psalm III's" rhyme scheme now becomes the vehicle of the order necessary to counter barbarity.

"Psalm V" (6/212-13)³² develops the theme of "Psalm IV" even further. Here Klein draws on the authority of biblical versification for effect. The will-to-conquer which has

³²"A song of degrees," Reconstructionist 7.3 (21 March 1941): 6; MS 002745 (6).

thus far been implicitly identified with Hitler's Germany is now explicitly identified as the motive for evil:

Consider the son of man, how he doth get his knowledge and wisdom!

Not to the sorcerer does he go, nor yet to the maker of books; not from the gait of angels does he take example; he mimics not the antics of the cherubim.

The beasts of the field are his teachers; feather and fur his instructors, instructing him the way that he shall go therein.

Before their hooves, he sits, a disciple; to the eyrie, he climbs, crying, Master, Master.

The cry of the eagle, the emblematic bird of Nazi Germany, alludes specifically to Nietzsche's famous distinction between "master morality" and "slave morality."³³ In imitating the "beasts of the field," which Klein had earlier referred to as "the least" of God's creatures, man practises the morality of the master race and so gives reign to his destructive jungle instincts. True "knowledge" and "wisdom" would be better served by following the "sorcerer," the "maker of books," the "angels," and the "cherubim." In effect, Klein reverses what he, at least, perceives to be the dangers of Nietzsche's moral hierarchy--a hierarchy which prefers the power of the master to the weakness of the slave--by arguing for the supremacy of reason (and the devotion to God which reason allows) over primitive instincts. "Psalm V" not only challenges the Nietzschean endorsement of a master morality, but it also challenges the modern myth of evolutionary

³³Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, trans. and with commentary by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966) 204.

progress by linking man to his primitive ancestors. This argument finds a contemporary parallel in the work of E.J. Pratt, whose poetry Klein consistently praised throughout the war period.³⁴ A relationship between the works of these two Canadian poets has already been noted by Dorothy Livesay but a full study of Klein's debt to Pratt in the Poems collection has yet to be explored.³⁵

"Psalm VI" (7-8/213-14) testifies to the possibility of divine retribution in a terrifying and apocalyptic vision of the future.³⁶ The five cross-rhymed iambic pentameter stanzas of Klein's poem also firmly repeat the question of "Psalm II":

How shall I make apocalypse
Of that which rises to my lips?

(3/211)

In "Psalm VI," it would appear that once again Klein has found, through the mounting force of his ordered verses, a way to make himself heard. The same might be said of "Psalm

³⁴See Klein's letter to A.J.M. Smith in The A.M. Klein Symposium, ed. and with an intro. by Seymour Mayne, Reappraisals of Canadian Writers (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1975) 7; Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 112.

³⁵See Appendix G for an extended discussion of Klein's relationship to Pratt.

³⁶"A psalm of Abraham, concerning that which he beheld upon the heavenly scarp," Poetry 59 (March 1942): 315-16 ("Upon the Heavenly Scarp"); The Book of Canadian Poetry, ed. and with an intro. by A.J.M. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1943) 396 ("Upon the Heavenly Scarp"); New Directions 8 (1944): 196 ("Upon the Heavenly Scarp"); Canadian Anthology, eds. Carl Klinck and Reginald Watters (Toronto: W.J. Gage, 1966) 384; SP 002080-81; MS 002587-91, 002745 (7-8), 002746 (7-8).

VIII" (9/214),³⁷ which repeats the tetrameter couplets used in "Psalm II," thereby echoing the "music" that he claims to have heard in that poem. (Pratt's fondness for the octosyllabic line might even be a source of Klein's own method of making such music. In Klein's short poem, which prays that the "hunters" might have "goodly hunting," it is difficult to avoid associating the biological imagery of "the whispering jungle of the blood," the "carnivorous midge," and the "sinuous spirochete" with Pratt's own familiar reliance on biological diction.) The poem appropriately follows the vision of "Psalm VI" by pleading for the success of the "hunters" who will bring their "quarry"--the "carnivorous" beasts and insects of the "wood"--"to bay."

It is inviting to speculate that when Klein writes in octosyllabic couplets, as he does in "Psalm VIII" (10-11/214-15), he is most able to honour the desire to sound the "music that about [him] sings."³⁸ In view of the fact that he first expresses this desire in the octosyllabic couplets of "Psalm II," and that both "Psalm VII" and "Psalm VIII" employ the same form in the service of celebration, it is likely that this is true. "Psalm VIII" begins with the confident declaration that

³⁷"For the chief musician: A song for hunters," *Opinion* 11.12 (October 1941): 28.

³⁸"psalm of the fruitful field," *Opinion* 4.6 (April 1934): 23 ("Paradise"); P34 001985-86 ("Paradise").

A field in sunshine is a field
On which God's signature is sealed.

The statement reiterates one of the major themes of Klein's early poems--that the natural, organic world reveals the handwriting of God. Creation in this view (which relies so heavily on the themes of early nineteenth-century Romantic poetry) is essentially good. The poem proceeds to demonstrate that man could find wisdom if he learned to read the Book of Creation instead of inhabiting the inorganic realm of the urban environment:

Even a sheep which rolls in grass
Is happier than lad or lass,
Who treads on stones in streets of brass,
Who does not love a field lacks wit,
And he were better under it!

"Psalm VIII" also sets up an opposition between the gentler natural world of a "field in sunshine" and the crueler, primitive world of the "beasts of the field" judged in "Psalm V." Clearly, in Klein's view, man would do better by imitating what is good and peaceful in the natural world and not what is primitive, "carnivorous," and life-destroying. "Psalm VIII" also acknowledges the presence of Pratt in Klein's psalter by asking

Who clamours for a witch's brew
Potioned from hellebore and rue;
Or pagan imps of fairy band
When merely field and meadowland
Can teach a lad that there are things
That set upon his shoulderblades two wings?

5

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NBS 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

10	12	15
16	20	25
32	40	50
63	80	100
125	160	200
250	320	400
500	630	800
1000	1250	1600
2000	2500	3200
4000	5000	6300
8000	10000	12500

The Witches' Brew is, of course, Pratt's exuberantly told story (also related in octosyllabics) of the effects of a potent mixture on the creatures of the sea.³⁹

It can now be seen that the first eight poems in Klein's psalter, with their reliance on rigorous formal arrangements and their concern with the loss of "open vision" in the modern world, argue for the possibility of retrieval on both the personal and the social levels of experience. It can also be seen to what degree the psalms comment on each other so that each poem tends to qualify or to complement the one before it. "Psalm IX" (12-13/215-16),⁴⁰ in which Klein prays directly to God to preserve him "against two wicked worlds"--poverty and wealth--implicitly asks that the harmonious vision of "Psalm VIII" might be sustained. Ostensibly, the extremes of wealth and poverty would prohibit the peaceful well-being that "Psalm VIII" recommends. In effect, Klein is asking God for the privilege of sustaining a golden mean between the "debasings" conditions of excess. Here the iambic pentameter cross-rhymed quatrains convey the sense of harmony and balance for which Klein prays:

But in Thy wisdom Thou canst so ordain
That wealth and poverty be known no more.
Then hadst Thou answered me, again and again,
Answered Thy servant, neither rich nor poor.

³⁹See Appendix G.

⁴⁰"A psalm to be preserved against two wicked worlds," MS 002603-04; 002745 (12-13), 002746 (12-13).

Klein is sure to remind his "Lord," in the first line of the poem, that he is "not one of the saints"--that is, he is not one of those men who can "dance" in the "broken shoes of poverty." But Klein also means to distinguish himself from the "Lamed Vav," the thirty-six saints who, according to rabbinic tradition, live anonymously in every generation but make themselves heard at times of great danger. Klein would not, of course, presume to be such a man; however, the fact that his psalter consists of thirty-six poems, that he does insist on making himself heard at a time of great danger (especially in view of the silence of the holy ones) and that the next psalm, "Psalm X" (14/216), is addressed to a "Lamed Vav," suggest that he resembles such a saint.⁴¹ In fact, the four cross-rhymed lines of "Psalm X," which immediately follow the same organizing principle of the preceding poem, point to the likelihood of such a possibility:

Under a humble name he came to us;
Died; and left his wife executrix
Of tears, and a name for which the saints would fuss.--
I believe he was one of the Thirty-six . . .

The three dots which conclude the poem invite several possibilities, one of them, perhaps, being that Klein himself will be one of the names "for which the saints would fuss." The deliberate stress on the legal term "executrix" also serves to reinforce the possible identification of Klein

⁴¹"Lamed Vav" A psalm to utter in memory of great goodness," Reconstructionist 2.12 (16 October 1936): 13 ("Incognito"); GH 001576 ("Incognito").

with the "Lamed Vav." Although Klein would not openly admit membership in such traditionally illustrious company he nevertheless offers a sufficient number of clues which invite the possibility.

In "Psalm XI" (15-16/216-17) Klein returns to the theme of a healthy and harmonious relationship to the natural world by setting forth the example of "Chatzkel the hunter," who protects God's creatures from natural dangers.⁴² Chatzkel is set in relief beside the fiercer "Nimrod"

Who used strength, not skill,
To quell the forest,

and who represents the more destructive will-to-conquer associated with the agents of life-destroying forces. The poem, with its nursery-rhymed quatrains (abcb), of dimeter lines, resembles the innocent children's verses of Hath Not a Jew... ("Of Sundry Folk"), where Klein sings of legendary Jewish characters with the same spirit of joyous wonder. "Psalm XII" (17/217-18) continues the lyrical form of "Psalm XI" but, as is so often the case in the psalter, with qualified restraint.⁴³ When Klein sings of the "beggar," the "blindman," and the "cripple" in "Psalm XII" he cannot help but marvel at their capacity to praise "their God," although he "cannot fathom how they danced / Or why." Not surprisingly, "Psalm

⁴²"A psalm of the mighty hunter before the Lord," P34 002000-01 ("Chatzkel the Hunter").

⁴³"To the chief musician, who played for the dancers," MS 002693.

XIII" (18/218) provides a partial explanation for his puzzlement.⁴⁴ This "Song for Wanderers" celebrates in the first two stanzas the tunes of the "gypsy" and the "sailor" but turns, in the final stanza, to the unhappy plight of another wanderer--"the weary Jew" who fails to sing because he has nothing to celebrate:

No song at all made sweet his lips,
 Not of travelled roads nor travelling ships.
 No song today wells from his heart
 That has no morrow!

But Klein's psalm is, in effect, the song that such a Jew might sing. That the final stanza is cast in the same rhyme scheme and in the same meter as the songs of the gypsy and the sailor proves that it is not impossible to sing after all, even in the face of weariness. In fact, the added irony of "Psalm XIII" is appreciated in view of the fact that Klein sings his song of the "weary Jew" when he has just questioned, in "Psalm XII," the ability to do so.

"Psalm XIV" (19/218-19) continues the simple lyricism of the three preceding psalms to narrate a parable of six "Holy Pilgrims."⁴⁵ These men are wanderers too, but clearly they have somewhere to go and something to celebrate. Five pilgrims attempt to honour God by bearing gifts representing

⁴⁴"A song for wanderers." This is one of the few poems recorded exclusively in the Poems collection.

⁴⁵"A psalm for five pilgrims, yes, six, on the King's highway," Menorah Journal 29 (Autumn 1941): 280-81.

one of the five senses. But Klein's praise is reserved for the sixth pilgrim of the sixth stanza:

Not sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, his freight,
One brings his heart for pawning with his fate:
He, surely, he shall come within the Gate.

In other words, greatest is the man who offers his praise and his gratitude to God through his heart--the heart being, according to rabbinical tradition, the seat of intelligence and the vehicle of love.⁴⁶ Moreover, it is understood that the sixth pilgrim involves all of himself, and not just one of his senses, in his devotion to God. The uncompromising order of the six tercets which constitute "Psalm XIV" also underlines the sense of unity attributed to the "Absolute."

Following this simple poetic parable of the wholeness and the unity of God is a cluster of poems devoted to Jewish nuptial proceedings. Significantly, "Psalms XV-XX" are placed at the centre of the psalter, thereby stressing the central importance of tradition, renewal, continuity, and celebration. "Psalm XV" (20/219),⁴⁷ for instance, honours the "Rabbi" who introduced Klein to his religious legacy and who now performs the marriage rites:

this is he
Who made my youth worth memory.
Most fitting is it, then, that this

⁴⁶See Everyman's Talmud by A. Cohen with an intro. by Boaz Cohen (New York: Schocken Books, 1975) 82.

⁴⁷"A psalm of Abraham, touching the crown with which he was crowned on the day of his espousals," Opinion 1.5 (4 January 1932): 14 ("Prothalamium"); Reconstructionist 2.12 (16 October 1936): 13 ("Prothalamium"); GH 001515 ("Prothalamium").

Old Rabbi, Eden-bant, should now
Sanctify our marriage-vow.

Here, too, Klein writes in the octosyllabic couplets that identify him in his most celebratory and confident moments. "Psalm XVI" (21/220) describes the signing of the ancient marriage contract with equally fitting formality.⁴⁸ The iambic pentameter cross-rhymed lines of the first two stanzas of the poem reflect the balanced tension between the male and his wife-to-be while the concluding couplet resolves the tension and mirrors the unity achieved in the co-signing of the document.

"Psalm XVII" (22/220) is a Petrarchan sonnet which fittingly captures the carefully ordered proceedings of the ceremony itself.⁴⁹ The octave describes the natural beauty of the bride--"Most beautiful and yet not beautified"--while the sestet describes the circular dance which the "long-haired virgins" perform around the bride to protect and to honour the perfection of her beauty. "Psalm XVIII" (23/221) sings the song of the Virgins in near perfect echo of the original Hebrew melody which Klein manages to convey through the use

⁴⁸"To the chief scribe, a psalm for Abraham, in the day of the gladness of his heart," Opinion 1.5 (4 January 1932): 14 ("Direction to the Scribe"); GH 001502 ("Direction to the Scribe").

⁴⁹"For the bridegroom coming out of his chamber, a song," Opinion 1.5 (4 January 1932): 14 ("Song for Canopies"); GH 001512-13 ("Song for Canopies").

of simple, short sentences and through a delicate use of cross-rhymed lines:⁵⁰

The vile tongue falters; it can bear no tale.
 Speak of the dove, if you will speak of her.
 She is a flower. She is flower-frail.
 Regard her. She is virgin. She is pure.

"Psalm XIX" (24/221) also owes a debt to the original Hebrew ceremony.⁵¹ Here Klein combines the first three blessings of the ceremony, which have as their theme the process of creation. By having children, a couple become partners with God in an act of creation, an act that preserves the human race and the natural world of which that race is a part. So it is that "Psalm XIX" blesses the seasonal and the diurnal rounds, and the bread, wine, fruit, and the "first-born" that are the issues of natural process. The last poem of the nuptial series, "Psalm XX" (25/221-22), is an exuberant expression of the joy that accompanies the marriage feast and of the gratitude that "each voice" utters "To laud the Lord."⁵² Each quatrain of the poem contains a couplet within a couplet (abba), as if to secure the joy of an ordered universe.

⁵⁰"For the bride, a song to be sung by virgins," Opinion 1 (25 January 1932): 17 ("The Bride"); GH 001503 ("With Clean Lips").

⁵¹"A benediction," Opinion 1.5 (4 January 1932): 14 ("Benediction"); GH 001503-04 ("Benediction"); SP 002059; MS 0022231-32.

⁵²"A psalm of Abraham, which he made at the feast," Opinion 1.8 (25 January 1932): 13 ("The Wedding Feast"); GH 001504-05 ("Bring on the rich, the golden-dotted soup").

It is difficult to find the "grief and despair" of which Waddington writes in the especially enthusiastic strains of "Psalm XX." "Psalm XXI" (26/222) is appropriately placed at the end of the nuptial sequence, for it celebrates the beauty and the goodness of Creation by drawing an analogy between a virgin-bride and the moon.⁵³ The poem begins with a gentle command in the rhythms of biblical versification:

Elder, behold the Shunamite, the rumour of her face,
And young man, know the mirror of thy love!

The Shunamite bride of The Song of Solomon (6.13) is perceived differently by the "Elder" than she is by the younger man, much like the "moon," which, Klein continues to say, is praised "each after his own fashion." But regardless of how the moon may be viewed, or to what purpose its light is directed, it remains

the seal of God
Impressed upon His open writ!

As in "Psalm VIII," Klein sees the natural world as God's text.

As if in answer both to the earlier psalms in the psalter, which question the direction of modern life, and to the ensuing poems, which continue the cries of doubt and fear, the nuptial sequence, and "Psalm XXI: A Benediction for the New Moon" which follows it, figure prominently in the psalter to assert the importance of tradition and the possibility of love and celebration. "Psalm XXII" (27-8/223) returns to the more troubled voice of modern times in

⁵³"A benediction for the new moon," MS 002233-34.

a prayer "against madness."⁵⁴ As Klein describes it, madness would be a life without God, without the capacity to love and praise in the manner of the nuptial poems. The psalm also serves to qualify Klein's earlier lament against the "weight of thought" and the "harnessed heart" in "Psalm III," for clearly it is reason or the gift of "the golden bowl," which distinguishes man from the "beasts of the field." It is his capacity to know God that marks his superiority in the natural hierarchy. Klein's allusion to the "golden bowl" of Ecclesiastes (12.6) also effectively sets him apart from the more sceptical author of that biblical book, for in his commitment to the value of reason and wisdom, Klein challenges the preacher's view that all is vanity, and that the wise man and the foolish man come to the same end. In fact, Klein would rather have the "full death-quiver" of God's "wrath" than meet with a life spent in ignorance of God's existence. The now familiar cross-rhymed quatrains of this psalm express the tension and fear which Klein wants to convey while also asserting the necessity of order which only reason can effect. The "touched ones" who are the victims of insanity lack the capacity to pattern their thoughts and utterances:

Behold him scrabbling on the door!
His spittle falls upon his beard,

⁵⁴"A prayer of Abraham, against madness," Jewish Frontier 9.4 (March 1942): 8 ("A Psalm of Abraham on Madness"); MS 002745 (27-8).

As, cowering, he whines before
The voices and the visions, feared.

They can only "whine" and so cannot sing or praise.

"Psalm XXI, I" (29/224) is, in some ways, the most complex and the most problematic of any of the poems in Klein's psalter thus far.⁵⁵ Klein promises that "when the signal shall be given" he will "break in and enter heaven" and destroy "the abominable scales / On which the heavenly justice is misweighed." As Fischer remarks, the blasphemous proposal of the poem "evoked the wrath of Randall Jarrell" who, in his review of the Poems collection, found it "extraordinary" that "a religious poet" should write this.⁵⁶ Even Fischer agrees with Jarrell. "It must be admitted," she goes on to say, "that an incongruence exists."⁵⁷ So she attempts to explain that, perhaps, in view of Klein's "interest in Cabala and in the Chassidism" his attitude might be rationalized, since both religious traditions insist that "man has to act to help God's intent."⁵⁸ But Fischer might have looked more closely at the poem to find an explanation

⁵⁵"A psalm of justice and its scales," Menorah Journal 29 (Autumn 1941): 282; SP 002091 ("Psalm of Justice"), MS 002599 ("Psalm of Justice").

⁵⁶Randall Jarrell, "These are not Psalms," Commentary 1 (November 1945): 89.

⁵⁷G.K. Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem: Religion and Ethics in the Writings of A.M. Klein (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975) 110-11. Hereafter cited as In Search of Jerusalem.

⁵⁸Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 110-11.

for what appears at first to be a blasphemous attitude. Surely nothing in Klein's work, either before or after the Poems collection, supports the view that he would have blasphemed. Moreover, such an attitude can scarcely be reconciled with the overall emphasis on faith and love within the Poems volume itself.

Within "Psalm XXIII" there is no direct mention of God. Klein does mention "heaven" and "heavenly justice," but he also identifies the "abominable scales" of justice as an "automaton"--that is, a mechanical apparatus devoid of intelligence. Surely this is not a word which one would use to describe divine will. The scales, in fact, are nothing more than "tree and token," its "markings" fastened by "bolts." Klein is not proposing to break something that belongs to God but something that belongs to the man-made mechanical universe--an object of artificial invention or a product of a particularly material view of heaven. It is against such a view, and not God, that Klein rails in "Psalm XXIII." Klein's diction and imagery in the psalm recall Pratt's "The Truant," which is also about a mechanical universe, and recommends the same response to it. Klein's "automaton" might well serve as the substitute for Pratt's "great Panjandrum," who is, as Frye describes him, "a demon of the mathematical order of nature of a type often confused

with God."⁵⁹ Not surprisingly the same "confusion" has generated the outrage of Jarrell and the rationalizations of Fischer. The achievement in Pratt's poem is that the human spirit which confronts the mechanical universe represents, as Frye describes it, "the ultimate principle of life," and recognizes that "the great Panjandrum of nature is fundamentally death." The achievement of Klein's poem is that he, too, dares to confront such a universe because he recognizes that in its undoing "justice shall be done."

It should also be noted that "Psalm XXIII" is cast in the form of a sonnet but that, in an unusual move, Klein combines elements of both the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean forms to voice his proposal. Such a strategy has the appropriate effect of reinforcing Klein's urge to break free from the restraints of formulaic mechanization. The psalm begins by arranging the first eight lines into two quatrains (abba, cbc), but it then proceeds--without a volta--to establish a sestet (efefef) according to the demands of the Petrarchan sonnet. Only God can arrange the natural, organic universe, but Klein--though no "master of the trade"--can "tamper" with the inorganic, mechanical universe in the service of justice and the true God. Indeed, the invention of Klein's sonnet form proves that he can make something new that still adheres to a principle of order. It should be clear that

⁵⁹Northrop Frye, The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971) 173.

far from recommending blasphemy "Psalm XXIII" echoes several of the psalms in the psalter in its challenge to the modern, materialist, mechanical world view which dispenses a miserable justice.

Nothing testifies so forcefully to the degree of Klein's unqualified faith in God, perhaps, as the next poem in the psalter, "Psalm XXIV" (30/224),⁶⁰ which is a lyrical endorsement of "the undebatable verity" of "Psalm II":

O incognito god, anonymous lord,
with what name shall I call you? Where shall I
discover the syllable, the mystic word
that shall evoke you from eternity?
Is that sweet sound a heart makes, clocking life,
Your appellation? Is the noise of thunder, it?
Is it the hush of peace, the sound of strife?

I have no title for your glorious throne,
and for your presence not a golden word,--
only that wanting you, by that alone
I do evoke you, knowing I am heard.

The first stanza, which establishes Klein's longing for a way to know and to address God, raises its questions in rhymes (abacded) that strain to find pattern. The second stanza, which provides the answer, resolves the tension in confident pentameter cross-rhymed lines. In his simple declaration of a faith founded on the will to seek God, Klein also answers the complaint of "Psalm I" against the "noise of the heathens" and the silence of the "holy ones." Here he reminds himself that God hears those who speak to Him.

⁶⁰"Shiggaion of Abraham which he sang unto the Lord," Opinion 11, 12 (October 1941): 28.

"Psalm XXV" (31/225) also returns to the announcement of "Psalm I" that "prophecy has vanished" in modern times.⁶¹ What prophets do exist are vulgar fortune-tellers, like "Madame Yolanda" (a descendant of Eliot's Madame Sordstris in The Waste Land), "Sir Aries Virgo," who predicts "five truces," and "Herr Otto Shprinzen," who the "contrary deduces." Even the "scriptural inspectors," presumably religious men, cannot be sought for consolation, for what Klein seeks is not an explanation of the future but an understanding of the confused here and now:

These, then, the soothsayers, and this their season:
 But where; O where is that inspired peasant,
 That prophet, not of the remote occasion,
 But who will explicate the folded present?

In Klein's view, current "soothsayers" fail to do what the original prophets of the Old Testament managed: to offer a vision of their faith as a way of countering the mounting despair and the demoralization of their times. And here, too, Klein insists on making himself heard by asserting the pattern of his thoughts in five cross-rhymed stanzas which stand as if in defiance of modern chaos.

Klein's "Psalm XXVI" (32/225-26) serves to answer the question of "Psalm XXV" by offering a vision of faith and redemption in the manner of an Old Testament prophet. In

⁶¹Go the prophets, minor and major, a Psalm or Song," Opinion 11.12 (October 1941): 28.

fact, Klein's poem directly alludes to the one hundred and thirty-seventh psalm of the Bible in its opening lines:⁶²

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, we wept
When we remembered Zion,--

As in the original psalm, Klein's poem remembers the sufferings of past humiliations and concludes by invoking the Lord to honour His chosen people:

Gather them up, O Lord, these many rivers,
And dry them in the furnace of Thy wrath!
Let them not be remembered! Let them be
~~so many seen to be forgotten~~ Clouds
Dropping their rain
Upon the waters of Thy favourite Jordan!

As is the case whenever Klein directly alludes to Old Testament sources ("Psalm V: a song of degrees") he abstains from end-rhymes because the authority of his verses is drawn from Old Testament rhythms.

One true prophet, at least, is the rooster, the subject of "Psalm XXVII" (33/226):⁶³

O creature marvellous--and O blessed Creator,
Who givest to the rooster wit
to know the movements of the turning day,
to understand, to herald it,
better than I, who neither sing nor crow
and of the sun's goings and comings nothing know.

In spite of Klein's protest that he cannot "sing," he manages to praise this "Prophet of sunrise." What Klein admires in

⁶²"To the chief musician, a Psalm of Israel, to bring to remembrance," Opinion 11.12 (October 1941): 26. For Eliot's use of these words in The Waste Land, see Collected Poems, 70 ("By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . .").

⁶³"A psalm to teach humility," Menorah Journal 29 (Autumn 1941): 284-85; SP 002056.

the rooster is its ability to intuit the diurnal sound, an ability which proves that it is in tune with the organic rhythms of life. This is one of God's creatures that Klein would recommend imitating, as against the "beasts of the field" of the earlier psalms. This theme is carried over into "Psalm XXVIII" (34/227), where Klein catalogues the "more-than-human-beasts" of God who provide man with "mystic parables" for living a devotional life:⁶⁴

The sheep whose little woolly throat
 Taught the child Isaac sacrifice;
 The dove returning to Noah's boat,
 Sprigless, and with tearful eyes;

The ass instructing Balaam
 The discourse of inspired minds;
 And David's lost and bleating lamb,
 And Solomon's fleet lovely hinds.

These biblical animals prove the mysteriousness of God's "ways," but most praise is reserved for the final stanza:

Above all, teach me blessedness
 Of him, Azazel, that dear goat,
 Sent forth into the wilderness
 To hallow it with one sad note.

"Azazel" is the scape goat of Leviticus (16.7-12) to which the sins of the Hebrews were symbolically transferred. It might teach Klein "blessedness" because, although cast into the wilderness, it managed to make itself heard. If Klein is living in a wilderness of modern times, then it is likely

⁶⁴"A psalm or prayer--praying his portion with beasts," Hebrew Union College Monthly 29.4 (April 1942): 15 ("Psalm"); First Statement 1.14 (1943): 2; MS 002573-75 ("Psalm").

that he would want to sing his "one sad note" and so make himself heard, even with all the sins of the modern world upon him.

The next three poems in Klein's psalter all draw on the stories of the Chassidic Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav, or "The Bratzlaver," mentioned in each of the poem's titular descriptions. Nahman, a descendant of the Baal Shem Tov who figures so prominently in Hath Not a Jew, is best remembered for his parables which stress simple faith and prayer. The three poems dedicated to him honour both his memory and the simple faith that he embodied. The first of these, "Psalm XXIX" (35/227-28),⁶⁵ offers a parable of an "aged king," which cannot help but recall A.J.M. Smith's "Like An Old, Proud King in a Parable."⁶⁶ In Smith's poem, a "bitter king" renounces the trappings of his authority ("Flung hollow sceptre and gilt crown away") and chooses, instead, to "lie / As naked as a bridegroom" in a "meadow in the northern stone" to sing "difficult, lonely music." This is a parable, then, of what one critic describes as Smith's decision to "divest himself" of the "oppressively emotional poetry" of Canada's "native" tradition in order to write the

⁶⁵"To the chief musician, a psalm of the Bratzlaver, a parable," New Directions 8 (1944): 198; MS 002677-78.

⁶⁶Poems: New and Collected by A.J.M. Smith (Toronto: Oxford, 1967) 12.

poetry best suited to the land of "northern stone."⁶⁷ Klein's "aged king," however, is significantly not "bitter," in spite of his decrepit condition: ". . . his brittle shins in hose, / Spoonfed, dribbling over a purple bib." Moreover, Klein's king advises his son, his "immortality;" to

Ascend my throne; don crown; let cannon boom!

Neither, abdication nor renunciation is recommended here; rather, the king urges continuity and celebration:

Be of good cheer, of noble temper, be;
And never let a baneful wind blow dust
Between yourself and your felicity . . .

In the face of death and decay, Klein's poem urges faith and hope in the power of continuity. It is inviting to speculate, especially in view of Smith's poem, that the king's command to maintain the trappings of royal authority represents Klein's commitment to the traditional forms of poetry. Klein's continued reliance on these forms, and his resistance to the kind of free verse Imagist poems that Smith was writing, lend credence to such a speculation. This is not to say, of course, that Klein disapproved of Smith's poetry (he did not, as his reviews of Smith's work show) but, rather, to say that in "Psalm XXIX," at least, Klein defends his own choice of forms, his own style, and his own voice. Of course, all of Klein's psalter asserts the necessity of maintaining continuity with the past as a way of countering

⁶⁷See I.S. MacLaren, "The Yeatsian Presence in A.J.M. Smith's 'Like an Old, Proud King in a Parable,'" Canadian Poetry 4 (Spring/Summer, 1979): 62-3.

the loss of "open vision" characteristic of the modern world. One way of proving the importance of continuity is to sing the "music" of that past in relatively traditional ways; the "difficult, lonely music" of Smith's parable would, in Klein's view, be an insufficient vehicle of expression.

The next two poems in the Psalter not only draw directly on the Chassidic parables of Rabbi Nachman, but they also render the traditional matter in distinctively traditional ways. "Psalm XXX" (36/228)⁶⁸ is a Shakespearean sonnet which condenses one of the "Bratzlaver's" more elaborate tales concerning the creation of Time. Klein speaks here as the so-called "stammerer" who, in the original tale, is granted the gift of song because his life is spent in the service of godly acts:

I go over the earth and collect all good deeds and the works of grace and bring them to [the man of] true grace. And out of the good deeds and the works of grace, time is born and renews itself in the eternal stream. For time is no secure thing and no being from all eternity; it is something that is created, and it is created out of the deeds of the souls.⁶⁹

The stammerer in "Psalm XXX" also acknowledges, through his rhetorical questions, that "Unprehensile Time" is unfathomable:

Can it be counted on an abacus?
Or weighed down on scales, most delicate to the touch?
Or measured with rods? What Mathematicus
Can speak thereof, save as a net on the brain,

⁶⁸To the chief musician, a Psalm of the Bratzlaver, which he wrote down as the stammerer spoke," MS 002693.

⁶⁹Martin Buber, The Tales of Rabbi Nachman, trans. by Maurice Friedman (New York: Horizon, 1956) 161.

A web some much-afflated spider weaves
 On which hang chronicles, like drops of rain?
 That, and no more, the quarry he retrieves.

Man can attempt to measure eternal Time, but he can only proceed by analogy (as Klein's similes prove) to produce "chronicles" of history which, "like drops of rain," reveal only parts of the whole. But the stammerer has, "by the spirit urged," moved towards eternity:

Having approached that Door, found it unlatched,
 Say Time is vacuum, save it be compact
 Of man's deeds imitating godly act.

The "Door" is likely the same place of entry to the afterlife as Pratt's "The Iron Door," which also has "no latch or knocker" upon it and which seems to have been "designed . . . to be swung / But once, then closed forevermore."⁷⁰ Just as Pratt's poem concludes with a "blindness falling with terrestrial day," signaling the end of vision, so does Klein's sonnet conclude with a vision of the "vacuum" of timelessness. But what the stammerer knows, having "approached" such a vision and not yet having proceeded beyond the "Door," is that Time can only be understood as the measure of man's "deeds" on earth. If man spends his time imitating God then he partakes on earth of the act of Creation which belongs to eternal Time. "Psalm XXX" is a difficult poem, but it is not incomprehensible. In fact, the Shakespearean sonnet form allows Klein to sustain his metaphoric argument with a

⁷⁰ Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt, ed. and with an intro. by Northrop Frye (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958) 26.

high precision of utterance that paradoxically admits the same freedom of interpretation characteristic of Rabbi Nachman's parables. Moreover, the epigrammatic couplet which summarizes the argument may be considered the poetic equivalent of the terse moral tags which round out Nachman's mystic tales.

"Psalm XXXI" (37-39/228-230)⁷¹ also borrows directly from Nachman's "The Seven Beggars," which is the source of the preceding poem. Here Klein selects one of the beggar's tales to narrate a parable of loss and renewal.⁷² Not surprisingly, the beggar's story of the "good gardener," who disappears mysteriously one day when the land is overtaken by marauders and who returns just as mysteriously when the land is restored," is retold by Klein to stress one of the central themes of the entire psalter: the natural goodness of the organic world which survives even the assaults of those men who would destroy it. All five sections which constitute "Psalm XXXI" are written in the form of the terza rima stanza of Dante's Divine Comedy. It is a fitting choice of expression for a poem in which Klein attempts to combine two levels of meaning, the allegorical and the literal. Moreover, it is clear that in using the terza rima stanza

⁷¹To the chief musician, a Psalm of the Bratzlaver, touching a good gardener," MS 002683-84.

⁷²Martin Buber, The Tales of Rabbi Nachman, 157-60.

Klein desires "Psalm XXXI" to carry stylistically a weight and authority associated with Dante's work.

The opening section of the poem, which describes the idyllic, wholesome, organic world of the gardener, is well served by the unifying principle of Dante's verse:

It was a green, a many-meadowed county!
Orchards there were, heavy with fruitage; and
Blossom and bud and benison and bounty

Filled with good odour that luxurious land.
Stained with crushed grass, an old and earthy yeoman
Sceptred that green demesne with pruning wand.

The second section of the poem relates the sudden invasion of the land by "three companies of bowmen" who befoul, pollute, and destroy the "beauty" of the earth. "The Bratzlaver," who speaks for Klein in this poetic tale, urges a "neighbouring folk" to save their "kin." Although Klein ends this section with what, at first, appears to be a break from the terza rima stanza--

Release their land, unburden them their yoke
Or similar evil may transgress your borders!

he carries the third line over into the beginning of the next section,

Now, though they made them ready, as I spoke,
to effect, temporarily, a sense of dislocation. This is appropriate not only because the would-be saviours begin their march in "tippling and in gluttonish disorders" but also because the original unity and organic order of the first section has been destroyed. As the marchers approach the invaded land, their food and drink become infected with

the disease of the unhealthy climate. The third section ends with the speaker restoring their health through the simple offering of his "ungraped water" and his "poor dry crust." In the fourth section, while his company sleeps, he walks alone among the "three companies of dread"--"Filth," "Bribery," and "Lust"--the three allegorical figures of the enemy. Here, too, Klein sustains the terza rima stanza form, although combining two stanzas in a sixain to account for the formidable presence of the enemy:

And from those gates, beset by wrathful faces
Where Bribery stretched its hand, and turned its head!
And from quick Lust, and his two-score grimaces!

Salute them, now, three companies of dread:
Filth, in its dun array, the clean taste killing;
Embattled Bribery, with stealthy tread
Advancing on the vanquished, all too-willing
To barter vision for a piece of gold;
And legioned Lust, at its foul buckets swilling . . .

In the final section, the enemy is driven from the land by the narrator's "henchmen" who--presumably fully restored by the gift of water and bread--are now equipped to confront the evil invaders. And in their success the land is returned to the mysteriously reappearing gardener:

Then did we come upon him, in a narrow
Streetyard, followed by children, and a cur,--
We brought him fruit, high-piled in a barrow,
Gift for a king,--for that good gardener.

Here it may be noted that Klein ends his poem with the cross-rhymed quatrain of restored order.

It is easy to read a parable of modern warfare in Klein's retelling of an older tale, for clearly the enemy, which is intent on conquering the good earth and which Klein identifies as a "wolf," is associated with the destructive "beasts of the field" of the earlier psalms in the psalter. The will-to-conquer which characterizes such an ignoble band of invaders is set in opposition to the righteousness of the gardener, who lives in harmony with the organic world and so is mysteriously chosen for survival. Not only does "Psalm XXXI" provide "proof of Klein's allegiance to the Chassidic tradition" of Rabbi Nachman, as Fischer notes,⁷³ but it also provides proof of Klein's allegiance to the literary tradition of Dante, on whom Klein draws formalistically to tell an old story about modern times.

In "Psalm XXXII" (40/230-31) Klein returns to the sonnet form and to unqualified celebration of both the fruits of the organic world and the pious men who are connected to that world.⁷⁴ The octave of this Petrarchan sonnet lists the sweet cargo of the "ships of Jaffa"--"All smooth and fresh; and innocent of mould"--while the sestet lists the instruments of religious devotion fashioned either in or of the earth of the holy land. It is also understood that the

⁷³Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 110.

⁷⁴"A song that the ships of Jaffe did sing in the night," Judean 2.4 (January 1929): 8 ("Cargo"); Canadian Jewish Chronicle 1 February 1929: 19 ("Cargo"); GH 001580 ("Cargo"); MS 002643.

produce and the products of that land are to be used by worshippers in the Diaspora who will thus be intimately connected to the source of such holiness.

The lyrical praise of "Psalm XXII" is qualified in "Psalm XXIII" (41/231), with its description of a violated Sabbath eve.⁷⁵ On this night, "white bread" is "still unbroken," the "wine," made of the "Grape clusters" of the preceding poem, is not poured, and the "candlesticks" once shipped from Jaffa now "flicker on the floor," signalling a violent interruption. It should be noted that the psalm is "forbidden to Cohanim"-- that is, to priests whose privilege it is to recite special blessings. But in view of the fact that the sanctity of this Sabbath has been violated, no blessings may be sung. The poem's barely discernable rhymes convey a sense of disorder, while its halting rhythm conveys an uneasy feeling of dread.

In the face of such a disturbance, Klein asks, in "Psalm XXXIV" (42-3/231-32), for consolation from his spiritual mentor, "Rashi"--perhaps the single most important influence on Jewish thought and education.⁷⁶ This is a disturbing poem, both in the nature of its questions and in the highly

⁷⁵"A psalm, forbidden to Cohanim," Opinion 2.10 (8 August 1932): 8 ("Kaddish"); GH 001553 ("Kaddish"); GHP 001794 ("Kaddish"); MS 002357 ("Kaddish").

⁷⁶"A psalm of Abraham, to be written down and left on the tomb of Rashi," Opinion 10.7 (May 1940): 10 ("Epistle to be left on the Tomb of Rashi"); Canadian Jewish Chronicle 10 April 1953: 10; SP 002110-11; MS 002745 (42-3).

personal tone of its expression, but it is plausible to suggest that Klein placed the psalm so near the end of his psalter after having solidly and confidently established the main tenets of his faith. The poem begins by evoking the horrible conditions of modern life in the familiar language of the earlier psalms:

Now, in this terrible tumultuous night,
When roars the metal beast, the steel bird screams,
And images of God, for fraud or fright,
Cannot discern what is from that which seems,--

Again, Klein echoes Pratt's diction and imagery which identifies the primitive instincts of evil with the technological, inorganic realm. Klein's present condition is one of "bewilderment," and so he seeks, through memory of his teacher's commentaries, some rational explanation for what appears to be an essentially irrational world. The "spiral splendid staircase" of Rashi's scriptural exegesis raised the young Klein upwards towards rational enlightenment, but the older man can no longer find the way to climb:

Nothing was difficult, O Master, then,
No query but it had an answer, clear,--
But now though I am grown, a man of men,
The books all read, the places seen, the dear
Too personal heart endured all things, there is
Much that I cannot grasp, and much that goes amiss,
And much that is a mystery that even the old Gaul,
Nor Onkelus, nor Jonathan, can lucidate at all.

The "old Gaul" is Rashi himself and "Onkelus" and "Jonathan" are also ancient biblical commentators in whom Klein fails to find an answer to his confusion. Klein admits that Rashi's time was as troubled and as dangerous as his own.

That Rashi found a way to make peace with himself in the face of such hard times only troubles Klein further:

Unriddle me the chapter of the week:
 Show me the wing, the hand, behind the claw,
 The human mouth behind the vulture beak;
 Reveal, I pray you, do reveal to me
 Behind the veil the vital verity;
 Show me again, as you did in my youth
 Behind the equivocal text the unequivocal truth!

Implied in these lines is the possibility that, perhaps, Rashi's "days" were not as horrible as Klein's, for again the "vulture" and the "claw" signal the primitive instincts which modern technology embodies. Klein, in fact, seeks "the human mouth" behind the "metal beasts," which may be the "Messerschmidt" and the "Heinkel" of "Psalm IV." Nonetheless, he waits and hopes for an answer from Rashi and,

in the interim
 I do, for you who left no son to read
 The prayer before the sacred cherubim,
 Intone, as one who is of your male seed,
 A Kaddish:
 May it reach eternity
 And grace your soul, and even bring some grace
 To most unworthy, doubt-divided me..

As doubt-ridden as Klein professes to be, he still manages to say a "Kaddish," that is, a mourner's prayer which, far from expressing grief, is solely concerned with the sanctification of God's Name. In fact, no prayer is thought to instill greater reverence or to arouse greater emotion than the Kaddish. In "Psalm XXXIV" Klein ends by reciting it in an effort to console himself by giving his doubts a positive outlet. It should also be remembered that in "Psalm XXXIV" Klein found security in the knowledge that God

was listening to him ("I do evoke you, knowing I am heard"); thus, intoning the "Kaddish" in "Psalm XXXIV" would presumably ease the burden of his doubt. In the light of the poem's account of the "tumultuous night" of modern times, it is not surprising that Klein should have such doubts, for it is not the issue of God's existence which troubles him so much as it is modern man's urge to destroy God's Creation. That this is the real source of Klein's doubts is fully evidenced in his Chronicle editorials both during and after the war-period. The hidden tragedy of both his psalter and of his editorials is man's resistance to his own emancipation. Consider, for instance, the conclusion of one of his Chronicle pieces provocatively titled "In Defense of the Aton":

Let us not put the blame upon things, but upon man It is the human heart, to paraphrase Scripture, which is the Lord's most acceptable offering; it is man, if you prefer, later quotations, who is, as Marx said, the root. From him it is that the evil, or the good, of atomic physics stems. But the thing is man. Here it is that science and knowledge and learning are singularly behind the need; here it is that the great discovery--that which brings trust where distrust there now is, comradeship where rivalry now prevails--still has to be made. Blame not, therefore, the atom, but blame that cosmos which, at war with itself, so arrogantly calls itself Man.⁷⁷

This paragraph is typical of Klein's habit of concluding his essays with the high-pitched tone of confrontation. Also typical is his habit of appealing to time-honoured authorities to underline his point; in this case he makes sure to satisfy

⁷⁷ Beyond Sabation, 266.

both religious thinkers and atheists at the same time, citing God and Marx in one breath. But what is most pertinent to a discussion of his psalter is Klein's criticism of "Man," the "arrogant" creature who misuses and abuses the potential of science to dominate the earth. What informs, therefore, both Klein's doubt and his relentless optimism is his continuing belief that bad history--Nazism, bombing planes, death-camps, the destruction of the earth--might be transcended by people who are secure in their destiny. His doubt stems from his realization that man too easily yields to his primitive instincts; his faith rests in the fact that men (like Rashi, for instance) can manage to subvert those instincts in the service of goodness.

Certainly "Psalm XXXV" (44-45/233-34), the next poem in the psalter and the penultimate entry of the group, attests to the triumph of belief over doubt.⁷⁸ In the same rhymed quatrains with which Klein expresses joyous thanks at his wedding feast ("Psalm XX"), Klein battles his "fear in the night" to proclaim humble gratitude for the gift of life. During sleep, his body lies helplessly "in a sack of flesh," but his soul is escorted "to distant shores" by "the four good angels of the night":

Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael,
And Michael, of the angelic host

⁷⁸"A psalm of Abraham, which he made because of fear in the night," Menorah Journal 29 (Autumn 1941): 281-82; First Statement 1.14 (1943): 1; MS 002745 (44-5).

Who guard my sleep-entrusted ghost
Until day break, and break the spell.

Going to sleep each night is, in Klein's view, an act of faith, since he is compelled to give up control to an unearthly company and travel

To lands unrecognized, to shores
Bright with great sunlight, musical
With singing of such scope and skill,
It is too much for human ears.

If sleep is, as Shakespeare writes, "Death's second self,"⁷⁹ then no wonder Klein fears "in the night." And it is particularly frightening to be taken to a world that no waking consciousness could imagine:

I see the angel's drinking-cup,
That flower that so scents the air!
The golden domes! The towers there!
My mind could never think them up!

But as frightening as his night journeys may be, Klein admits that they reveal something of another life, another realm of possibilities, which the waking world is prevented from realizing:

Yet when the shadows flee away,
And fly the four good angels, and
I fare forth, exiled from that land,
Back to my blood, my bone, my day,

Untowered, unflowered, unscented banks,
Back to the lumpy sack of skin,
The head, the torso, and the shin,
I offer up, to Thee, my thanks.

To return to consciousness is to return to an acute awareness of the flesh and its earth-bound limitations. But the final

⁷⁹See Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, "That time of year thou mayest in me behold."

paradox of such an awareness is that only in conscious life is praise of God possible. It is precisely man's ability to think, to reflect on his earthly existence, that distinguishes him from the beasts and marks his divinity. Moreover, "Psalm XXXV" is written in echo of the traditionally uttered morning blessing, a blessing offered by people of great faith who are conscious of God's role in everything they do from the moment they arise in the morning. And to thank God at this time of the day is to be aware of what most people simply take for granted. Placed as it is so near the end of the psalter, "Psalm XXXV" also functions to reassert Klein's testimony of the existence of the "undebatable verity," even after having expressed the troubling doubt which haunts him during the rest of his waking day.

The final poem in the psalter, "Psalm XXXVI" (46/234),⁸⁰ both continues to affirm the faith of "Psalm XXXV" and summarizes the major themes of the preceding thirty-five psalms. When reading its four confidently arranged couplets, it should be remembered that when Klein voices unqualified praise and thanksgiving he does so in similar form: either in the octosyllabic couplets of "Psalms II" and "VIII" or, in variation of the form, in the couplet-within-couplet quatrains of "Psalms XX" and "XXXV." In the last psalm he

⁸⁰"A Psalm touching genealogy," MS 002293 ("Genealogy"); MS 002605.

expands the form to run-on pentameter lines which constitute the one assertive statement of the poem:

Not sole was I born, but entire genesis:
 For to the fathers that begot me, this
 Body is residence. Corpuscular,
 They dwell in my veins; they eavesdrop at my ear,
 They circle, as with Torahs, round my skull,
 In exit and in entrance all day pull
 The latches of my heart, descend, and rise--
 And there look generations through my eyes.

The body (which Klein wakes up to repossess in "Psalm XXXV") is more than "the lumpy sack of skin" of that poem; it is "residence" of the history of his people to which he is bound and to which he is forever responsible. Each waking day, presumably, is a recreation, a "genesis" of his race. It is also interesting that here Klein refers to the "latches" of his "heart," in echo of the complaint of "Psalm III" against the "harnessed heart." As the psalter had demonstrated, and as "Psalm XXXVI" proves, the paradox of Klein's awareness is that he may be harnessed to his history and his culture, but this is also the condition of his freedom. The tradition to which he is committed by birth provides him with both an often burdensome sense of duty and a liberating sense of security. It, above all, provides him with a solid moral code ("as with Torahs") to counter the alienating despair of modern life. So it is that he is protectively encircled by the memory of history, enclosed (like the rhymes of his psalter), but not entrapped by his consciousness.

It can be seen that "The Psalter of Avram Haktani" does manage to assert what Pacey once termed Klein's "vigorous optimism," and does so in the face of the "grief and despair" which Waddington inaccurately describes as the dominant mood of the series. It is also true that Layton's charge against the work--that it lacks a convincing knowledge of "Satan"--reveals more, perhaps, about Layton than it does about Klein. (It is telling, for instance, that in 1945, Layton was beginning to align himself with what would later become a full Nietzschean response to modern experience. At least in Layton's interpretation of Nietzsche, evil is a real and necessary expression of man's anti-rationalist, sexual impulses.) As this discussion of Klein's psalter has indicated, far from ignoring "Satan," Klein confronts the issue of evil head-on, and particularly in the earlier psalms which take issue with the modern view that a will-to-conquer is a sign of progressive humanity. In Klein's view, it is imperative that man resist such a regressive, valueless direction if anything worthwhile in civilization is to survive at all. For Klein, in fact, as one of his Chronicle editorials announced in 1939, "The Issue is Clear," and it is Hitler who fully represented the dangerous track of modernism:

Either he is destroyed, and with him all who have bent to his will and served his purpose, and the world can continue along the even tenor of its way, in peace towards progress; or he is permitted to continue his course unrestrained, until the

world is rendered safe for dictatorships, and mankind relapses back to the age of Neanderthal.⁸¹

Like Pratt (who could well have written this paragraph), Klein upholds what one critic describes as "the standards of humanity" as expressed in "the excellence of the mainstream of English literature." This same critic correctly argues that Irving Layton confusedly works against those standards "when he lumps all traditionalist attacks on his work with the 'Wasp' mentality." When Layton finds fault with Klein's poems he also sets himself apart from "the history of English Literature" in which so much of Canadian poetry shares:

. . . we know its influence in the works of poets such as D.C. Scott, E.J. Pratt, and even Layton's fellow-Jewish poet, A.M. Klein. And whatever their ambivalence towards religious faith or their loss of it, many poets such as Roberts, Carman, Lampman, Dudek and Kennedy [and Klein], have shared in the long tradition of natural law inherited from the Greek philosophers and poets and assimilated to the Mosaic and Christian codes.⁸²

Clearly "The Psalter of Avram Haktani" belongs not only to the tradition of Jewish culture but to the tradition of English literature as well; perhaps the traditions co-exist easily in Klein's poetry because they partake of the same moral certainty, not to mention the same fundamental humanism, which is a primary requirement of survival in the modern age.

⁸¹Beyond Sabation, 60.

⁸²Peter Hunt, "Irving Layton, Pseudo-Prophet--A Reappraisal," Canadian Poetry 1 (Fall/Winter, 1977): 20.

II. "A Voice Was Heard in Ramah"

The second section of Klein's Poems consists of four poems under the general title of "A Voice Was Heard in Ramah." The "voice" is, as in the psalter, both Klein's personal voice and the voice of the Jewish community itself. "Ramah" is the ancient city mentioned in the Old Testament books of The Prophets so it may be presumed that, again as in the psalter, Klein speaks as a modern-day prophet at a time when "prophecy has vanished."

When Leo Kennedy read the first poem in the group, "In Re Solomon Warshawer," he wrote to Klein: "This new poem is a good poem, Abe, but it is the same poem you've been writing for thirteen years."⁸³ For Klein, this was precisely the point. His compulsion to catalogue the indignities of injustice could never be exhausted, especially once the familiar pattern of persecution had surfaced so monstrously in his own time. "In Re Solomon Warshawer" (49-55/234-239) is,⁸⁴ in fact, a direct response to what Klein referred to as "the macabre medievalism" of the Warsaw ghetto: the "totalitarian barbarism" of a walled city for Jews guarded by "the Central

⁸³Leo Kennedy, Letter to A.M. Klein, 12 November 1940, Public Archives Canada 000110.

⁸⁴"In Re Solomon Warshawer," Menorah Journal 28.2 (Summer 1940): 138-42; The Book of Canadian Poetry, 385-89; SP 002082-89; MS 002345-52, 002745 (49-55), 002746 (49-55). This discussion is based on the poem as it appears in Poems and not on the extensively revised version of it which Klein reworked (1953) for his Selected Poems [1954-1955].

Government of Poland."⁸⁵ The poem explores the hideous consequences of a totalitarian mentality which ultimately seeks not just to separate Jews from the rest of humanity but to destroy them. Solomon of Warsaw is less than a man in the eyes of his enemies; he is simply a legal case, a criminal by virtue of the fact that he represents everything which the enemy detests.

More so than any other poem in the collection (and perhaps more than any poem Klein ever wrote) "In Re Solomon Warshaver" borrows its theme and its dramatic structure from E.J. Pratt, and specifically from Pratt's "The Truant."⁸⁶ Whereas in Pratt's poem a puny human being is charged with treason by the forces of the mechanical universe, and pleads his case before the tribunal headed by "the great Panjandrum," in Klein's poem, Solomon, the prototype of the Wandering Jew, is charged with lying by the Nazis and pleads his case before an equally unsympathetic tribunal. It is understood by the end of Klein's poem (and suggested by the end of Pratt's) that the truant is to meet with death, but his achievement rests in his confident, poetic testimony, which expresses courageous defiance in the face of annihilation. Klein's poem is deliberately more grim in its conclusion than Pratt's because it is contrived as a legal report. Written by the suspiciously named "Friedrich Vercingetorix"

⁸⁵Beyond Sabation, 95.

⁸⁶Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt, 100-05.

--his given name is German and his surname is that of a chief of the Gauls in the time of Caesar--it merely documents an execution that has already occurred. So he reports that on one decidedly Anglo-Saxon "Wodin's day, sixth of December, thirty nine," he came upon a "shouting Jew" who desired to be left "in peace." But Solomon's wish is not granted, for after producing proof of his identity, "a Hebrew pamphlet and a signet ring," or "Exhibits 1 and 2," he is pressed to account for his existence:

One of the anthropophagi was he,
 or, if we wished, a denizen of Mars,
 the ghost of my father, Conscience--aye,
 the spectre of Reason, naked, and with scars;
 even became insulting, said he was
 Aesop the slave among the animals . . .
 Sir Incognito--Rabbi Alias . . .
 The eldest son of Zion . . . said we knew
 his numerous varied oriental shapes,
 even as we ought to know his present guise--
 the man in the jungle, and beset by apes.

(51/236)

These lines strongly echo Pratt, whose truant is classified as "little genus homo," and who, in turn, charges his accusers as "dumb insouciant invertebrate." The "apes" who in Klein's poem hound the "man in the jungle" are like the mechanical rulers in Pratt's poem who also "rule a lower than a feudal state."

But, unlike the enemy in Pratt, the enemy in Klein is clearly the same enemy that Jews have always faced. "O I have known them all," Solomon states (in echo of Prufrock,

perhaps, who also claims to "have known . . . all" of his enemies):⁸⁷

The dwarf dictators, the diminutive dukes,
The heads of straw, the hearts of gall,
Th' imperial plumes of eagles covering rooks!

(52/236)

In his catalogue of persecution, Solomon proves both that history has always been against the Jew and that the haunted Jew has still managed to survive. He has survived, in fact, because it is his destiny to inhabit a myth of exile and redemption:

Such is the very pattern of the world,
Even the sparrows understand;
And in that scheme of things I am enfurled,
Am part thereof, the whole as it was planned,
With increase and abatement rife,
Subject to sorrow, joined to joy--
Earth, its relenting and recurring life!

(53/237)

Solomon's argument is the same one which Klein's psalter proffers--that the natural goodness of Creation and the organic world which is proof of such goodness will survive all attempts to violate that "pattern." But for the moment, Solomon admits that he is overcome by the power of "demon" forces. His argument--that he is, in fact, "Emperor Solomon," now banished from his throne by the evil "Asmodeus"--only provides the enemy with further proof of his mad lying. Solomon Warshaver is, of course, the Emperor in much the same way that each living Jew re-enacts a pattern of persecution

⁸⁷Eliot, Collected Poems, 15.

and liberation. But the "SS" tribunal can no more accept such a metaphorically sound argument than they can accept Solomon as a human being. And as a human being he admits that he is "Damned by desire," but "at least waged war, for holy booty, / Against [his] human taint." This is more than the enemy would do, intent as it is on destroying humanity in the service of the "beast that talks." Solomon's final argument is directed against the very same primitive instincts which Klein identifies in his psalter as the expressions of a destructive will-to-conquer:

Learning is banished to the hidden cave;
Wisdom decried, a virtue of the slave;
And justice, both eyes seared, goes tapping with a cane.
His counselor is the wolf. He counsels hate.
His sceptre is a clay.
And love is a high crime against the state.
The fury of the forest
Is the law.

(55/238-39)

Although Solomon is taken away by the end of the poem, his voice has been heard. Presumably his belief in the survival of humanity outlives even himself. Like "The Truant" which "In Re Solomon Warshawer" evokes, especially in Solomon's speeches, it is to be believed that both man's will to endure and his intelligence will overcome even the most formidable of enemies.

Although Klein does not adhere to a strict formal pattern of rhyme or meter in the poem, most of "In Re Solomon Warshawer" is rhymed and ordered to convey different passages of stress and emotional pitch. In the original Poems collection,

in fact, all of Solomon's recorded speech is italicized, which lends an urgency and a forcefulness to his case that is otherwise missing in The Collected Poems. Even without the italics, however, the line beginnings of Solomon's poetical speeches are contrasted with the more prosaic, uncapitalized lines of the "scribe's" record. Klein also departs from Pratt's effectively ironic use of octosyllabic couplets in "The Truant" by setting the matter-of-fact, frequently cross-rhymed lines of the reporter against the impassioned and more lyrical octosyllabic couplets or run-on cross-rhymed lines of Solomon. Moreover, as Livesay correctly points out, Klein's "passionate identification with the rightness of man's case heightens the language to a degree not found in 'The Truant.'"⁸⁸ Regardless of the technical differences between the two poems, however, it is clear that in Pratt Klein recognized both the technical power and the confident vision of history which stand behind "In Re Solomon Warshawer."

Leo Kennedy might well have said of the next poem in the collection, "Rabbi Yom-Tob of Mayence Petitions his God" (56-8/239-41),⁸⁹ that it was the same poem that Klein had

⁸⁸Dorothy Livesay, "The Polished Lens: Poetic Techniques of Pratt and Klein," in A.M. Klein (Marshall), 128. This article is reprinted from Canadian Literature 25 (Summer 1965): 33-42.

⁸⁹Note that "Rabbi Yom-Tob of Mayence Petitions His God" is one of the sections of Klein's "Murals for a House of God" originally published in Opinion 3.9 (July 1933): 18-21. See also MS 002442-85.

been writing for years, for it recalls, among others, Klein's earlier "Reb Levi Yitschok Talks to God." Like Yitschok, Yom-Tob (whose name means "festival") speaks directly to God in search of a "sign" of His mysterious ways. What makes this poem, however, suitably situated in *Poems* is its acknowledgment of the "battlements" of earth; Yom-Tob yearns to hear God speak to him because the sounds of war surround him. The rabbi hails from the same medieval town which is the subject of the earlier "Murals for a House of God," and, as is the case in that poem, Mayence becomes the timeless, symbolic site of persecution. The poem, in fact, proves Solomon of Warsaw's argument that all the historic enemies of Jews are the same enemy, for Yom-Tob is speaking as a pious man amid the strife of medieval and modern times at once. Moreover, he speaks not only for himself but also on behalf of Klein who, in "Psalm XXXVI," identifies himself as the natural son of the ancestral and historic "fathers that begat" him.

Yom-Tob begins by speaking forcefully but humbly. The strong dactylic stresses which open each line of the first three stanzas evoke the cadences of biblical speech while the variable but ordering end-rhymes hold his passion and even his sorrow in check:

Only in the voice of an earthworm, do I cry:
 Descend from Thy tall towers in the sky;
 Forsake Thy lonely hermitage; O Lord,
 Grant me the Sinai of a single word.
 Before Thy feet I spread my prayershawl;
 The traces of Thy footsteps I wear out

With kisses; my phylacteries are kin,
 Kin to Thy sandle-strings. Grant but Thy grace,
 Alight upon these battlements for a space,
 And in Thy talk of this and that, make clear,
 Before the sun splinters to stars upon the sky,
 The how and when, the wherefore and the why

Klein then breaks from the tone and the rhythmic stress of these lines, momentarily abandoning all rhyme to reach God's ears:

Let there be light
 In the two agonies that are my eyes,
 And in the dungeon of my heart, a door
 Unbarred. Descend, O Lord, and speak.

But Yom-Tob quickly collects himself, and proceeds through cross-rhyming lines and eventually through octosyllabic couplets to "petition" his all-but-silent God. In effect, Yom-Tob's prayer in itself serves to solace him, so that he works himself through to a moment of calm acceptance:

Not in levin, not in thunder
 Shall I behold the sign and wonder,
 But in the still small voice,
 Let me rejoice.
 Wherefore Thy Will is manifest, O Lord,
 Thy will be done.

The "still small voice" is specifically that of the Lord (I Kings 19.12), but it is also the voice of Yom-Tob himself who, like Klein, in "Psalm XXIV," knows that he is heard by evoking God. The biblical reference is also found in Tennyson's "Two Voices" which figure in Yom-Tob's petition as well.⁹⁰

⁹⁰Tennyson's poem proceeds as a debate between a "still small voice" urging suicide and the ego of the young Tennyson, who wrestles with his will to live. Eventually, after long disputation, the debate yields to something beyond reason--to, presumably, the life of intuition or the instinct of the soul which turns nihilism into affirmation: Tennyson ends

Whereas Tennyson identifies the "still small voice" with denial, Klein identifies it with affirmation, and whereas Tennyson comes to his life-asserting conclusion with the help of a vision (he sees a family on its way to Church through his casement window), Yom-Tob sees no "sign and wonder," and so must rely only on the strength of his inner faith.

In the second-to-last stanza of his petition, Yom-Tob rejects the way of conversion, always an anathema in the Jewish mind: "Shunned as a leper be that one." He also assures the "virgins in Israel" that they shall be protected from "the heathenish paw," a phrase that relies on the psalter's identification of the enemy as a devouring beast. And so the poem ends with a prayer always recited on the eve of Sabbaths and festivals:

Blessed this day; this day on which we shall
 Make glorious His name. Blessed the sun
 Accepting the Kiddush of the wine-filled skull.
 Blessed this cellar floor, and silent stone,
 And benedictions on this hallowed knife
 Which pries the door to the eternal life.

Yom-Tob situates himself in a "cellar," a cellar which is likely the earth but which might also be the place of his entrapment. In fact, the "wine-filled skull" suggests that he is in a place of death, and probably close to it himself.

with a statement that is directly echoed in Yom Tob's speech: "And wherefore rather I made choice / To commune with that barren voice, / Than him that said 'Rejoice! Rejoice!'" See The Poems of Tennyson, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Longman, 1969) 541.

Like Solomon of Warsaw, however, he manages to sanctify God's name even with the end in sight. In view of the last stanza, the rest of the poem now becomes clear. Yom-Tob is not merely seeking faith in a state of spiritual darkness; he is actually in the darkness of a "dungeon" and his call for light is a prayer against the night of death fast approaching him. Clearly, the light of the "eternal life" comes to him through the act of praying itself. This is, in Klein's view, the only alternative in such grim circumstances.

The other two poems in this section of the collection are ballads through which Klein voices a communal protest against the murderers of his age. These are decidedly topical songs, as if to remind the reader that it is modern, and not just medieval, persecution which Poems documents. The first of these, "The Ballad of the Thwarted Axe" (59/60),⁹¹ provides an opening parenthetical description of the setting of the poem: "(Coram the German People's Court)." But "Coram" means here both the Latin "in the presence of" and the Hebrew "to call to account"; indeed, both meanings of the word are appropriate to this ballad in which the "judges" of the German court are indicted by the haunting spirits of murdered Jews whose voices constitute the italicized portions of the poem:

⁹¹"Ballad of the Thwarted Axe," Canadian Forum 21 (October 1941): 212; Canadian Jewish Chronicle 24 March 1944: 4; MS 002185-90.

Headman, headman, --cheated man!
Whom thorough judges mock.
You shall have no use for your axe,
A ghost stands in the dock!

Klein effectively draws on some of the conventions of early folk ballads to sing his song: the presence of the supernatural, the use of simple narrative and diction, the victimization of common people by forces of authority, and the use of incremental repetition. The message of this ballad is also as clear and as available as it is in any folk ballad: true justice can only be administered by those who serve God's will. The spirits of the victims are still heard long after their bodies have been destroyed and it is they who, in effect, have the last word.

"Ballad of the Days of the Messiah" (61-2/243)⁹² is more clearly an art than a folk ballad. Its particularly inventive form, in which three couplets constitute a single stanza, communicates the relentless march of war with mounting horror:

O the days of the Messiah are at hand, are at hand!
 The days of the Messiah are at hand!
 I can hear the air-raid siren, blow away the age of iron,
 Blast away the age of iron
 That was builded on the soft quick-sand.
 O the days of the Messiah are at hand!

O Leviathan is ready for the feed, for the feed!
 Leviathan is ready for the feed!
 And I hold firm to the credo that both power and torpedo
 Have so fired that good piscedo

⁹²"Ballad of the Days of the Messiah," Hebrew Union College Monthly 29.1 (November 1941): 13; Canadian Jewish Chronicle (5 December 1941): 12; MS 002161-66.

He is ready for the eating, scale and seed!
 Leviathan is ready for the feed!

Like the repeated phrases of the poem, the calculated rising and falling stresses of the lines adumbrate the approaching terror of war. Klein also makes grimly ironic use of traditional Hebrew songs which welcome the expected Messiah. Here, instead of figuring atop a donkey, as is usually the case, the Messiah is seen approaching in a tank, his "seraphim a-shooting from its flank." Both "Ballad of the Thwarted Axe" and "Ballad of the Days of the Messiah" sound a deliberately impersonal and hauntingly effective note at the conclusion of "A Voice Was Heard in Ramah." The second section of Poems concludes with the voice of the community, guarded in its optimism but defiantly certain in its warning against the horrible consequences of war.

III. "Yehudi Ha-Levi, His Pilgrimage"

The last section of Poems is made up of a single poem, "Yehudi Ha-Levi, His Pilgrimage" (65-82/244-54), a forty-two stanza elegy that was originally written in commemoration of the eight-hundredth anniversary of Ha-Levi's death.⁹³ Like much of Klein's poetry of the early 'forties, "Yehudi Ha-Levi" has been either ignored or, when addressed at all, judged as a failed poem. Waddington, for instance, has

⁹³"Yehudi Ha-Levi, His Pilgrimage," Canadian Jewish Chronicle 19 September 1941: 9-12; MS 002712-30.

trouble with the use of archaic diction in the poem, uncertain as to whether or not it is put to the service of irony, ornamentation, or psychological distance. She also finds Klein's use of "the dream convention" within the poem functionally irrelevant. Above all, Waddington deems the poem a failure because "it is simply not equal to the task of supporting the use of a stylistic deviation like archaism."⁹⁴ Fischer takes even less space than Waddington to evaluate the poem, reluctantly admitting that "few modern readers can find pleasure in the Spenserian vocabulary" and that the demands of the poem's form "seem to have subdued much of the sparkle, the originality of imagination that distinguishes so much of Klein's verse."⁹⁵

Now it is true that "Yehudi Ha-Levi" is infused with archaic diction and that the poem is written in Spenserian stanza form. But these technical features were not new to Klein in 1941, when the poem was first published. The unpublished Auto-da-fé's sixty-one Spenserian stanzas were written as early as 1926, and with the publication of Hath Not A Jew... in 1940 archaic diction became one of the earmarks of Klein's style. In fact, both Waddington and Fischer praise Klein's skilful management of Chaucerian and Elizabethan diction in the modern poems of that volume but both critics fail to see the achievement of "Yehudi Ha-Levi," which uses

⁹⁴Waddington, A.M. Klein, 71-72.

⁹⁵Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 118-19.

similar techniques. Moreover, both critics fail to see how the poem draws successfully not only on several literary antecedents but also on Klein's own poetry to promote the unity of the Poems collection.

Waddington's claim that "Yedudi Ha-Levi" is "one of those poems which require a knowledge of Jewish background" notwithstanding,⁹⁶ the poem is self-evident, direct in its narrative and unambiguous in its message. Klein tells the tale of Ha-Levi, a poet, philosopher, and physician practicing in his native Toledo, Spain. One night he has a dream of a caged princess who pleads to him to set her free. Upon awakening, Ha-Levi vows to seek the princess, adventuring to distant lands in search of her image. Travelling aboard a ship, Ha-Levi is blamed for a sudden storm by the captain and threatened with his life. But the poet's prayer to God for help is answered, and the journey continues safely. Finally, weary and dispirited by his failure to find the princess, Ha-Levi comes upon the city of Jerusalem, and in a glorious revelation he realizes that the princess is, indeed, the city, held captive by Crusading knights. Ha-Levi then sings his song in praise of Zion, at which point an Arab rider strikes him down dead. The poem concludes in celebration of Ha-Levi's song and of the enduring spirit of the princess-Jerusalem who, although still held captive, is determined to be free.

⁹⁶Waddington, A.M. Klein, 71..

Certainly no knowledge of "Jewish background" is necessary to appreciate Klein's admiration of Ha-Levi's quest or of the lyrical gifts which save him from actual death during his journey and provide him with immortality long after it. Of course, many Jewish readers would already be familiar with the legendary life of the historic eleventh-century Yehudi Ha-Levi, many of whose poems have been received in the liturgy of the synagogue. The uninformed Jewish or non-Jewish reader is obliged to do what he must often do with Klein's poetry: look up the reference. It would be helpful, although not crucial, to discover, for instance, that the "Al-Kazari chronicle" mentioned in the seventh stanza is Halevi's most important philosophical work, in which he sought to prove the thesis that the claims of philosophy were ultimately exclusive of the claims of revelation. It would then be understood that when Klein writes in the twenty-third stanza that, upon vowing to follow the image of the princess, Ha-Levi gives up "his phials and his jugs / And all the script of sage Aristotle," the doctor-philosopher is rejecting rationalist speculation in favour of the empirical truth of revelation. But it seems more appropriate to say that "Yehudi Ha-Levi" is one of those poems which require a knowledge of literary background, for Klein invites a comparison with earlier poems through both subject and form.

Fischer does observe that "Yehudi Ha-Levi" fuses "Spenserian elements with the story of the great medieval Hebrew poet" for a specific meaning:

—By employing Spenserian elements, Klein, in effect, furnished a comment on the story and the definition of his hero: Halevi, he seems to say, is comparable to the knights of the Faerie Queen.⁹⁷

While Fischer's remarks are appropriate they still ignore the fact that the poem is framed by the voice of Klein himself, who not only retells Ha-Levi's story but also reminds the reader that he is doing so. One poet, Klein, writes the elegy of another poet, Ha-Levi, in a form modelled not only on the Faerie Queen but also, and more appropriately, on Shelley's Adonais, which laments the death of Keats in fifty-five Spenserian stanzas. Although Klein does not directly address himself to the Adonis myth in his poem, he does align himself with the tradition whereby one poet lives to sing the song of another who has died. Moreover, Klein actually translates Ha-Levi's "Ode to Zion" (just as Shelley had translated Bion and Moschus)⁹⁸ and incorporates or recreates the original source material into his own poem (stanzas xxxiv-xxxix). The very first stanza of "Yehudi Ha-Levi" not only acknowledges the elegiac tradition from which

⁹⁷Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem, 119.

⁹⁸Shelley's poem is, in turn, modelled on classical pastoral elegies (Bion's Lament for Adonis and Moschus's Lament for Bion), fragments of which Shelley had translated and used as paradigms for his own elegy.

Klein borrows, but it also concludes with a subtle allusion to Keats, for whom Shelley's Adonais mourns:

Liveth the tale, nor ever shall it die!
 Upon his scroll the scribe has lettered it.
 The learned rabbin, in his homily,
 Its telling gilds with verse of holy writ.
 O many a darkened Jewerie is lit
 By its mere memory, It doth not fail.
 Yet, in this latter day, who shall have wit,
 Whose cunning of words shall in this day avail
 For speech too grieving even for throat of nightingale?

(65/244)

Surely Klein answers his own question by proceeding to remind the reader of "the tale" in the rest of the poem. And just as Shelley begins his elegy with the announcement that Keats's "fate and fame shall be / An echo and a light unto eternity,"⁹⁹ so does Klein begin with the announcement that Ha-Levi's "tale" shall never die. But Klein's mourning has less to do with the real man who died so many centuries ago than it has to do with the realization that in "this latter day" there is no longer any singing:

Only the fingers of the wind may play
 The harp of David on the willow tree;
 And Solomon his song, none durst essay.
 The songs of Asaph eke have ceased to be;
 Dust are their temple throats; and also, he
 The chief musician is now stifled mould.
 In Israel is no song save threnodie;
 Shall then, for want of singer, stay untold
 The tale of the pale princess and the jongleur bold?

(65/244)

⁹⁹The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford, 1956) 432.

These lines cannot help but recall Klein's psalter, in which he laments that "all prophecy has vanished out of Israel," that "open vision is no more," and that "among the holy ones" there is only silence ("Psalm I"). Klein's grief has much to do with the fate of poetry itself in a world that has lost the capacity to create. Klein is also probably ironically calling attention to his own poetry since he has, indeed, "essayed" to sing David's psalms in "The Psalter of Avram Haktani." It should also be noted here that Klein's editors were originally troubled by the use of archaic diction in this stanza, but Klein defended his technique, finally convincing the editors to drop their complaints:

The word is "essay" meaning to attempt. The word is "eke" used by Chaucer and Coleridge, and easily comprehensible to Jews It is to be noted that archaic medieval words are frequently used in this poem, obviously for the purpose of bringing out the Eleventh-Century atmosphere in which it is set.¹⁰⁰

It is telling that Klein would draw on the authority of two English poets to defend his word choice since the poem relies as much, if not more, on a knowledge of English literature as it does on a knowledge of Jewish history.

It has already been noted that "Yehudi Ha-Levi" belongs to the elegaic tradition of Adonais and that the quest theme of the poem derives from the tradition established by Spenser's Faerie Queen. It can now be seen that Klein associates that

¹⁰⁰Letter to Judge Louis E. Levinthal, 1 July 1943, Public Archives Canada 00219-20.

theme with another Romantic poem which also makes use of the Spenserian stanza, Byron's "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage." The title of Klein's poem certainly makes such an association obvious. Klein had already transmuted Byron's poem into the "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" of Hath Not a Jew.... In "Yehudi Ha-Levi, His Pilgrimage," Klein makes use of the same device of the wandering hero-quester found in both Byron's and his own earlier poem to repeat the theme of the value of pilgrimage. And just as Byron's poet gives himself up to exile on "Ocean's foam," to follow "where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail,"¹⁰¹ so does Ha-Levi resolve to adventure to "unknown shores, across the perilous swell / Of seas uncharted" (74/249). Significantly, both Byron's and Klein's quester-heroes are moved to seek an ideal which is ultimately embodied in the songs they sing. In the last stanza of "Yehudi Ha-Levi" it is clear the poetry has the power to sustain the beauty and the purity of the quester's moral-aesthetic ideal:

Liveth the tale, nor ever shall it die!
 The princess in her tower grows not old.
 For that she heard his charmed minstrelsy,
 She is forever young. Her crown of gold,
 Bartered and customed, auctioned, hawked and sold,
 Is still for no head but her lovely head.
 What if the couch be hard, the cell be cold,
 The warder's keys unruined, stale the bread?
 Helevi sang her song, and she was comforted!

(82/254)

¹⁰¹Lord Byron: Selected Poems and Letters, ed. and with an intro. by William H. Marshall (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968) 86-87.

So it is that Klein ends both this poem and the Poems collection with prophetic optimism. Not only does the stanza give voice to the dream of Zion, or of redemption for the suffering of modern times, but it also affirms the timelessness of poetry which makes such a dream forever possible. Like the ageless youths on Keats' "Grecian Urn" ("for ever young"),¹⁰² the princess of Hal-Levi's and of Klein's song "grows not old." The song, like the urn, is truth because no malady or hardship can waste it--so long as there is a poet like Klein who keeps singing it.

It is not surprising that Klein should conclude this poem, and Poems, with an allusion to Keats, and, in particular, to Keats's poem on the triumph of art. What, it seems, Klein has most in common with his nineteenth-century Romantic predecessors is a profound belief in the value of poetry. This is, of course, not a belief held exclusively by Romantic poets such as Byron, Shelley, and Keats, but what informs so much Romantic poetry, and what, in turn, appeals to Klein, is its often exuberant response to creative potential. In Shelley, in particular, Klein probably recognized a deep religious and prophetic sensibility, striving to assert itself in spite of an indifferent or a hostile world. Poems is, above all, about the necessity of maintaining such a sensibility, especially in the face of the events of a

¹⁰²John Keats: Complete Poems, ed. Jack Stillinger (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982) 282.

global war and the increasing spiritual impoverishment of modern times. The overall impression of this remarkably personal collection of poetry is that Klein views himself as something of an unacknowledged legislator of the modern world, confidently determined to answer his own repeated challenge to make his voice heard through the rhythms of the Old Testament and through the traditional forms of English poetry. This is why the troubling poems of the psalter and of the second section of the volume eventually yield to the final affirmation of "Yahudi Ha-Levi, His Pilgrimage," as if Klein were gathering strength and inspiration from the sound of his own voice, and from the sound of Ha-Levi's voice. In effect, the conclusion of Poems provides the proof of Klein's claim in the last poem of "The Psalter of Avram Haktani" that "there look generations through [his] eyes." Part of the achievement of this volume is that Klein manages to see the bonds of his heritage--both religious and literary--as a source of personal emancipation.

IV. The Hitleriad

In 1942, while reworking his Poems manuscript for publication, Klein began working on a satiric poem, that would eventually take shape as the mock-epic in twenty-seven

parts, The Hitleriad.¹⁰³ Caplan thoroughly covers the frustrating years during the Second World War when Klein tried to see what he considered to be "one of the very best things he had ever written" in print.¹⁰⁴ There is no need to recount the history of Klein's struggles to publish the work, which was finally taken up by New Directions of Connecticut in 1944 and appeared in August of that year, but it is worth recalling that in spite of E. J. Pratt's enthusiastic endorsement of the work, Canadian publishing houses, and in particular Macmillan, refused to accept it for publication. To its credit, the newly-formed First Statement group (1942) agreed to publish The Hitleriad after Klein had turned to the press, as Caplan notes, "as a last resort."¹⁰⁵ Klein's reluctance to allow First Statement to publish the poem probably had something to do with his desire to reach a much wider reading audience than the press entertained. It may also have had something to do with the well-known "friendly" rivalry between the Preview group, to which Klein (as well as Patrick Anderson, Frank Scott, P. K. Page, and others) belonged and the First Statement group, to which Irving

¹⁰³The Hitleriad (New York: New Directions, 1944); The Collected Poems 186-208. All references which follow in parentheses are to The Collected Poems.

¹⁰⁴Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 111.

¹⁰⁵Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 112.

Layton, John Sutherland, and Louis Dudek belonged.¹⁰⁶ Klein's uneasiness with First Statement may be evident in his decision to sever his publishing agreement with the group, even after several sections of The Hitleriad had appeared in two issues in 1943, and to accept the New Directions offer of 1944.¹⁰⁷

Klein might have intuited, but he could not have foreseen completely, that the leading members of First Statement, Sutherland, Layton, and Dudek, would become the fiercest critics of The Hitleriad. Sutherland, in particular, aggressively charged the work with excessive didacticism:

Dogmatism has killed the poetry. In The Hitleriad, the white hope Dogmatism disposed of the black killer in a rousing battle, but also felled the referee with an axe-like blow. To get on with the simile, the referee was poetry--the referee tried to stand in the gap and stop the wholesale slaughter, and got killed in the slaughter. The Hitleriad is to be judged as most people judge a boxing match --does it or does it not make you fighting mad? . . . The Hitleriad is a polemic, and a polemic that might have achieved its purpose as well in prose as in meters. Certainly if we look in it for the

¹⁰⁶See Michael Gnarowski, "The Role of 'Little Magazines' in the Development of Poetry in English in Montreal," in The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada: Essential Articles on Contemporary Canadian Poetry in English, eds. Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968) 212-222. See also Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 95-101.

¹⁰⁷See First Statement 2.1 (August 1943): 2-3 (sections I-IV); First Statement 2.3 (October 1943): 4-7 (sections XII-XV). Klein also published selections from The Hitleriad in the Canadian Jewish Chronicle, 4 October 1946: 6-7 ("The Dock at Nuremburg").

suggestibility of poetry, or the subtle wisdom of satire, we are doomed to disappointment.¹⁰⁸

It is now more obvious, perhaps, than it was in 1946, when these lines were written, that Sutherland's condescending tone and strident critical attitude have less to do with Klein than they do with a determined resistance to the kind of modernist poetry to which Preview was committed, "and which was later labelled [by A.J.M. Smith] 'the cosmopolitan tradition.'¹⁰⁹ Indeed, in Sutherland's essay on Klein, not just The Hitleriad but almost all of Klein's poetry, with the qualified exception of Hath Not a Jew..., is viewed as weak at best and forced, flabby, or overwrought at worst. Even what was in 1946 known as "Portrait of the Poet as a Nobody" (later "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape") was singled out as "an example of padding or involvement as an excuse for very little nothing to say."¹¹⁰ It is, then, not surprising that Louis Dudek (who has written of his preference for First Statement's "anarchic attitudes of rejection, anti-literary leanings," and "a certain irresponsibility combined with a puritanical conviction in the prime virtue of integrity" over Preview's "derivative . . . excessive adulation of the

¹⁰⁸John Sutherland, "The Poetry of A.M. Klein," in A.M. Klein (Marshall), 49. This article is reprinted from Northern Review 2 (1949): 30-34.

¹⁰⁹Gnarowski, "The Role of 'Little Magazines' in the Development of Poetry in English in Montreal," 220.

¹¹⁰Sutherland, "The Poetry of A.M. Klein," 53.

Oxford English Ideal")¹¹¹ should have agreed with Sutherland's assessment of The Hitleriad:

This poem--I think of it as the "hilariad"--is really a commendable failure. True, we once admired it, and it has been praised strongly by E.J. Pratt and faintly by other critics; but beside the bad rhyming and diction and the crude satire, the poem, considering the implications of the subject, has no density or weight of thought.¹¹²

The "we" to whom Dudek refers is the First Statement group. It is inviting to speculate on whether both Sutherland and Dudek would have sounded such negative critical reactions to The Hitleriad if Klein had not broken his publishing agreement with the group. When Caplan's claim that "Klein more than anyone else managed to straddle both groups [Preview and First Statement]" is considered, it is safe to say that he would have felt less at ease with the "rough young iconoclasts of First Statement" than with the "more established, cosmopolitan poets of Preview."¹¹³ Regardless (for the moment) of its critical merits, there can be little doubt that The Hitleriad was conceived as a satire in the established tradition of Augustan satire, most obviously of Pope and to some extent of Swift. Moreover, its passing allusions to Marlowe, Blake, and others help to identify the poem with the aims of the Preview group which, as Gnarowski notes, "had seen

¹¹¹Dudek, "The Role of Little Magazines in Canada," in The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada, 209.

¹¹²Dudek, "A.M. Klein," in A.M. Klein (Marshall), 71.

¹¹³Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 97.

Canadian poetry as part of a universal content of ideas lodged in an English-language culture, dominated by a social theme which could be best expressed in the cosmopolitan language of the intelligence."¹¹⁴ But despite what is now understood as the aesthetic and even political biases of Canadian criticism of the late 'forties and early 'fifties, the prevailing and enduring critical consensus on The Hitleriad is aligned with Sutherland and Dudek. In view of E.J. Pratt's early endorsement of the work and of the surprising neglect which The Hitleriad has endured since the 'fifties, it seems that a full study of both its thematic and formal considerations is not only necessary but timely.

It was Pratt, as already noted, who most appreciated the "range both in material and treatment" of Klein's Hitleriad.¹¹⁵ In his Canadian Forum review of the work, Pratt points out that even Klein had anticipated the critics who would fault the work with a lack of objectivity. In the poem's introductory section, Pratt recognizes Klein's defensive strategy:

Heil heavenly muse, since also thou must be
Like my song's theme, a sieg-heil'd deity,
Be with me now, but not as once, for song: -
Not odes do I indite, indicting Wrong!
Be with me, for I fall from grace to sin,

¹¹⁴Gnarowski, "The Role of 'Little Magazines' in the Development of Poetry in English in Montreal," 221.

¹¹⁵E.J. Pratt, rev. of The Hitleriad, in A.M. Klein (Marshall), 71. This review is reprinted from the Canadian Forum 24 (1944): 164.

Spurning this day thy proffered hippocrene,
To taste the poison'd lager of Berlin!

Happier would I be with other themes--
(Who rallies nightmares when he could have dreams?)
With other themes, and subjects more august--
Adolf I sing but only since I must.
I must! Shall I continue the sweet words
That praise the blossoming flowers, the blossoming birds,
While, afar off, I hear the stamping herds?
Shall I, within my ivory tower, sit
And play the solitaire of rhyme and wit,
While Indignation pounds upon the door,
And Pity sobs, until she sobs no more,
And, in the woods, there yelp the hounds of war?

(186)

These two important opening paragraphs establish both the subject and the formal treatment of the poem in a manner befitting the mock-epic tradition on which Klein draws. The very title of the work calls attention to that tradition by associating Hitler with the Dunces of Pope's Dunciad. The heroic couplets of the invocation confirm that association. But Klein both relies on the tradition and insists on distinguishing his poem from it by acknowledging that it is motivated by something more urgent than an impulse to exercise "rhyme and wit"--a phrase that cannot help but evoke the characteristics of Pope's epigrammatic style in such mock epics as The Dunciad and The Rape of the Lock. And when Klein claims that he would rather write of "subjects more august" he implies not only the Augustan age of Roman literature but also the age of Swift and Pope in eighteenth-century England. Of course, Klein would have it both ways, so to say; he would like to write with the ease and grace of his

eighteenth-century models and, at the same time, speak to the immediate, urgent events of war. The difficulty that he faces, however, is that "the stamping herds" of the enemy can be heard approaching; thus, he lacks the time to compose the delicate, urbane verses that mark Pope's poetry. Moreover, the subject of his work itself, "Adolf," requires the angry, forceful response of indignation, not just the chastened wit of mild outrage. Certainly the bitterly ironic "Heil" which opens the poem sounds the aggressive tone which Klein is forced, reluctantly, to adopt.

But it is, after all, the mock-epic tradition which seems best suited to his purpose. To "praise," like such heroic epic poets as Homer and Milton, is a privilege of time and of sweeter circumstances. Since he "must" speak of war, and in particular of Hitler's Germany, he must adopt a form of address that matches in scale and significance the very scope and importance of his subject. That he "must" do so at all is explained in the third stanza of the opening section:

I am the grandson of the prophets! I
 Shall not seal lips against iniquity.
 Let anger take me in its grasp; let hate,
 Hatred of evil prompt me, and dictate!
 And let the world see that swastika-stain,
 That heart, where no blood is, but high octane,
 That little brain--
 So that once seen the freak be known again!

(186)

Since these are the times, as Klein writes in his "Psalter of Avram Haktani," when "all prophecy has vanished out of

Israel" ("Psalm I"), and since "there look generations through [his] eyes" ("Psalm XXXVI"), it is his responsibility not only to speak when no one else is doing so, but also to honour the traditions of his ancestors. It is also his explicit purpose to do what the satirist has always done: to expose--"to let the world see" the pretensions of power by deflating the stature of so-called greatness. In this case, Klein would unmask Hitler as nothing more than a "freak"--a puny, shallow-minded, but nevertheless dangerous enemy of life itself. Of course, in his method Klein borrows Pope's treatment of the Dunces who are at once below the honour of consideration and a serious menace to civilization. This is why both the Dunces and Hitler's henchmen perform a charade, a charade, however, that has mutilated hints and distorted echoes of very considerable things--like the classical epics, the Scriptures, and Milton. The success of the mock-epic depends upon the implicit contrast between the mighty and the trivial, to the ironic disparagement of the latter. And, presumably, the success of The Hitleriad depends upon Klein's ability to demonstrate that Hitler is a dangerous fool, scarcely worthy of serious human consideration. In fact, it is clear from the start that Klein does not even consider Hitler to be human. His "heart" is bloodless, carrying, instead, "high octane." The phrase recalls both Pratt's technological diction and Klein's own identification of the enemy as a mechanical force in his Poems volume.

Surely, it is the major lament of The Hitleriad and the tragedy of the times that such an unthinking, inhuman agent of evil as Hitler should be allowed to dominate the world.

In light of the Chronicle editorials written during the war period, it is not surprising that Klein should draw on the authority of the mock-epic tradition to emphasize the smallness of Hitler. In effect, Klein's strategy in prose is the same as that in poetry. Current events are frequently viewed, in the editorials, as ridiculous, troublesome and threatening, but ridiculous nonetheless. Hitler earns such derisive epithets as "the bandit," "the illegitimate Shicklgruber," the "madman of Europe," "the gangster," "the hoodlum," "the house painter" or, most frequently, the dismissive and condescendingly familiar "Adolph." Likewise, Mussolini is dubbed "the Italian fuehrer," "the balcony warrior," "the sawdust Caesar," or simply "Benito." Stalin is the "Pooch-Bah" and Camillien Houde, mayor of Montreal (and the subject of Klein's poem "Political Meeting"), becomes "Little Red Riding Houde."¹¹⁶ With such a view of history, leaders of government are stripped of their pretensions, and vanity is exposed. Nations appear to be run by mean little men performing their roles as if in some grim comic opera. The sheer number of stage metaphors, and of references

¹¹⁶See Beyond Sambation.

to acting, in Klein's editorial pieces reinforces this view.¹¹⁷ Clearly, Klein's satiric method partly stems from a rich tradition of Jewish literature in which the Jewish victim's reflexive response to persecution is the "subtle appreciation of the farcical." In an early essay on "Jewish Humour," Klein writes of the traditional response of Jewish victims:

Not always did he pass through the vale of tears attired in sackcloth and covered with ashes; even in the midst of tragedy itself, tragedy that by some lunatic wilfulness of mad actors had worked itself into comedy, there flickered in his life a suggestion of heavenly humour, a suspicion that perhaps after all the chortling and tittering the joke was not entirely at his expense.¹¹⁸

The best posture for the victim, as Klein's essays and as The Hitleriad prove, is the self-defensive one of laughter. Such laughter, tainted as it is with a morbid awareness of pervasive wretchedness, is seldom carefree and only occasionally gay. What is crucial, in Klein's view, is that the victim turn the horrible realities of his situation into a comic-absurdist drama in order to achieve "a measure of objective distance and so preserve some human dignity in the face of suffering.

¹¹⁷See in Beyond Sabatation: "Crocodile Tears," 15 March 1940; "The Secret Weapon of the Superman," 3 August 1945; "Hamlet without Hamlet," 9 May 1947; "Without the Prince of Denmark," 1 February 1952.

¹¹⁸"Jewish Humour," The Judaean 7.5 (February 1943): 36, 39.

While it is true, to some extent, that The Hitleriad suffers from too little of the distance which Klein so often recommends and true that even Pratt was forced to admit that this is one of the work's major limitations, it is also true to say, along with Waddington, that the method of caricature which is its chief satiric device "is distance."¹¹⁹ Certainly the sustained use of closed forms, such as the heroic couplet, the sonnet, and the cross-rhymed stanza, evidences a reasoned, discriminating order even while an actual disorder is being described. The verbal portraits of Hitler and his band of murderers which constitute most of the work are so self-consciously stylized as caricatures that they cannot help but achieve a measure of formal distance, in spite of Klein's unfailingly contemptuous tone. Waddington quite rightly takes issue with Desmond Pacey's complaint that the Nazis in The Hitleriad "remain abstractions, mere strawmen for a blaze."¹²⁰ Klein, Waddington argues, "was not interested in depicting them as fully-rounded 'real' human beings, but as sub-human creatures."¹²¹ Perhaps more to the point of the mock-heroic tradition is the fact that Klein relegates the Nazis to the status of clowns, and mad clowns at that. Consider, for instance, the second section of the poem:

¹¹⁹Waddington, A.M. Klein, 85.

¹²⁰Pacey, Ten Canadian Poets, 283.

¹²¹Waddington, A.M. Klein, 88.

See him, at last, the culprit twelve men damn.
 Is this the face that launched the master-race
 And burned the topless towers of Rotterdam?
 Why, it's face like any other face
 Among a sea of faces in a mob--
 A peasant's face, an agent's face, no face
 At all, no face but a vegetarian blob!
 The skin's a skin on eggs and turnips fed,
 The forehead villainous low, the eyes deepset--
 The pervert big eyes of the thwarted bed--
 And that mustache, the symbol of the clown
 Made emperor, and playing imperial pranks--
 Is this the mustache that brought Europe down,
 And rolled it flat beneath a thousand tanks?

(187)

In effect, this section establishes the dramatic principle of the entire work. Hitler stands before a jury, waiting for the judgement of his war crimes, and the rest of the poem will constitute the case of the prosecutor-Klein against the criminal. But at first glance this seems to be no hardened murderer. Hitler looks ordinary enough (his "face like any other face" invites a comparison with Leonard Cohen's description of the "medium" looking Adolph Eichmann).¹²² Upon closer inspection, Hitler's face resembles an amorphous, vegetarian-"sub human"--"blob." But even less ambiguous, and less threatening, is the recognition that Hitler resembles the stock villain of Victorian melodrama, exaggerated in his features and even a little silly. Indeed, the "mustache" on Hitler's face, if not curled in lusty contempt, is as much a prop, a false beard, or a clump of black hair, as the glue-dried patch on a theatrical villain's upper lip. Ultimately,

¹²² Leonard Cohen, Flowers for Hitler (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964): 66.

this is a portrait of a "clown / Made emperor," a phrase that conjures up the image of Charlie Chaplin's Great Dictator (1940), a film that Klein admired and that, interestingly enough, was not well received for reasons that were applied to Klein's Hitleriad: many thought the subject, Nazi Germany, was too serious to be treated satirically.¹²³ But, for Klein, as for Chaplin, the problem is that a clown should hold the power to bring "Europe down," like Chaplin's Hynkel, who performs a megalomaniac balloon dance with a globe.

Klein's amazement that such a "face" as Hitler's should have "launched the master race" is ironically underscored by an association with Marlowe's Dr. Faustus evoked in the opening lines of this section.¹²⁴ Waddington's remark that "some readers may find" such an association "inappropriate" stops short of accounting for the aptness of the allusion.¹²⁵ On one level, of course, Klein wonders at the ordinariness of Hitler's face in much the same way that Faustus wonders whether or not the Helen of Troy standing before him is really the same woman of whom he has heard so much and over whom wars were fought. On another level, the reference functions as a distorted echo of Homer's classical epic, which must stand behind the mock-epic in order to serve the necessary contrast between the mighty and the trivial, the

¹²³Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 114.

¹²⁴Doctor Faustus 5.1.1768-69.

¹²⁵Waddington, A.M. Klein, 85.

ideal and the debased. It is, in fact, the mock-satirist's achievement that he can demonstrate the dissolution of value in the present world by distorting the language of pure epic through the insertion of a commonplace observation. And not only does Klein evoke Homer's Iliad but he does so by evoking Marlowe's Faustus, thereby adding to the richness of his allusion and strengthening the implicit standard of judgement against which the present world's trivializing tendencies can be measured. The heroic ideal must stand behind the satirist's immediate focus of attention so that the extent to which man has fallen might be confidently expressed. Surely, the device of allusion partially satisfies the requirement of critical distance which so many critics have failed to recognize in The Hitleriad. Furthermore, the figure of Faust, unavoidably identified as the prototype of German wilfulness, cannot help but force an ironic awareness of the difference between Marlowe's tragic figure and the ordinary "clown" who is Hitler. It is, no doubt, significant that Klein alludes specifically to Marlowe's Faust and not to Goethe's, for whereas the latter is a romantic hero whose life is justified by his constant striving and who is eventually saved by an appreciative band of heavenly angels, the former is a decidedly limited seeker whose wilful blindness and arrogant rebelliousness lead him directly and finally to hell. Clearly, for his purposes in The Hitleriad, Klein would align himself with the judgement of Marlowe against

his tragic hero. That Klein alludes to Marlowe's play so early in The Hitleriad, and in the very section in which Hitler is situated before a jury, suggests that the final judgement of Hitler will be as damning as it is for Marlowe's Faust.

It is important to observe that while Klein fulfils, through his use of allusion and ironic deflation, some of the requirements of the mock-epic tradition, he also breaks away from the traditional use of heroic couplets in this section to write what is, in effect, a sonnet. One reason for this is that Klein would appear to be justifying his claim in the opening invocation that he cannot afford to "play the solitaire of rhyme and wit"--that is, that he cannot proceed according to the usual prescriptions for the mock-epic form because his subject is too urgently in need of expression. He proves his defense by choosing a relatively more flexible form in the second section. In fact, the sonnet which constitutes the section is rhymed so loosely that its pattern appears to be arbitrary (abab cbcd edfgf). In view of Klein's usually strict and even subservient adherence to pure sonnet forms, whether the Petrarchan or the Shakespearean, it is plausible to suggest that he not only intends to prove the claim of his invocation but that he also wishes to demonstrate the distortion of order that is his theme. And while it is true that the poem has some

shape and order, it also perfectly embodies the near shapelessness or indistinctiveness of Hitler's appearance.

Both the theme of Hitler's ordinariness and the formal departure from heroic couplets are carried over into the third section of The Hitleriad. In three cross-rhymed sixains, Klein stresses the mock-epic focus on the banality of evil:

Judge not the man for his face
 Out of Neanderthal!
 'Tis true 'tis commonplace,
 Mediocracal,
 But the evil of the race
 Informs that skull!

(187)

In his opening lines Klein deliberately echoes Pratt's "From Stone to Steel," where it is observed that "The snarl Neanderthal is worn / Close to the smiling Aryan lips."¹²⁶ Like Pratt, Klein associates evil with primitivism, so that Hitler is understood to represent the instincts of the "beast." But, faithful to his earlier description of Hitler as a clown, Klein concludes with the reminder that his stature is "The total bigness of / All little men" (188).

With the fourth section, Klein begins his biography of Hitler, a biography that is rendered almost exclusively by heroic couplets through to the twelfth section. Klein asserts that these are "the facts, the untampered text"

¹²⁶The Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt, 41.

(188) of Hitler's life which should be sufficient to bring
in a charge of guilty:

Where was he born? (Born is the word that I
Use, seeing littered is not poesy.)
Where was he born? In Braunau at the Inn--
And Austria paid for that original sin!

(188)

It is obvious from Klein's parenthetical remarks that there is difficulty in adapting the subject of Hitler to the dignified formality of the heroic couplet. The elevated diction ordinarily used to serve the satirist's ironic perspective cannot comfortably, in this case, suit Klein's obviously guilty villain; nonetheless, Klein self-consciously strains to meet the demands of "poesy," thereby anticipating the critics' charges against indecorousness or lack of distance. In calling attention to the form of his satire and to his difficulty in adapting his subject to it, Klein deliberately provides himself with the poetic licence necessary to free his diction from traditional constraints while attending to traditional form at the same time. This is even more obvious in the lines concerning Hitler's name:

At first hight Shicklgruber--'what a name
To herald through the mighty trump of fame'--
Hail Shicklgruber! Schicklgruber, hail!
Methinks this lacks the true imperial style,
And certainly no poet's nor mob's tongue
Could shake from shekel-shackle-gruber--song!

(188)

In the light of Klein's acknowledged difficulties with formal diction, his use of the Old English "hight" is almost

comically out of place. Moreover, he then makes a deliberate show of acceding to the demands of elevated expression by placing his remarks in inverted commas. The "trump of fame" sounds a decidedly classical note, but Klein successfully undercuts his own elevated rhetoric with the colloquial exclamation, "what a name." The intentionally deflationary effect of such incongruously juxtaposed phrases is then carried over into the next lines, where Klein admits that "Heil Shicklgruber ... lacks the imperial style." The added irony of this observation is that not only does Hitler change his name to command more authority, but Klein also alters his diction to suit "the imperial style" of his mock-epic. Moreover, Klein facetiously admits that Hitler makes a better name for both the "mob's tongue" and the "poet's song." Compounding the ironies of this passage from the fourth section of The Hitleriad are the puns that Klein wrings, first from "trump," which contains the meaning of deceit, and then from "Shicklgruber," which, as Klein suggests and as Waddington explains, is stretched to contain three associative contexts: "'Shakel' refers to money, 'shackle' to [Hitler's] victims, and 'gruber' which derives from the German grube (hole) connects associatively with the notion of a gravedigger." So it is that Klein's "syllabic emphasis of this meaningless name makes it meaningful in the context of Hitler's interest and attributes."¹²⁷ Clearly, in spite

¹²⁷Waddington, A.M. Klein, 88.

of his protests to the contrary, Klein successfully manages to exploit epic language and epic form in the best tradition of English satire.

That tradition is explicitly evoked in Klein's ensuing description of Hitler's school days:

His teachers have since died; and fortunate they
 Who else had died ten deaths to see the day
 The dunce of the corner corner better men,
 And great wealth his who could not count to ten!

(188)

Here, Klein not only makes use of what Waddington calls "double-track words,"¹²⁸ but he also makes sure to acknowledge Pope's "dunca-epic." Like Pope's dull-witted mock-heroes, Hitler showed little capacity for learning--"Doctrine he spurned, and scholarship despised." The tragedy is not only that Hitler should become "the premier German mind" with such an undistinguished school record but also that he spent his school-days in Linz, "the town where Rilke wove his spell." There one man "dreamed the beautiful and the good," while another learned to hate; sadly, the latter grew up to embody the German spirit, and not the former who, in Klein's view, is more deserving of such honour.

But Hitler dreamed, too, as Klein notes in the fifth section. For a time, at least, Hitler pursued art, and, in particular, painting. The contemptuous satirist observes that Hitler's art work became the stained canvases of Europe:

¹²⁸Waddington, A.M. Klein, 88.

Yet it is true that in due time, he would
 Incarnadine his murals with much blood;

(189)

"Incarnadine" is borrowed from Lady Macbeth's troubled remarks concerning her blood-stained hand, which, since "all great Neptune's ocean" cannot clean, "will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine."¹²⁹ The fitness of the word for a description of Hitler's artistic ambitions is borne out by Klein's own comments on this Shakespearean passage:

. . . incarnadine, almost a technical term, painter's jargon . . . incarnadine is, in its place among these words, enhanced to meaning in the second degree. For it communicates to the reader not merely the notion of colour--any other sanguine word might have helped to do that--but it vibrates also with the resurrected potency of its elsewhere forgotten etymology: here, amidst flesh murdering and flesh murdered, it is crimson, indeed, but crimson of the flesh.¹³⁰

Thus, "incarnadine" is not only appropriate because it is "painter's jargon," and so suits Hitler's ambitions, but also because it "vibrates" in The Hitleriad with the same "resurrected potency" of its original meaning as it does in Macbeth. The allusion also functions, of course, to remind the reader of the tragedy of current events. Like the other allusions in this work, it is a fragmented echo of its source and so serves the mock-epic writer's theme of distortion or debasement. In fact, this is the very theme of this section inasmuch as Hitler's "classic painting," his "masterpiece

¹²⁹Macbeth 1.7.60-61.

¹³⁰MS 005224.

supreme," is "The Reich's Last Supper"--a grotesquely mutilated version of such paintings as Michaelangelo's.

"Here stutters biography," Klein admits in the sixth section of The Hitleriad. And here, it should be noted, stutters the heroic couplet, which breaks down in the opening lines of the section:

Here stutters biography. The scribes conflict
 In qualifying Vienna's derelict:
 Was he a bricklayer, as some aver,
 A paperhanger, or a carpenter?
 The witnesses ignore.
 It seems, in any case,--symbolic thing!--
 He always worked in scaffolding.

(190)

But Klein returns in the remaining eight lines of the poem to the more certain rhythms of decasyllabic couplets to express the known facts:

He fed on alms, these say. 'Twas Jewish food.
 Hate knows no firmer ground than gratitude.

(190)

So ends Klein's description of Hitler's youth, his unremarkable academic career, and his artistic ambitions. He now turns to discuss Hitler's reaction to the First World War in section seven:

And then there came--blow, trumpets; drummers, drum!--
 The apocalypse, the pandemonium,

(190)

In obvious mock-ironic style, Klein echoes Paradise Lost, associating the First World War with Milton's city of demons and, at the same time, deflating the stature of modern

circumstances. This perfectly suits Klein's purpose because he goes on to describe, with affected wonder, the fact that Hitler emerged from the war with neither medals nor promotions. He concludes this line of thought in the next section with the fact of Hitler's cowardice:

Fled, with the fleeing of his own brave words,
 Fled, fell on his face, and not upon his spear,
 Got up, and fled, a rabbit to its hutch.
 Such was the hero, flashing others' swords!
 Such was the leader, leading bouts with bear!
 Such was the puttering-out of the Great Putsch!

(191)

The heroic couplet is abandoned temporarily in this section. Instead of its epigrammatic precision, rhythmic repetition together with a more open form of end-rhyme forcefully serve Klein's portrait of his mock-hero. Both parallel syntax and punctuation are used here in aid of mounting expectation, so that while the lines march forward, like the steadily advancing German troops, they move against the image of the retreating Hitler, running in the opposite direction like some comically panic-struck "rabbit."

In the ninth section, Klein returns to the heroic couplet to summarize Hitler's cowardice. Here, too, Klein relies on well-placed punctuated pauses to establish a pattern of defeated expectation:

Let it be said of Hitler, then, that he
 Had courage, when he had a guarantee;
 He risked, when primed assurance smiled; he dared
 When the positions had been well-prepared.
 He sought the German power--but no haste:
 The dotard Hindenburg would see him placed.
 He marched across the Rhine; yet it was plain

A bullet would have marched him back again.
 He coveted the Czech-land; yet he waited
 Until that prize was generously donated.
 Circumspect, cautious, of an humble air--
 Until he found he could afford to dare.
 Then, summoning the pensioned warriors,
 Then, even then, he followed his true course,
 Mounting no charger, but a Trojan horse!

(191)

Each end-stopped couplet has the bathetic effect of answering a lofty claim with an anti-climactic account of Hitler's timorous but shrewd caution. But Klein subverts his own patterned technique of inflation-followed-by-deflation in the third-to-last line of the section, where the end-word "warriors" anticipates a resolving rhyme and is met, instead, with a new rhyme that introduces the concluding couplet. This device affectively takes the pattern of defeated expectation to an even more deflationary conclusion. The final image of the "Trojan horse" on which the mock-hero rides appropriately hints at Homer's classical epic and deflates Hitler's heroic posture at the same time. Moreover, through Klein's calculated use of diction, such as "guarantee," "risked," "grimmed assurance," and "pensioned," Hitler figures in the decidedly unheroic role of an insurance agent.

What accounts for Hitler's popular success is his "iron will," as Klein points out in the tenth section of the poem. This is a phrase that recalls not only Pope's Dunces (who are the embodiment of reductive will) but also Klein's own Poems collection (which associates the mechanical, inhuman instincts of the Nazis with technology). With both his will

and his power of persuasion, Hitler managed to convince "the half-mentalities" of his doctrine of hatred:

Consider with what petty bribes these were
 Perverted from both Kant's and Goethe's lore,
 Pure reason bartering for Force impure,
 And their Faust-soul betraying for a whore!

(192)

The epigrammatic conciseness of the heroic couplet obviously well serves Klein's account of Hitler's reductive distortions of German thought as represented by Kant and Goethe. In his "perverted" understanding, Hitler trades Kant's definition of the autonomy of "Pure Reason" for Goethe's insistence on the primacy of "Force impure," or misguided wilfulness, so that the resulting "Faust-soul" ends up "betraying" philosophical truth for some cheapened version of it. Klein's allusions also echo his earlier reference to Marlowe's *Faustus* and, beyond that, Homer's *Iliad*, both of which stand behind this mock-epic as standards of judgement against Hitler. In contrast to the ideals of heroism particularly embodied in Homer are the shabbily distorted principles of leadership that Hitler exploits to sway the mobs:

These, such as these, no genius, but mere quack
 Could soon reduce from people to a clique,
 And bid them be, enamoured and enticed,
 Of crooked cross re-crucifying Christ!

(192)

In Klein's view, Hitler rallies his audiences to worship the crooked-crossed swastika in grim and mutilated parody of the first crucifixion. Even more ironic is the suggestion that

the Jews substitute for Christ as the scapegoat victims of modern times.

In the eleventh section, Klein directs his readers to Hitler's Mein Kampf, which, the poet suggests, might be read as a blueprint for Hitler's campaign of hatred. The autobiography, "with double-jointed rhetoric," reveals both the range and depth of Hitler's plans "And above all, the pose, the Wagnerian pose!" But Hitler is the mock-hero of a particularly grim opera, in which the enemy is neither powerful nor truly threatening, but merely the easy target of Hitler's malevolence: "the strange ubiquitous Jew!" With the support of history--history that documents the familiar pattern of Jew as scapegoat--Hitler blames all of Germany's social and economic ills, its threatened "pagan vigour," its weak political structure, and even its weather, on "the Semitic hosts." Even more hideous is Klein's deliberately casual conclusion that the world tacitly endorsed Hitler's mad "theorem":

(Observe the method in this madness, since
The Jew being beaten, the world did not wince,
The vogue was shown, by flesh-barometer,
He could persist, yet no great risk incur.)

(194)

Presumably, since Jews did not constitute a significantly large enough body of people, no attention was paid to Hitler's threats to annihilate them. So ends Klein's description of Hitler, a man who, at first dismissed as a foolish clown, gradually assumes a scarcely comprehensible position of

international prominence--a fact that points to the very madness of a world which allowed such a thing to happen.

In sections twelve through fourteen, Klein describes Hitler's "henchmen." These are the "frustrated men" of the Third Reich, such as Goebbels, Rosenberg, Goering, and the "lesser fry" like Himmler and Hoffman who supported Hitler's mad politics. Each portrait is drawn with the full force of contempt and unironic disgust. Klein harnesses the heroic couplet to serve his mounting disdain with epigrammatic precision, as if to check his nearly explosive rage with sustained formal balance. His description of Rosenberg, for instance, just barely maintains control over his passion:

And such that other, Rosenberg,
 The penman of the mob; had written books;
 Corrected Adolph's grammar; could devise
 Seventy reasons for atrocities;
 Scorned pity; credited with stabbing hooks
 Into the too-compassionate Christian crux;
 Concocted, weakly, blood-philosophies,
 To genuflect non-Arians to their knees;
 Was daft about his twentieth-century spooks;
 Herr Rosenberg, burdened with double shame:
 A Baltic birth, and a Semitic name.

(195)

At the start of the passage the ordering couplet form gives way to a descriptive emotional intensity. It is not until the end of the portrait that Klein manages to return to the calmer, imposing structure of the heroic couplet. (Similarly, his description of Goering also yields to flexible cross-rhymed lines.) In section thirteen, where the "lesser fry" are discussed, Klein does manage, at least, to hold his

passions in check through tetrameter couplets. Not until he is through with his description of all of Hitler's ignobal companions can he restore continuity with the heroic couplet. In summary of this part of The Hitleriad, Klein regains some composure:

Where are they now?
 These knights reproachable but without fear?
 O where is Shleicher's intellectual brow?
 Why does not Heines, stalwart, reappear?
 Where are the crows of yesteryear?

Departed, gentlemen, but without dirge.
 The gallant Fuehrer had to have his purge;
 These worthies, therefore, came to bitter ends:
 They'd sinned the supreme sin--they were his friends!

(198)

It is interesting to note that in a calmer, less impassioned state of mind, Klein has the presence to allude to Francois Villon's "Ballade des Dames du Temps Jadis" (probably by way of Rossetti's translation) in an especially mocking way by substituting Villon's "snows of yesteryear" for "crows of yesteryear."¹³¹ The reference is appropriately distorted, effectively and comically underlying the satirist's view of his undeserving heroes.

In sections fifteen through eighteen, Klein places Hitler's war campaign of hatred in a wider context of world events. First, all of Germany's religious and political factions are indicted for conspiring with Hitler:

¹³¹The Complete Poetical Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. William M. Rossetti (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1901). See "Three Translations from Francois Villon, 1450," 237.

Each in his fashion, and for personal sake
Led Germany to Hitler's stake.

(198)

Self-interest is almost always the villain's motive in a mock-epic world. Although Klein turns to attack Britain, whose "diplomats" blindly accept the lies of the Third Reich, in section seventeen he sets forth Churchill as a model of insight and honourable behaviour. Churchill, above all others it seems, "saw / This moulting of the moral law," although, sadly, he stood "alone against the flood." Without the support of Clemenceau (the "Tiger, ever-burning bright," the long-dead leader of the French and the once ardent supporter of Dreyfus) Churchill's cries "against the knaveries" were too weak to disarm Hitler's Germany or to awaken a seemingly indifferent world. The biblical imagery of section seventeen ("the flood," Roosevelt's vengeful "steel leviathans," "flaming swords," and "swift seraphic engines") is suitably matched by the final allusion to Blake's "The Tyger," which is echoed not only in the description of Clemenceau but also in the tetrameter couplets of the concluding quatrain. Churchill, Roosevelt, and Clemenceau are figured here like Old Testament prophets, men with the singular vision who foresaw the erosion of moral law in the age. The section concludes with a disquieting simplicity that recalls Blake's Songs of Experience.¹³²

¹³²The Complete Writings of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 214.

Clearly, a strong show of force and of moral courage is necessary to counter Hitler's formidably threatening presence. The League of Nations, the subject of section eighteen, lacked both of these:

It could have had no other fate. Alas,
 Who looked, could long have seen it in the glass:
 The kisses blown with weak asthmatic breath
 By old men gesturing themselves to death.
 Were these the men to put teeth in the law,
 Who had no tooth in their collective jaw?

(200)

And so Hitler, reading "his opportunity," and even amazed that so few "did not see" him preparing "the weapons of the blitz" (201); carried on with his thinly-disguised assault plans. With the end of this line of argument, Klein turns his case in section twenty toward his summary remarks. Hitler may have "known decency, or love, or honour," he suggests, but such human "virtues" seemed to have no place in his "thought." Moreover, no one bothered to "explore" whatever humanity may have lain behind such an obviously "wicked man."

With the "Law"--that is, the law of men and not of "the beast," or the law given by God to man--inoperative, unchallenged, and even ignored, Hitler was free to assert his own dark design: "The burglar's darkness and the murderer's fog" (202). In this the twenty-first section of The Hitleriad, Klein breaks completely from the heroic couplet, to express Hitler's lawlessness in scarcely ordered cross-rhymed lines, as if to suggest that the crimes of theft and covetousness

with which Hitler is charged could not be contained by delicately balanced poetry. Only in the final epigrammatic couplet does Klein restore the order which, like the "illuminated law," threatened to disappear completely.

In section twenty-two, Klein begins with mock-epic lines which well serve his filmic description of Hitler's crimes in imitation of swiftly edited and powerfully expressive war newsreels:

The scenes now change, but madness knows no halt,
Norway is sacked, and Poland's sown with salt
Explosive! Holland also visited
Whose dykes and Dutchmen bled.

(Montage again: the camera goes berserk
With vertical flame and towers diagonal;
Then rests to show the generals; they smirk.)

Closeup. The fascist and his rods
Flogging the Yugoslavian fading out
to Greece, her freemen broken, like her gods:

(204)

The poetry seems almost to go "berserk" here as line after line, like shot after shot, catalogues the relentless march of Hitler's European slaughter. As is so often the case in The Hitleriad, it is not until the final lines of a section that Klein retrieves the calming effect of a rhyming couplet:

Look east, the Russian lifts avenging hands,
Waylaid, assaulted, wounded--he still stands
By dint of that unthawed triumvirate;
Cold steel, and Stalin cool, and icy Winter!

(204)

Just as Hitler begins to face the obstacles that will be his undoing, Klein's poetry begins to restore a degree of balance.

Klein's case against Hitler is not yet through, however; nor are the consequences of Hitler's European slaughter long passed. So the final two lines of the section end on a decidedly unrhymed and chilly note.

"As footnote to the headlined Terror," Klein writes in the twenty-third section, Hitler's "ally fared no better than his foe." Countries were divided and partitioned in the "science" of war and in the "art" of "treaties." Hitler, Klein notes, would "even make a ten-year truce with God!" Indeed, this is the charge of the next section of The Hitleriad. Hitler's truce is really a pact with the devil and, like Faust, he dares to enter into competition with God (the allusions are to the brazen serpent of 11 Kings 18.4):

Nor did he merely wage his war on Man,
Against the Lord he raised his brazen brow,
Blasphemed His name, His works, contemned His plan,

Himself a god announced, and bade men bow
Down to his image, and its feet of clay!
God's places of true worship were laid low.

(205)

The terza rima stanzas of this section work ingeniously to parody Hitler's demonic design, for they ironically render a black and godless scheme in the architecturally unified trinitarian stanzas of Dante's Divine Comedy. Nothing could be further from Dante's sacramental vision than Hitler's "pagan" creed. The ironic effect of the terza rima lines also serves to underline the thoroughly perverted unity of Hitler's demonic theology.

In section twenty-five, Klein uncharacteristically pleads his case in two stanzas, the first one in blank verse and the second in loosely rhymed pentameter lines. The choice of form, particularly the first stanza, echoes the voice of the epic, not the mock-epic writer. It is only fitting that Klein should drop his angry or ironic posture to speak in Miltonic verse when he appeals sincerely and straightforwardly for vengeance. Returning to rhyme, he calmly states:

I come now rather as a man to men.
 Seeking the justice for that voice which cries
 Out of the ground, the voice of our brothers' blood!
 That voice will not be still again,
 Those bones unblessed will still arise,
 Yes, and those living spectres, of the mind unhinged,
 Will still beat at our padded memory, until
 Their fate has been avenged!

(206)

In place of the nearly-explosive passion of indictment and self-consciously witty discourse, is the biblical certainty of prophecy which not only measures Klein against the unholy Hitler of the preceding section but also identifies a new and calmer attitude of optimism thus far not sounded in The Hitleriad. In the penultimate section of the work, Klein continues his prophetic manner of utterance in echo of his own "Ballad of the Thwarted Axe." Here he calls on the "ghosts" of the murdered to speak, as they do in his ballad, of the "unspeakable" atrocities they suffered:

Then from such evidence, such witnessing,
 Surely the anger of the world will burst,
 Surely the wrath of nations will outfling
 Against this culprit, multitude-accursed
 Doom indexed by the black gloves of their reckoning!

Thief, perjurer, blasphemer, murderer,
 Let him be blotted out, and all his crew.
 Efface the evil; let it be no more.
 Let the abomination cease; and through
 Implacable Justice let emerge the world, clean, new!

(207)

Once and for all, Klein abandons the heroic couplet form, as if to signal his departure from its attendant ironic attitude. Instead, he relies on casually cross-rhymed, or loosely rhymed lines in places, to set forth an ordered, reasoned, and unaffected argument for the necessity of renewal.

This sense of liberation--from form and subject--is effectively managed in the final section of The Hitleriad, which reads like a prayer to peace and, more important, like a hymn to natural, organic goodness:

The field will glow again with harvesting,
 And glow with argosies the deep; again
 Will frolic in the ether, sunlight-blue'd--
 Not the grim vulture of the brood
 Its talons dripping blood,
 But the bright friendly somersaulting plane
 Writing against the sky
 So all may read on high
 Man loyal to his human brotherhood,
 To human brotherhood, and to the godly reign!

(208)

These final lines recall not only Klein's Poems volume, with its studied dialectic of man and machine, the natural and the technological, the human and the primitive, but also Pratt's poetry, which, as this chapter has shown earlier, attends to the same themes. So it is that Klein ends The Hitleriad on a decidedly dignified note, having abandoned the forced and often strained self-consciousness of the earlier sections in

favour of a more relaxed and rhythmically free form of expression. In support of his own description of "centrifugal" poetry, Klein concludes by "raising the reader to a level of exaltation, at [the poem's] conclusion," launching him forth "into space." And like Keats's "To Autumn," which Klein cites as an example of the achievement of such a device, the last section of The Hitleriad directs the reader's mood and imaginative gaze upwards to the sky.¹³³

By the time that he reaches the twenty-seventh section of The Hitleriad, Klein has moved far way from the contemptuous attitude of the mock-epic writer, having deliberately abandoned self-conscious formal restraints and ironic wordplay for a more comfortably familiar expression of romantic optimism. There is, perhaps, something to be said for Pacey's terse comment that Klein's "proper element is praise,"¹³⁴ but it is even more accurate to say that The Hitleriad demonstrates this very point with a full recognition of the limitations of sheer outrage. Klein acknowledges the difficulties of writing a mock-epic on such a grim subject in the opening section of the work but he persists in spite of them, partly out of an over-riding sense of responsibility to charge Hitler with war crimes and partly out of a need to insist that the only way to defeat Hitler is to adopt a view of him as a dangerous clown. The varied formal considerations of

¹³³MS 05229-30.

¹³⁴Pacey, Ten Canadian Poets, 284.

the work--the continual playing with and against the heroic couplet, the introduction of different rhyme schemes and stanza lengths, the final romantic hymn--testify to the degree to which Klein recognizes the need to experiment with his subject. Oddly enough, John Sutherland argues that Klein's "changes in technique" ought to be read as "a bow to modern poetry."¹³⁵ It is truer to say that, for Klein, the changes of technique indicate a self-conscious struggle with the questionable suitability of traditional forms in light of a horrible modern reality. As always, and as is certainly the case of his Poems collection, Klein opts for an alignment with those traditional forms as a way out of the uncertain madness of the present. It is, moreover, not surprising that in the end, The Hitleriad chooses Miltonic verse over Pope's, or chooses Keats's lyricism to the eighteenth-century "solitaire of rhyme and wit," to assert the values of a humanist tradition without ambiguous qualification. That Klein felt that he had succeeded in overcoming the difficulties of his technical experiment is borne out by the fact that he "spoke of [The Hitleriad] proudly as one of the best things he had ever written."¹³⁶ There were those, however, who would reserve such praise for Klein's next major achievement, The Rocking Chair poems, which, while they would obviously focus on new subjects, would do so in remarkably familiar ways.

¹³⁵Sutherland, "The Poetry of A.M. Klein," 53.

¹³⁶Caplan, Like One That Dressed, 111.

Chapter Five

The Rocking Chair and Other Poems

Between 1944 and 1950, the period between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the writing of The Second Scroll, Klein involved himself in many different activities, each one demanding considerable energy. In the late 'thirties, Sam Bronfman, an important figure in the Jewish community and a prominent member of Canada's business establishment, had recognized Klein's oratorical gifts and had asked Klein to work for him as public relations advisor and speech writer. Klein "readily accepted the offer" and continued to work for Bronfman through the 'forties.¹ Klein was also still managing editor of The Canadian Jewish Chronicle, and continued to write weekly editorials and occasional features. An offer from McGill University to instruct students in Modern and Eighteenth-Century Literature in 1945 tempted Klein to accept a new challenge, although not without some hesitation.² The federal political campaign of 1947-1948 in which Klein ran as a Labour-Zionist in the Cartier riding of Montreal certainly consumed a great deal of time

¹Usher Caplan, Like One That Dreamed: A Portrait of A.M. Klein, foreword by Leon Edel (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982) 84. Hereafter cited as Like One That Dreamed.

²When approached by McGill to teach poetry as a Visiting Lecturer, Klein expressed his reluctance over the prospect in a diary entry. See Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 127; Public Archives of Canada 001303.

and energy. Moreover, Klein increased the number of guest speeches and public readings and he intensified his Zionist work in the late 'forties, all the while continuing to practise law and to raise a family. Plans were even under way for a major critical study of Joyce's Ulysses. No sooner did Klein complete one project than he began another, as if sensing that pausing would encourage the cessation of all creativity.

The major work to emerge from this period of public involvements and remarkable energies was The Rocking Chair volume, a collection of poems that brought Klein the Governor General's award for poetry in 1949. Generally considered to be Klein's finest achievement, The Rocking Chair poems marked a new direction in Klein's work, a direction away from the almost obsessive Jewish concerns of his past published work. The idea for the volume, however, had been with Klein for some time. His law practice and his public associations steadily brought him into the socio-political milieu of provincial affairs. His legal clients were largely poor French Canadians, but his professional contacts were the judges, lawyers, notaries, civil servants, and politicians of the Quebec social network. During the Second World War, Klein had turned his creative efforts to the publication of Poems and The Hitleriad, but he had also tinkered with several unpublished poems written during this period that reflect his growing interest in the fabric of Quebec society.

One such poem, dated as early as 1941, suggests that Klein was beginning to turn to this world for new sources of inspiration. "In Memoriam: Arthur Ellis 1867-1937" is an elegy in honour of one of the most notorious figures in the country--Canada's executioner and hangman known only by the alias Arthur Ellis. Klein's identification with Ellis's enforced anonymity is telling of the poet's continuing preoccupation with social rejection. "In Memoriam: Arthur Ellis" expresses pity and understanding for what must have been Ellis's lonely life. Branded as one of a "freakish breed," Ellis moved in a strangely distant world, condemned by the very society that sanctioned his grisly function. Klein admits in the poem that although he was morbidly attracted to Ellis, he could not manage much sympathy for the hangman when he was still alive. But the respectfully candid concluding sections of the poem provide a moving and thoughtful tribute of the dead man:

Still, I recall you now with pity, Ghost,
 recall your incognito life, your name
 kept out of phone-books, all your mail addressed
 to some provincial post,
 and neighbours told--suspicious of your game--
 you travelled in the public interest.
 O, baffled were you by the civic guile
 which praising the courtroom's murderous intent
 scorned you its servant, as if you stood trial!
 Like crime, you bore an alias; you went
 friendless and childless your own long last mile.
 And each death, piecemeal, marked your own descent.

My pity is the pity for my like.
 All generation's of your calling. All
 are carnivorous, almost all men's meat
 is cannibal.
 Involving a great word, like you, we strike.

Like you, we prosper only on defeat.
 The deed is noble, out of Holy Writ,
 and reasoned, Kill off evil or see worse:
 yet this just murder, we performing it,
 unmasks us, the masked executioners,
 who at our fatal function must admit
 ourselves accursed with your special curse.³

Probably first conceived shortly before the writing of The Hitleriad, "In Memoriam: Arthur Ellis" marks both a resemblance to and a departure from Klein's long satire. In the elegy to Ellis, Klein explicitly acknowledges the hangman as a symbol of man's natural "cannibalism." Acting on behalf of society, he relieves men of the burden of guilt and the responsibility of murder. But in The Hitleriad, which is partly an investigation into cannibalism disguised by modern technology, Klein never stretches his analogy to the German Nazis whom he could not in good conscience justify as acting on behalf of all men. Perhaps after the war, at some distance from the horrors of the holocaust, Klein could more openly recognize the relation between the murderer and his victim or the enemy and the vanquished. Perhaps this is why "In Memoriam: Arthur Ellis" was one of Klein's entries in his proposed Selected Poems edition of 1955. In its sympathetic understanding of Ellis's ambiguous social role and in its

³"In Memoriam: Arthur Ellis," SP 002100-02; MS 002308-44; Circle 7.8 (1946): 59-60. Textual evidence would indicate that the poem was first composed as early as 1941 and then revised several years later. Quotations here are from the 1946 version of the poem. Klein's 1936 interview with Arthur Ellis evidently resulted in both this poem and "Portrait of an Executioner," A.M. Klein: Short Stories, ed. M.W. Steinberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983) 191-200.

profound expression of Ellis's personal alienation, Klein's elegy reaches further than The Hitleriad to include all men in the social struggle.

"In Memoriam: Arthur Ellis" not only invites comparison with The Hitleriad but it also points ahead to "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape." In particular, the concluding sections of the tribute to Ellis recall Klein's portrait of the anonymous, isolated poet lying in wait at the "bottom of the sea."⁴ It is easy to see how in Klein's imagination both figures--hangman and poet--share the space of exile and ostracism. Klein's eternally Wandering Jew (the poetic archetype of such exile figures as Childe Harold, Solomon Warshawer, and Baruch Spinoza, among others) occupies a similar space; however, in both of Klein's elegies--one to an executioner and one to a poet--the figure of the Wandering Jew is subsumed by a more comprehensive symbol. Less obviously ethnic than the Wandering Jew, the hangman and the poet both represent the modern society from which, ironically, they have been excluded. Although they may at first appear to be strange literary companions, Arthur Ellis and the drowned poet have much in common. One dares to enact society's most terrible deeds; the other dares to speak society's buried dreams. For their bold acts they suffer the consequences of disapproval and neglect. Klein's interest in figures of exile and social alienation can be traced as far back as the

⁴See note 77.

'twenties. As discussed in the opening chapters of this thesis, many of Klein's early poems and editorials anticipate the central themes of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape." But the evolution of Klein's Wandering Jew from a cultural-ethnic type to a universal symbol of modern psychic and social alienation becomes most noticeable in the 'forties. The radical poems of the 'thirties, particularly "Diary of Abe Segal, Poet" and "Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger," root the figure of the Wandering Jew in the broad modern social world but each poetic figure bears a distinctively Jewish name and a distinctively Jewish condition. With "In Memoriam: Arthur Ellis" Klein seemed to be turning towards a new set of social possibilities rooted in a wider, more central tradition. The achievement of this new and, in some ways, heightened perspective of the modern condition, can be found in The Rocking Chair volume of 1948.⁵

I. "Autobiographical"

As a collection, The Rocking Chair volume brings together various strands of attention in Klein's past work. In its witty observations of the Quebec socio-political climate, The Rocking Chair poems recall Klein's earlier satires, such as "Of Daumiers a Portfolio" and "Barricade Smith: His

⁵The Rocking Chair and Other Poems (Toronto: Ryerson, 1948).

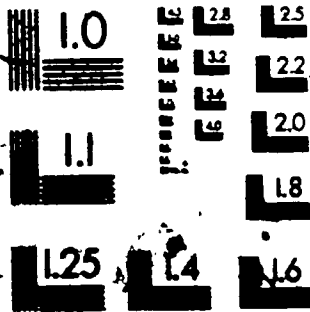
Speeches." In its vividly drawn character sketches, it suggests the imaginative portrait poems of Hath Not a Jew... Here, as elsewhere in his earlier work, Klein's formal choices are recognisably traditional. Patterns emerge from the careful plotting of quatrains, terza rima, septains, and ballad stanzas. The poems frequently convey the rhythmic cadences of syntactical parallelism and the elegant pacing of Klein's measured stresses. But as much as The Rocking Chair poems resemble the Klein of the 'twenties and 'thirties and even the Klein of Poems (1944) and The Hitleriad, they achieve a notable freshness of sound and texture. It is safe to say that more so than Hath Not a Jew..., Poems, and The Hitleriad, more so than Klein's radical poems, The Rocking Chair volume occupies a central place in the Canadian modernist tradition.

Perhaps the most obvious difference between The Rocking Chair and Other Poems and Klein's earlier work is the richness of the imagery. Not only does Klein draw on an imaginative landscape in the Quebec poems but he also animates an immediate, physical landscape—whether the complex and colourful urban world of Montreal or the dignified rural simplicity of the province's countryside. Miriam Waddington accurately elaborates on The Rocking Chair volume's distinction in her study on Klein:

The Rocking Chair is full of the sense of outer as well as inner place, and for the first time, the richness of a specific external geography (as opposed to an abstract imaginary one) enters Klein's work. He is no longer fantasising about European Jewish villages and medieval Christian

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knights. He is looking at contemporary Montreal and the Canadian cities that lie beyond, and is filled with the surprise of his own discoveries.⁶

Indeed, for what appears to be the first time, Klein presents a sustained vision of the dynamic, changing present. Inspired by the richness of his immediate world, and compelled to register his own response to that world, Klein achieves in The Rocking Chair a remarkably personal expression of modern experience. This combination of "outer" and "inner" place and the mix of public and personal voices find a fitting expression in Klein's "Autobiographical" (271-73), first published in The Canadian Forum in 1943 and later appended to The Second Scroll.⁷ Like "In Memoriam: Arthur Ellis," the poem is useful to consider as a preamble to a full consideration of The Rocking Chair. "Autobiographical" is directly about the process of seeing a physical landscape through the inner eye of memory. Each image of Klein's past is anchored in a sense of outer place. The autobiographer chronicles the various meaningful moments in his life in the light of their association with fixed locations or images.

⁶Miriam Waddington, A.M. Klein, Studies in Canadian Literature (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970) 4.

⁷"Autobiographical," Canadian Forum 23 (August 1943): 106 ["Autobiography"]; The Book of Canadian Poetry, ed. A.J.M. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943) 398-400; The Second Scroll (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951) 123-26; SP 002113-16; MS 002131-44; The Collected Poems of A.M. Klein, ed. and with an intro. by Miriam Waddington (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974) 271-73. Readers should also consult Zailig Pollock's "Errors in The Collected Poems of A.M. Klein," Canadian Poetry 10 (Summer/Spring 1982): 91-99.

The poem is born, as is the poet, "out of the ghetto streets," "out of the jargoning city" of Montreal. In recreating his childhood perceptions of that world, the poet recaptures a sense of newness. The material world is thereby reanimated with a lucid intensity never quite so evident before in the Klein of the 'twenties and 'thirties.

Of course, by the 'forties Klein had lived enough life to have developed a rich memorybank of images. In fact, "Autobiographical" searches for a way to close the ever-widening gap between the earliest, most innocent moments of awareness and the relentlessly advancing years of experience:

Out of the ghetto streets where a Jewboy
 Dreamed pavement into pleasant Bible-land,
 Out of the Yiddish slums where childhood met
 The friendly beard, the loutish Sabbath-goy,
 Or followed, proud, the Torah-escorting band,
 Out of the jargoning city I regret,
 Rise memories, like sparrows rising from
 The gutter-scattered oats,
 Like sadness sweet of synagogal hum,
 Like Hebrew violins
 Sobbing delight upon their Eastern notes.

(271)

This first stanza establishes the lyrical mood and the emotional intensity of the poem. Assisted by the incantatory parallelism of its extended prepositional phrases, the stanza steadily moves forward to form one complete statement. Its enjambed lines thus fittingly imitate the spiraling notes of "Hebrew violins," instruments that recall the sweet sadness or the "Sobbing delight" of the distant past. Each subsequent stanza is imbued with a similar sense of precise

recollection and romantic longing; a longing to preserve that recollection for all time. In effect, each stanza fixes the past in an imaginatively recalled tableau of impressions. Klein remembers the "one sweaty cent" that bought "warm, fresh-smelling bakery" goods; the "bright-bottled, green, blue, red" of the barber-shop; the "fruit-stall piled, exotic"; the "big synagogue door, with letters of gold." Not surprisingly, "Autobiographical" is illuminated by Klein's initiation into the world of language. He remembers his uncle "counting holy words" (prefiguring the Uncle Melech of The Second Scroll) and

Occasions dear: the four-legged aleph named
 And angel pennies dropping on my book;
 The rabbi patting a coming scholar-head;
 My mother, blessing candles, Sabbath-flamed,
 Queenly in her Warsovian perruque;
 My father pickabacking me to bed
 To tell tall tales about the Baal Shem Tov,--
 Letting me curl his beard.
 Oh memory of unsurpassing love,
 Love leading a brave child
 Through childhood's ogred corridors, unfear'd!

(272)

Knowing language brought rewards. Mingled with his memory of learning the alphabet is the assurance of his parents who nourished security and control. As each stanza opens and closes on a freshly revived memory, the poem gathers a romantic weightiness. But in the concluding stanza, Klein returns himself to the reality of the waking moment:

I am no old man fatuously intent
 On memoirs, but in memory I seek
 The strength and vividness of nonage days,
 Not tranquil recollection of event.

It is a fabled city that I seek;
 It stands in Space's vapours and Time's haze;
 Thence comes my sadness in remembered joy
 Constrictive of the throat;
 Thence do I hear, as heard by a Jewboy,
 The Hebrew violins,
 Delighting in the sobbed Oriental note.

(273)

The price of age, Klein implies, is heightened self-consciousness, which turns the physical world (Creation in Hath Not a Jew...) into something used and ordinary, making fresh discoveries almost impossible. "No day is ever like that," Klein admits in the penultimate section of the poem, thus reminding the cliché that "you can't go home again." In directly invoking Wordsworth in the last stanza, Klein distinguishes his own purpose from that of the Wordsworth of the "Intimations Ode," the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, and The Prelude. Klein insists that his own aim in remembering is not merely to recapture the moods of the past but to regain the childhood vision itself. In "nonage days," the world was viewed with "strength and vividness." He would now "seek," therefore, to reanimate that now-buried perception.

The open rejection of Romanticism at the conclusion of "Autobiographical" identifies Klein with the modernist's aim to invent the tradition of the new.⁸ Klein wishes to substitute a "fabled city" for the mere "recollection of event," to substitute an imaginative possibility for a faded reality.

⁸This phrase is borrowed from Harold Rosenberg, The Tradition of the New (New York: Horizon, 1959).

To a certain extent, the poem does succeed in making a new thing out of the past. Clearly the adult perspective both chastens and reshapes the original experience, lending it order and furnishing it with meaning. Moreover, the formal presentation of the poem reinforces its self-conscious artistry: each of its eight eleven-lined stanzas obeys a rigorous, closed rhyme scheme (abcabcdedfe); each stanza also imposes a grammatical pattern conveyed by parallel syntax and recurring diction. In its self-conscious recreation of the past, "Autobiographical" recalls Dylan Thomas's "Fern Hill" and Robert Frost's "Birches," two poems that highlight the ironic distance between childhood experience and the present recollection of that experience.⁹ Yet for all of its modernist claims, "Autobiographical" is also a romantic return poem in the tradition of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and Roberts's "Tantramar Revisited."¹⁰ It could also be seen as part of a literary tradition which has Proust at the centre--a tradition evolving from the Romantic aesthetic of contemplation. As "Autobiographical" makes clear, the world of objects has no inherent value until the mind, in a kind of secondary process, sees them relationally. Thus the

⁹Dylan Thomas: Collected Poems 1934-1952 (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1954) 159-61; Complete Poems of Robert Frost (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1949) 152-53.

¹⁰The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, eds. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols. (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1949) 2: 259; Selected Poems of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts (Toronto: Ryerson, 1936) 50-51.

adult perspective shapes the raw impressions of childhood into culturally significant experience. In the process, that experience acquires the value and meaning of the ideal. While it is true that Klein's poem shares the modernist's heightened awareness of the difference between then and now, it also conveys the romantic longing to bridge the gap. In effect, Klein wants to have it both ways, so to say. "Thence comes my sadness in remembered joy," he remarks paradoxically, calling attention to the impossibility of recreating the past exactly. Yet "Thence do I hear, as heard by a Jewboy / The Hebrew violins," he concludes without irony. By the last lines of the poem, the gap between then and now has dissolved completely. He hears now what he heard then, or so he claims. The tension between heightened consciousness and unmediated experience (a tension apparently resolved by the end of the poem) that informs the romantic-modernism of a poem like "Autobiographical" also characterizes the central themes of The Rocking Chair poems. In that collection, Klein searches for a possible match between the outer world of objects and the inner world of the imagination through the ordering, unifying potential of poetic discourse. Perhaps, because the subject of The Rocking Chair poems is no longer an extension of himself, that is, no longer a Jew, Klein could more openly investigate the relation between the poet-shaper and the outer, shaped world than he ever had before.

One more 'forties poem is worth considering before a full discussion of The Rocking Chair. "Doctor Drummond" might well have prefaced the 1948 volume, for, like "Ave atque Vale" of Nath Not a Jew..., it bids farewell to an irrelevant idiom and a tired poetic expression. Klein published the poem in 1946 in the Canadian Forum, as if to announce a new poetry of French Canada.¹¹ The derisive tone of "Doctor Drummond" is specifically levelled at William Henry Drummond, the Irish country doctor who eventually established not only a medical practice in Montreal but also a reputation for public speaking, public patronage, and popular poetry. As Roy Daniells points out in The Literary History of Canada,

His poems of habitant life, the first volume of which in 1897 contained a sympathetic introduction by Louis Fr chet te, and which appeared also in four other volumes between 1898 and 1907, were widely read and have never lost their appeal. The picture of habitant life is superficial, comedy and pathos are precariously related, the presentation of "un pauvre illettr " (in Fr chet te's phrase) as a national type is itself hazardous.¹²

Klein shares this judgement of Drummond's dangerous stereotyping. In the poem, his objection to Drummond is aimed at the popular poet's superficial characterizations of French Canadians:

¹¹"Doctor Drummond," Canadian Forum 26 (September 1946): 136; MS 002278-81.

¹²Roy Daniells, "Minor Poets 1880-1920," in Literary History of Canada, 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965) 438.

Consider the patrician patronizing the patois,
 consider his habitants, the homespun of their minds and
 motives,
 And you will see them as he saw them--as white natives,
 characters out of comical Quebec,
 of speech neither Briton nor Breton, a fable folk,
 a second class of aborigines,
 docile, domesticate, very good employees,
 so meek that even their sadness
 made dialect for a joke.

One can well imagine the doctor,
 in club, in parlour, or in smoking car,
 building out of his practise a reputation
 as raconteur.
 But the true pulsing of their blood
 his beat ignores,
 and of the temperature of their days, the chills
 of their despairs, the fevers of their faith,
 his mercury is silent.

(286)

Unable to find the pulse of the nation, Drummond writes an irrelevant, empty poetry--at least according to Klein. Ostensibly, Klein would counter Drummond's stereotyping with a more sensitive, developed, and complex characterization of French Canadians. To be sure, The Rocking Chair poems do aim at measuring the "temperature" of the Quebec climate. Like Drummond, Klein is an observer of a society to which he does not properly belong. Yet unlike Drummond, Klein's awareness is informed by a shared sympathy with French Canada, a sympathy born out of ethnic distinctiveness and cultural oppression.

Readers have been quick to point out that Klein's treatment of the French Canadian milieu stems from his natural identification with another minority group. Fischer amends this critical view slightly, however:

. . . Klein was drawn to write about French Canada not so much because he felt there was a kinship between French Canadian and Jewish ways, but because, on the contrary, there were such profound differences In his sympathetic approach to something as alien as Quebec Catholicism, he is deliberately seeking out the stranger and shows that he can have affection for him.¹³

As provocative as this last statement is, particularly since it suggests that Klein consciously set out to overcome a latent sense of xenophobia, perhaps Klein's own words best provide the nature of his identification with French Canada. In 1948 he drafted a letter to the American poet, Karl Shapiro (never mailed), who had praised The Rocking Chair volume enthusiastically:

. . . And what have you to do with French Canada? It's a long story. Two books I wrote, both stemming out of my ancestral traditions; both praised ancient virtue; when I looked about for those virtues in the here and now, I found them in Quebec. Now I have no illusions about my province, its clericalism, its frequent reactions, etc.--but here was a minority, like my own, which led a compact life; continued, unlike my own, an ancient tradition, preserved inhibited values, felt that it "belonged."¹⁴

The central point here is that Klein does, indeed, identify himself with these Catholic strangers; their preservation of "ancient values" appealed to him as proof that such a thing was possible in spite of cultural oppression. The quotation

¹³G.K. Fischer, In Search of Jerusalem: Religion and Ethics in the Writings of A.M. Klein (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1975) 133.

¹⁴Letter to Karl Shapiro, 27 December 1948, Public Archives of Canada 000422-24. See Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 163-64.

from the drafted letter to Shapiro also indicates the degree to which Klein regretted the dilution of his own tradition through assimilation and contemporary compromise. It is no wonder that until The Second Scroll, Klein wrote so little in praise of the modern Jewish experience, casting his Jewish types in medieval landscapes where the "ancient values" were still alive. The Rocking Chair marked the first time that Klein wrote of the time-space world of his immediate environment in a sustained way (the radical poems, of course, attempt to capture the immediate world in protest poetry). It is telling of Klein's uneasiness with modern Jewry that he cast his eye on the milieu of French Canada instead.

In The Rocking Chair volume, at a comfortable distance from his object of contemplation, Klein could relax his grip on the problem of Jewish identity, and allow himself to explore freely the ways in which the poetic imagination shapes the immediate environment. As "Autobiographical" shows, the relation between inner and outer space is a delicate, complex one, requiring the lucid intensity of an open, yet disciplined imagination. And as "Doctor Drummond" implies, the world of French Canada--Klein's immediate environment--must be carefully and respectfully interpreted by the watchful outsider. As in Klein's finest poems, The Rocking Chair collection achieves a graceful tension arising from the meeting of mind and matter--inner and outer place.

As always for Klein, the miracle of language makes that meeting intelligible. The formalizing geometry of his poetic discourse both orders and gives meaning to the observed world, in effect, recreating it. That Klein longs for the permanency of such a relationship, or graceful tension, marks his romanticism. That he frequently suspects the possibility of such permanence marks, at least in part, his modernism.

II. The Rocking Chair and Other Poems

The symbol of the volume is found in its title. Both functional and folkloric, as common as a hooked rug or a pine armoie, the rocking chair has long been identified as a token of Quebec rural life. But Klein wisely recognizes the poetic potential of the rocking chair as a metaphor for more than bucolic simplicity:

I seek to find [in the rocking chair] the symbol for French Canada, a symbol which will at once illustrate a continued preoccupation and will also point to the nature of the psychology, as far as I understood it, of the French people, ties to this continent, and nostalgic memories of the old continent.¹⁵

Klein's rocking chair sustains the weight of an entire culture, at least as the poet understands it. That Klein chose this emblem of Quebec life as the title of the collection

¹⁵McGill Reading, Notes to "The Rocking Chair," Klein Committee ts.

points to its symbolic importance.¹⁶ The introductory poem both elaborates that importance and establishes the formal direction of the rest of the volume. Indeed, in many ways "The Rocking Chair" poem sustains the weight of the "other poems" that follow it.

Most apparent at first glance is the ordered way in which "The Rocking Chair" rests on the page. Klein crafts his chair poem out of four eight-line stanzas, each contoured by a rhyme pattern that further divides the stanza into quatrains (ababcdcd). This scheme neatly compliments the paradoxical function of the chair itself as an object moving "on no space." Not only the alternating rhymes but also the central split or pleating of each stanza convey the rocking motion of the chair. But the formal arrangement of the poem does more than imitate, albeit brilliantly, the dynamic of the rocking chair. It comes to represent by the fourth

¹⁶Klein's editor tried to dissuade the poet from entitling the volume The Rocking Chair but, it is to be presumed, Klein held fast to his choice: "We have again discussed your title. We don't like 'The Rocking Chair' and we think 'P.Q.' is bad. We think we made a mistake with Pat Page's last title 'As Ten as Twenty' and also with Birney's latest 'The Strait of Anian.' Would it do to call your new book 'Poems 1940-1948' after the manner of T.S. Eliot? Or we could call it 'Selected Poems'? Dr. Pierce suggests that a half dozen of the poems which appeared in your first important collection be repeated here even though we had to make a place for them, and the book be called 'Selected Poems.' We did this with Earle Birney's latest collection. We will hold the manuscript until we hear from you further." Frank Flemington, Letter to A.M. Klein; 29 March 1948, Public Archives of Canada 000381. "The Rocking Chair," Nation 159 (6 October 1945): 341; SP 002068-69; MS 002606-11. Parenthetical references are first to The Rocking Chair and then to The Collected Poems.

stanza the "static folk" of French Canada themselves, a folk advancing unchangingly into the future. The paradox of their continuing survival lies in their hold on the past, as Klein's letter to Shapiro makes clear; yet, as "The Rocking Chair" implies, such relentless moving backwards as well as forwards is problematic. Klein's own ambivalence towards-- or double vision of--French Canada thus finds a fitting objective correlative in the chair, which is itself so expertly shaped by the formal devices of the poem. This ambivalent view of French Canada, as shall be demonstrated, certainly goes further towards characterizing the province than "Doctor Drummond's" stereotyping. Moreover, the complexity of Klein's description is deepened by the poet's self-consciousness as an outsider, one watching and evaluating the world around him with guarded sympathy.

Whatever it becomes in the poet's eye, the rocking chair is first a measure of the rhythms of Quebec family life. "No less a national bird," it clocks the pace of summer evenings on the farmhouse porch, the very centre of rural Quebec life. But this benign view of the rocking chair thinly disguises its darker function as a "cage," entrapping the family in its bars, perhaps keeping the French Canadian child from developing into responsible adulthood:

and in its peace the pensive mother knits
contentment to be worn by her family,
grown-up, but still cradled by the chair in which she sits.

Identified in this first stanza of the poem with Quebecois matriarchy, the rocking chair is a site of life but also of arrested growth--of continuing infancy. In this view, it is difficult not to hear a degree of irony in Klein's emphasis on "knit," which denotes binding, at the end of the seventh line. The unexpected "contentment" which follows "knit" on the last line tempers the irony somewhat, but there are other ambivalences in the poem that keep Klein's double vision of the chair apparent. Of course, as already mentioned, the formal arrangement of the stanzas in the poem sustains such a double vision.

In the second stanza, Klein elaborates on the chair's significance in the lives of the French Canadian family. Remarkably flexible and portable, especially in the light of its essentially rigid construction, the chair easily adapts to new contexts. In the first quatrain of the stanza, the rocking chair is imaged as a symmetrical compliment to the "old man's pet . . . his pipe," and as a prop in the "toddler's game and dangerous dance." In each case, the chair functions to balance an equation of the human and the inanimate. In the second quatrain, the chair is "sabbatical and clumsy," appropriate to its place in a setting of awkward adolescent courtship. That courtship perpetuates the cycle of continuity, a cycle suggested by the "white haloes / dangling above the blue serge suits of the young men." As with the end of the first stanza, here the chair is the site of both life and

childhood--or of guaranteed infancy. The continuity of the life cycle is, of course, desirable, but an enclosed, circumscribed life is in danger of being stunted.

While the second stanza animates the rocking chair as an extension of its environment, the third stanza provides it with independent life, "a personality of its own." As much a "character" as the drunken Quebecois marionette, "Lacoste," the chair relies on no one for its "individuality." As the second quatrain of the stanza implies, however, its personality grows out of its history:

it is tradition. Centuries have been flicked
from its arcs, alternately flicked and pinned.
It rolls with the gait of St. Malo.

Since Jacques Cartier's first sighting of Quebec (he was born in St. Malo), the chair has been rocking to the unchanging rhythms of French Canadian life. Klein's emphasis on "flicked" and "pinned," like his emphasis on "khit" in the first stanza, raises a suggestively masochistic possibility, a possibility unambiguously carried over into the final stanza:

It is act

and symbol, symbol of this static folk
which moves in segments, and returns to base, --
a sunken pendulum: invoke, revoke:
loosed yon, leashed hither, motion on no space.
O, like some Anjou ballad, all refrain,
which turns about its longing, and seems to move
to make a pleasure out of repeated pain,
its music moves, as if always back to a first love.

All of the poem imitates the rocking motion of the chair, but in this concluding stanza Klein fully exploits the technique of verbal opsis with which he experiments in his

early poetry. This device, it will be recalled, employs an intimate connection between the subject being described and the sounds and rhythms of words used to describe it, effecting a powerful sense of the image and its textural qualities. Consider the way in which Klein places commas in the lines quoted above to break the lines into "segments," in imitation of the movement of the chair. Note also the way in which the stanza is run on from the previous one, which, together with the colon in the middle of the third line, conveys the motion of a "sunken pendulum." Likewise the "invoke, revoke" of that line, italicized for special attention, contributes to the effect of a relentless symmetry. The effect of the run-on clause "and seems to move / to make a pleasure out of repeated pain" expresses the "longing" of the chair and its inhabitants. As one might expect of so accomplished a craftsman as Klein, the paradox of the chair--static motion --becomes the paradox of the poem: the frozen, static tableau of language manages to create the illusion of movement, the rhythm of an object in space. The various tensions which the chair generates by association with its back and forth motion parallel the tensions generated by the poetic process itself. These tensions are held in a marvellously poised balance by the formal structure of the poem. As "The Rocking Chair" fills the page with its regularly contoured stanzas, repeating themselves like an "Anjou ballad," it simultaneously moves forward, both in time and space.

One of the tensions which Klein sets up in the poem centres on the relation between subject and object, or inner and outer space. On the one hand, the chair is a projection of those who use it; on the other hand, Klein insists that it has "no less / an identity than those about it." Both these things are true in a poem that depends (as does the chair) on every level on the symmetry of paradox. Likewise, Klein's double vision of the chair as a site of life and entrapment--a vision that extends to French Canada itself--looks further to the difficulty of distinguishing between subject and object, for neither view is true without a recognition of its opposite: the chair is both these things in the poet's eye. The rocking chair "is act / and symbol," Klein writes, both verb and noun, an independent agent of motion and an object transformed by the observer into a set of rich associations, associations which in turn generate new paradoxes. As a perfect arrangement of space, a refined balancing act of lines and planes, a token of symmetry, the rocking chair is as ordered and as self-contained as Klein's poem itself. Indeed, in the chair Klein not only finds a suitable emblem of his investigation into his relation to French Canada, but also a fitting metaphor of his exploration of the poetic process itself. No wonder he insisted on entitling the volume by this remarkable introductory poem.

The overt themes of The Rocking Chair collection may be "love, portraiture, and social criticism," as Waddington defines them,¹⁷ but as the first poem suggests, the unifying principle of the volume is an appreciation of design itself, or what Klein might call geometry (as he does in "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens"). The attraction to the rocking chair is, in part, an attraction to its design. There is scarcely a poem in the rest of the collection that does not refer to geometry or the arrangement of space in some fashion, whether it is expressed as the Euclidean pattern of streets in Montreal, observed from the top of Mount Royal, the "crossroads" of the world as viewed from a jet, or the "pairs" of Catholic nuns seen from a window in the hospital of the Hotel Dieu. Almost every poem delights in design and in the poet's capacity to appreciate it. And it is precisely this bird's-eye view of the landscape that allows the poet to frame such pleasing shapes in it. Such a compulsion towards symmetry is revealed early on in Klein's work, and discussed in detail in this thesis, but never does Klein so openly praise order in the world as a projection of order in the watchful mind as he does in The Rocking Chair.

In the second poem in the volume, "The Provinces" (2/297-98), Klein continues his investigation of the unity

¹⁷Waddington, A.M. Klein, 110.

of space.¹⁸ This time he finds a suitable subject in the map of Canada, a map drawn by the poet in the bold strokes characteristic of his more playful satires. After marking the uniqueness of each of the nine provinces (Newfoundland had not yet joined Confederation), Klein asks where the essence of national character is to be found:

But the heart seeks one, the heart, and also the mind
seeks single the thing that makes them one, if one.

Here, the impulse for a carefully balanced vision, for a unity of parts, is confounded by the realization that Canada's oneness depends paradoxically upon its shared diversity. Such national myths as "the mounties," "Christmas trees," or the Parliament buildings only partially satisfy the quest for unity. The answer seems to lie somewhere at the meeting of mind and matter. Perhaps the country can only be understood in terms of the people who inhabit it. Klein concludes "The Provinces" with a final rhetorical question. Shall one

. . . find it, find it, find it commonplace
but effective, valid, real, the unity
in the family feature, the not unsimilar face?

The extrusive rhymes concluding the poem serve to insure closure, bracketing the word "unity" itself. Moreover, the repetition of "find it" lends rhythmic weight and moral certainty to the quest for the unifying principle of Canada. But here, as in "Autobiographical" and "The Rocking Chair," the relation between subject and object, inner and outer

¹⁸"The Provinces," Northern Review 1.1 (December 1945-January 1946): 27-28; MS 002568-70.

space, is delicately suspended. The unity of Canada depends upon the subject's perception of such unity, which, nonetheless, exists, as Klein is sure to stress, as "effective, valid, real." In other words, the country both exists as a unity composed of nine provinces and does not exist, except as an idea in the mind. The deliberately ambiguous "not unsimilar face" which concludes the poem functions like a riddle, or at least like a verbal paradox, teasing the reader at once to see and not to see "the family feature" on a Canadian face. It is easier for Klein to image the characteristics of the provinces than it is for him to draw the inconceivable. The poem is, after all, not entitled "Canada," although it searches to define the nation as a group of shared characteristics. As so often the case in The Rocking Chair, "The Provinces" moves from specific description to some point of general discovery, from the concrete to the abstract. The movement, as in "The Rocking Chair" poem, directs the reader towards a comprehensive overview matching Klein's own. The eye sees the parts first and then recognizes that they belong to some dimly discernible whole, some abstract reality which the autonomous unity of the poem best approximates. Thus "The Rocking Chair" proceeds by "segments" to draw and define an object, and "The Provinces" moves by parts to fill out a map of the whole country. Of course, "The Rocking Chair" is no more a rocking chair and "The Provinces" is no more a map of Canada than Magritte's painted representation

of a pipe is a pipe--that is, it is and it is not a pipe. Klein is playing a similar game but then he always was. Moreover, his game is a serious one, which has its roots in the Kabbalistic texts, as already demonstrated in this thesis. Words embody sense and shape reality itself, but as the modernist poet of The Rocking Chair admits, that reality depends upon the active imagination of the reader. This notion finds its richest expression in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," the last poem in the collection, but it is rewarding to see Klein's exposition of it throughout the volume.

In "The Cripples" (4/298-99), Klein's investigation of the geometry of space finds a fitting subject in the "unsymmetrical" pilgrims scaling the "ninety-nine steps" of St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal.¹⁹ This poem has drawn considerable attention as confessional evidence of Klein's loss of faith. While it is true that Klein does, indeed, admit to being "crippled more than" the physically deformed pilgrims seeking spiritual wholeness, this acknowledgement should not overlook his assertion of the value of symmetry, which Klein sees as possible and good. As an outsider to the religious faith driving the pilgrims up towards the "dome" of "Brother André," Klein watches the procession with qualified admiration. As pointed out elsewhere, "Klein's

¹⁹"The Cripples," Poetry 70 (July 1947): 177-78; Poems of French Canada (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 3; Seven Poems (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 4; Huit poèmes canadiens (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 9.

use of terza rima, the very embodiment of Dante's trinitarian Catholicism," is an appropriate "vehicle" for "The Cripples."²⁰ That Klein imposes such an ordered form on his perceptions suggests the degree to which he longs for a world balanced by the spirit and the flesh, although he may not inhabit such a place himself.. Indeed, the terza rima of the poem lends reliably tough shape to the poet's crippled faith, a shape as fixed and vertical as the "St. Joseph's ladder" of stone which the crippled pilgrims ascend.

In "The Snowshoers" (5/299-300), Klein relaxes the formal properties of his observations.²¹ Relying this time on a more loosely rhymed arrangement of space, the poet celebrates the snowshoers for moving in a world of geometry. Here, the poet's admiration is without qualification, and needs nothing so fixed as terza rima to offset doubt. "The Snowshoers" is, in fact, a modern ode to the winter world of forms. Although an outsider to the action, as in "The Cripples," the poet enjoys the privilege of watching the snowshoers enter his field of vision. From his comfortable point of view, he delights in the ways in which the multi-coloured costumes of these winter athletes impose bright arrangements on the "enhancing whiteness of the snow." In

²⁰D.M.R. Bentley, "A New Dimension: Notes on the Ecology of Canadian Poetry," Canadian Poetry 7 (Fall/Winter 1980): 13.

²¹"The Snowshoers," Queen's Quarterly 54 (Winter 1947-48): 412; SP 002076-77; MS G02639.

the first stanza, the snowshoers emerge "from the saints' parishes" to perform a ritual as ordered as any religious ceremony. Even their preliminary play assumes a graceful shape: "they snowball their banter below the angular eaves." The poet-watcher notes the geometry of circles and lines in the foreground of the landscape before him. In the second stanza, the snowshoers begin their gorgeous procession, "bright with assumption," imprinting themselves in "zigzags" and "rondures" against the air:

Like a slapdash backdrop, the street moves with colours,
the zones and rhomboids moving
toward the enhancing whiteness of the snow.

Clearly, he enjoys a comprehensive view of this scene, a scene that depends on his framing eye for its existence. In the final stanza, the snowshoers seem to pass before the poet-watcher towards the ice-covered lake where they are transformed in his eyes into "coloured sails." And as the snowshoers fill a "World of white wealth," miraculously tracing patterns on water, they enter into a harmonious relationship with the poet-watcher who fills his white page with the geometry of his rhyme and word order.

In "For the Sisters of the Hotel Dieu" (6/300), Klein sings in praise of the Catholic nuns who, like "biblic birds," comforted him in his "childhood illnesses."²² What

²²"For the Sisters of the Hotel Dieu," Poetry 57 (July 1947): 178; Poems of French Canada (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 4; Seven Poems (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 8; Huit poèmes canadiens (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 10; SP 002070; MS 002291. Note that in The Rocking Chair, the

the poet notices first about the nuns is the ordered symmetry of their cloistered walks. "IN pairs," he writes, stressing the appealing doubleness they present before the watchful eye. Seeing the nuns then reminds him of "the hovering solace" they brought to him, "not of [their] race," as a child. This short affirmative poem recalls the process described in "Autobiographical," where the poet recreates the impressions of youth with the assistance of the shaping, adult imagination. Not surprisingly, perhaps, Klein's sometimes ambivalent view of Quebec Catholicism finds no expression in the benevolence of "For the Sisters of the Hotel Dieu." The fondness of his memory together with the appealing symmetry of the nuns make for a distanced yet loving sketch.

The next poem in The Rocking Chair, "Grain Elevator" (7/301), is central to both the collection and Klein's moral-aesthetic preoccupations.²³ As in "The Rocking Chair" poem, Klein animates a material object in four eight-line stanzas. The rhyme is looser here than it is in the first poem, but it can be seen that the stanzas in "Grain Elevator" are also shaped into quatrains. Although subtle, the central divisions in each stanza (made most obvious in the final first words of all poems are set in capitals.

²³"Grain Elevator," Poetry 70 (July 1947): 175-76; Poems of French Canada (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 2; Seven Poems (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 3; Huit poèmes canadiens (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 8.

stanza by the end stop after "space"), reinforce the dialectic described in the poem of inner and outer space. Klein's double vision of the grain elevator is not morally ambivalent, however. Instead of imparting insidiousness to the object (as he does to the rocking chair, albeit subtly), Klein explores the ways in which the object both shapes physical space and is shaped in the mind. Like the rocking chair, the grain elevator is both act and symbol--at once part of a magnificent process whereby wheat turns to grain and a solid shape from which rich metaphoric possibilities are generated. There can be little doubt that the grain elevator is a positive symbol since its order is the feeding of the world. But one of the paradoxes with which the poem plays involves the grain elevator as a "prison," a "beached bastille," housing and entrapping grains, which, in turn, "save life." Not even a grain elevator can escape the mind's transforming powers. Indeed, in the first stanza, the object seems to rise from the landscape like a primitive icon, "blind and babylonian," recalling the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). A further look transforms the dark object into "Leviathan" (Job 41.1-34; Ps 74.14). From other views, the grain elevator resembles "cliffs," "the blind ark," "a cave," and "some eastern tomb." "But even when known" to be a grain elevator, Klein continues in the second stanza, it retains its mythical, biblical, and religious characteristics:

for here, as in a Josephdream, bow down
the sheaves, the grains, the scruples of the sun

garnered for darkness; and Saskatchewan
 is rolled like a rug of a thick and golden thread.
 O prison of prairies, ship in whose galleys roll
 sunshines like so many shaven heads,
 waiting the bushel-burst out of the beached-bastille!

The grain elevator dominates the landscape like both a temple, a site of worship, and a fortress in which the sunshine of the prairies is locked. No single view of it is every superceded so much as extended by another perspective. Like a cubist painting of a grain elevator seen simultaneously from many angles, Klein's poem of the grain elevator comprises as many possibilities as his imagination will allow. Moreover, the various perspectives of the object range from the most concrete to the most abstract. The grain elevator, in other words, inhabits both physical and imaginative space. For Klein, the two spheres are necessarily interdependent.

In the third stanza, the poet shifts almost exclusively to the imaginative landscape of the grain elevator. In fact, he turns his gaze away from the outer world and focusses instead on what the elevator suggests to him. He thinks of it now as an international symbol, a meeting place of the world's races, where grains are gathered and separated "to save life." In his mind (the place where the grain elevator takes shape), the grains even "dream." As important is its function as a feeding station for the world, the grain elevator truly comes alive in the active imagination. As the fourth and final stanza makes clear, the grain elevator orders the world, but it is itself ordered by the mind:

A box: cement, hugeness, and rightangles--
 merely the sight of it leaning in my eyes
 mixes up continents and makes a montage
 of inconsequent time and unctiguous space.

The first line above establishes the physical properties of this geometrical phenomenon, which, when reflected in the eye, is reshaped, reinterpreted, and reconstructed as a "montage" or as an imaginative plane on which infinity and eternity are juxtaposed. This poetic possibility exists, Klein goes on to say, for a very material reason:

It's because it's bread. It's because
 bread is its theme, an absolute. Because
 always this great box flowers over us
 with all the coloured faces of mankind

The concrete form of the grain elevator--"a [flour] box" grounded in the landscape--serves the content--a "theme" flowering in the mind. Klein's particularly Hopkins' sounding conclusion (recalling the conclusion of "God's Grandeur")²⁴ recognizes the transcendent quality of the grain elevator both as a material object dominating the landscape and as a symbol uniting the "coloured faces of mankind." Indeed, in this remarkably accomplished poem, the relationship between

²⁴Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. and with an intro. by W.H. Gardner (London: Penguin, 1953) 27. Klein's debt to Hopkins is obvious in The Rocking Chair generally. See Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 150. "Klein had begun reading Hopkins closely around 1940 and was to maintain an almost obsessive interest in his poetry well into the late fifties." Klein's McGill lecture notes on Hopkins also reveal an intense fascination with Hopkins' word patterning: "Everything is a Rorschach blot, stained, veined, flaked and frothed.... The Jesuit sees each thing with a nimbus around it." Public Archives of Canada, 005090-95.

inner and outer space--between mind and matter--is so intimate that the two become indistinguishable.

With "Université de Montréal" (7-8/302), Klein's observations of objects in the world--specifically a group of French Canadian law students--expand to include their symbolic significance to Quebec society.²⁵ Of course, as a practising lawyer educated in Quebec, Klein could write on this subject with confidence, as "Université de Montréal" demonstrates. With the irony of experience and the affection of familiarity, Klein observes the students in relation to a socio-cultural context, they themselves would scarcely recognize. Klein adopts a similar perspective to "The Snowshoers"--that is, from a fixed position (grounded confidently in time and space) he notes a group of moving people enter and exit his field of vision. However, whereas in "The Snowshoers" he tracks the actual physical progress of the winter athletes, in "Université de Montréal" he tracks both the movement before him and the route he imagines that the students will follow as lawyers. To some extent, the students themselves are aware of their destinies:

and through the maze already see themselves
silken and serious, a gowned guild
a portrait painter will one day make traditional
beneath the Sign of the Code Napoléan.

Although directed to imagine their future as serious members of the Queen's Counsel, the students could not fully recognize

²⁵"Université de Montreal," MS. 002701-02.

the process of moral accommodation or political compromise in which they are bound to participate. Only the poet, at a comfortably ironic distance, can appreciate the totality of the "maze" through which the students move. Here, the figure of a labyrinth (which might be more positively used in another context by a poet so attracted to closure and order as Klein) connotes entrapment and, possibly, deceit.

With the clipped descriptive shorthand and the witty bravado characteristic of his best satires ("Of Daumiers, a Portfolio"), Klein delights in noting the ways in which the students will fulfil the roles cast for them. Indeed, the poet's stance renders the objects of this gaze theatrical, exaggerated, and transparently pretentious:

This, then, their last permitted juvenal mood
kicked up by adolescence before it dons
the crown and dignity of adulthood.
Today, the grinning circle on the Place d'Armes,
mock trial, thumbdown'd verdict, and, singsong,
the joyous sentence of death? tomorrow, the
good of the state, the law, the dean
parting deliberate his beard
silvered and sabled with rampant right and wrong.

The moot court at which the students play is merely a rehearsal for the bigger stage of the courtroom. Both the playful puns ("juvenal," "dons,") and the heraldic allusions ("sabled with rampant") underscore Klein's ironic view of the students' education. Protected by the trappings of the law, and shielded by the armour of their power, the students inevitably grow into the "solid men" of the future. As the poem continues, and as Klein abandons the present tense to imagine the smugly

bourgeois futures of these emerging lawyers, his derision intensifies. The Klein who laments the passing of both the students' innocence and the freedom they enjoy is the same Klein who composed the radical poems of the 'thirties. Behind these poems is a view that men are easily corrupted by the allure of power, the promise of material security, and the glamour of political opportunity. In a despairingly short time, the law students of "Université de Montréal" will abandon their wide dreams to become part of a restraining, even life-denying system:

Soon they enter
 their twenty diaries, clogged and elaborate,
 and soon, too soon, begin to live to leave
en bon père de famille, --a sound estate.

Such regulated behaviour dedicated to the accumulation of property is a long way from the "Flaunting," "jaunty," staggering revelry of the poem's opening lines. Both the run-on lines and the loose rhyme of the first two sections of the poem yield to the halting punctuation and the tightening rhyme of the last section, reflecting the increasingly constrained lives of the student-lawyers. Moreover, Klein's repetitive use of "soon" in the last section of the poem is an audible reminder of the predictable regularity of their lives and the sad fact that their youth has been traded too quickly for professional respectability. Klein's dissatisfaction with this subject was voiced much earlier in "Of Daumiers, a Portfolio," but in "Université de Montréal" his irony is aimed at a specifically French Canadian context. Indeed,

the double vision or ambivalence that marks several of the Rocking Chair poems is poignantly registered in "Université de Montréal," where "green raw / celebrants of the Latin Quarter, duly / warp and wrinkle into avocats." Klein seems especially unhappy with the speed at which such attractive, classically trained, romantic, "beret"-headed youths turn into overweight middle-class Frenchmen. From the poet's steady point of view, such a rapid metamorphosis is measured both morally and aesthetically. But how is it that winning Quebec youth evolve into insipid Quebec bourgeois? "Université de Montréal" implies that the process of Quebec education--which serves a materialist patriarchy supported by the "Code Napoléon"--grooms the students in this direction. Entrapped in a maze of his own designing, the French Canadian is destined to exchange classical virtue--the one line of his inheritance represented by "Xenophon and Virgile"--for bourgeois imperialism--another line of his inheritance represented by "Napoléon." For Klein, the cost of the exchange to the moral fabric of Quebec society may be too high.

As a witness to that society, Klein not only recognizes but is also intrigued by the major forces exerting pressures on Quebec life. Such a complex, tradition-bound world, fraught with contradictions and struggling to preserve its certain identity in an uncertain homogeneous modernity, is bound to invite careful study from one so culturally conscious as Klein. As one of, if not the most significant defining

characteristics of Quebec life, the subject of Roman Catholicism particularly attracts Klein. Like the figure of the rocking chair, the symbols of religious observation can be imaged at once as life-affirming and life-denying. In "The Sugaring" (10/303), the poem that follows "Université de Montréal" in The Rocking Chair, this delicate dialectic is explored intently.²⁶ Klein develops an elaborate conceit in this poem which identifies the running of the sap in maple trees with the bleeding of the Christian martyrs. Not surprisingly, such an analogy strikes a strangely grotesque chord. Clearly an outsider to the "sugaring" ritual, Klein is nonetheless compelled to document its slavish observance with a fascination approaching morbidity:

Starved, scarred, lenten, amidst ash of air,
roped and rough-shirted, the maples in the unsheltered
grove
after their fasts and freezings stir.
Ah, winter for each one,
each gospel tree, each saint of the calendar,
has been a penance, a purchase: the nails of ice!
wind's scourge! the rooted cross!
Nor are they done with the still stances of love,
the fiery subzeros of sacrifice.

Recalling Eliot's modernist hymn to "Midwinter spring" at the start of "Little Gidding,"²⁷ the first stanza of "The Sugaring" imbues the process of natural renewal with Christian significance. Eliot's physical landscape of Little Gidding

²⁶"The Sugaring," MS 002658-59. Note that the poem is dedicated to Guy Sylvestre, French Canadian literary critic.

²⁷T.S. Eliot, Collected Poems 1909-1962 (London: Faber and Faber, 1974) 214. Compare Eliot's "unimaginable / Zero summer" with Klein's "fiery subzeros of sacrifice."

is the site of a metaphysical debate on the nature of time, which concludes with a confident affirmation of the power of Christian love, but Klein never abandons his late winter Quebec landscape nor the process of sugaring enacted on it. Instead, he rigorously pursues his conceit to its, logical, if ambivalent conclusion. Moreover, although Eliot begins "Little Gidding" with customary detachment, he steadily imposes himself--and his observing "I"--onto the landscape, so that by the conclusion of the poem he is harmoniously fitted to a world in which the natural elements and the signs of Christianity are fused. As to be expected of a self-conscious Jewish poet, Klein would and could not enter into a similar communion with the object of his gaze. "And look! men catch this juice of their agonized prime," he says in the second stanza, distinguishing himself from the company of sap gatherers. Indeed, as "The Sugaring" develops towards a feverish intensity, appropriate to a description of natural and religious apotheosis, Klein's distance from such an experience seems more marked. The accumulated weight of the poem's alliteration, exclamation points, and lyrical excesses deliberately underscores Klein's ironic distance from what he sees. Theatrical in its expression ("Ichor of dulcitude") and exaggerated in its declamations ("O, out of this calvary Canadian comes bliss"), "The Sugaring" suggests a cloying intemperance, which the title of the poem already sets forward. Moreover, that Klein should employ such rhapsodic

language ("savour and saving images of holy things" . . . "crystalled spotlessness!") to describe the maple syrup candy that results from the sugaring process establishes a gap between the sacred and the profane that is never convincingly closed. Klein's elaborate conceit obviously endows the sugaring ceremony in springtime Quebec with the symbolic weight of Christian resurrection. At the same time, however, it is possible to recognize that Klein's elevated utterances thinly disguise a calculated irony (born out of revulsion, perhaps) aimed at exposing the French Canadian practice of simony. This is a bold charge, but it is easier to accept if Klein's steadfast detachment and the poem's unusually excessive diction are kept in mind. The ambivalence with which the poem concludes may be, therefore, a result of this double vision of the sugaring process. The celebration of death in the poem's closing lines--which is so foreign to Klein's Judaic sensibilities--and the final reminder that this is "their ceremony," "their sacrifice," make the poem's irony quite palpable. Fascinated by and even attracted to the saccharine rites of French Canadian devotion, Klein nonetheless remains securely apart from such practice.

In the next poem in The Rocking Chair, Klein turns his gaze towards another conspicuous site in French Canada: the "Indian Reservation: Caughnawaga" (11-12/304-305).²⁸ Like

²⁸"Indian Reservation: Caughnawaga," Poetry 66 (September 1945): 318-19; MS 002306-07. Caughnawaga is located just south of the island of Montreal. In Klein's day, it was a

the French Canadian, although much more desperate, the Indian faces the possibility of cultural extinction. Dominated by a white Anglo-Saxon culture and doomed to suffer a slow, humiliating death, the Indian belongs to Klein's company of social outcasts, martyred nobles, and historical victims. Perhaps the most despairing poem in the collection, "Indian Reservation: Caughnawaga" not only laments the passing of a defeated culture but also the loss of a childhood dream. Unlike the imaginative possibilities of "Autobiographical" or "For the Sisters of the Hotel Dieu," a closing of the gap between youthful dreams and adult memories is not manageable here. The present reality of the Indian's plight on which the poet focusses is too grim to be ignored. The child's romantic images of Indians were fed on books, adventure stories and Westerns, which encouraged him to admire the stoic nobility of chiefs and warriors. But "that scene is changed," Klein writes in the third stanza of the poem--that scene in the mind, at least, for "Indian Reservation: Caughnawaga" gives no evidence that Indians were allowed such romantic freedom in the poet's own lifetime. From its opening rhetorical cry (which might deliberately echo Rossetti's translation of Villon's Ballade des Dames du Temps Jadis)²⁹ to its haunting, mournful conclusion, "Indian Reservation: popular tourist site.

²⁹The Poetical Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. William M. Rossetti (London: Ellis and Elvey, 1891) 176.

"Caughnawaga" regrets the impassable difference between then and now. The nobility of the nation's native peoples has been purchased, Klein implies, at a dear rate. The shanty dwellers "dance, but for a bribe." Disharmony and disarray characterize their tenanted space: head-dresses are "bedraggled," papooses are "ragged," bones are "bleached" of colour, their world is a "crypt." Typically, though, Klein's formal arrangement of that space shapes such disarray into neatly rhymed septains (ababcde), which provide an ordering, consoling vehicle for the poet's sadness, as well as a check against the moral disintegration of the Indian. In the poet's childhood imagination, at least, the Indian once lived with a legendary greatness informed by the language of the Western; but, as Klein admits, now even the "papooses . . . bite the dust."

The Indian lives in a more welcoming environment in the next poem in The Rocking Chair, "Krieghoff: Calligrammes" (13/305).³⁰ That environment is also imaginary, however, since it exists only on the canvases of the painter Cornelius Krieghoff. Nonetheless, the cheery playfulness and the lyrical ingenuity of this poem serve to offset the lugubriousness of "Indian Reservation." In "Krieghoff," Klein continues his exploration of the dialectic of inner and outer space, but this time through a form of art criticism. A direct

³⁰See J. Russell Harper, Krieghoff (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

confrontation not with the landscape but with a representation of that landscape, Klein's poem is primarily engaged with the process of symbolism. As the title makes clear, the French poet Apollinaire's Calligrammes (1918) stand behind "Krieghoff."³¹ Klein's poem is not so much a "calligram" as it is about the caligrams he literally reads into Krieghoff's paintings and about the differences between visual and verbal representations of reality. Unlike Apollinaire (whose Calligrammes often violate the conventions of linear continuity in order to wed the verbal and the graphic, or to foreground the visual), Klein insists on the formal difference not only between the two media but between the reader/observer's apprehension of each medium.

The physical world, or "paysage" of Krieghoff's canvases, is immediately accessible--perhaps too easily so for Klein. Characterized in part by its "simplicity," the canvas of the nineteenth-century painter comprises a set of familiar, even trite images: "French Canadian trees," "arrows," "wigwams," "gables." These, Klein summarizes in the first stanza of the poem, are the "pat petted verities" of Krieghoff's repertoire. To the poet's imaginative eye, Krieghoff's pictorial representations of rural Quebec are as easy to read as the alphabet:

³¹Oeuvres Poétiques d'Apollinaire (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1956) 163-314; Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War (1913-1916), trans. Anne Hyde Greet and with an intro. by S.I. Lockerbie (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).

And any signs will do:
 the ladder H that prongs above the chimney;
 prone J's on which the gay sleighs run;
 the Q and her papoose;
 crucifix Y; or bosomed farmwife B--
 wanting an easel and the painter's flourish
 with alphabet make free,
 make squares, make curleques
 of his simplicity.

The writer who lacks the painter's tools must transmute the visual signs into verbal ones, in effect, recreating Krieghoff's canvas on "the blank whiteness of [the] page." In this way, Klein's poem seems to be a caligram of Krieghoff's landscape. "Krieghoff: Calligrammes" is, however, an interesting variation on Apollinaire's attempts to render the physical world graphically through verbal signs. Klein's poem is less a transcription than it is a commentary on the difference between visual and verbal codes. How can language represent the two colours of Krieghoff's canvas, Klein asks and then answers at the conclusion of the poem:

These must be spun, these must be bled
 out of the iris of the intent sight:
 red rufous roseate crimson russet red
 blank candid white.

Klein privileges verbal language over concrete imagery because he values the poet's challenge of inventing a symbolic discourse to recreate reality over the painter's task of merely imitating reality. Colour cannot be embodied in language, but the poet can make the reader see red through the imagining inner eye, or as Klein eloquently puts it, "out of the iris of intent sight" (in syntactical echo of "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," a poem largely

about the value of imaginative sight). By demonstration, the poet brackets a series of words--each denoting a shade of redness--with the word "red." The reader is directed to consider each colour separately, noting with what subtlety, as opposed to Krieghoff's "simplicity," "rufous" is distinct from "roseate," or how "crimson" is both like and unlike "russet." In other words, Klein implies, the poet demands a fuller response to his caligram than Krieghoff does to his canvas. The challenge of representing whiteness is likewise met by inviting the reader to consider "blank" and "candid," words which surely denote more than colour, or colourlessness. In fact, "blank" puns on the French blanc, and "candid" suggests a moral quality that Krieghoff's white snow fails to suggest. The poem is, therefore, far more open as a form than Krieghoff's framed winter scene. When the reader is asked to participate in the symbol-making process, to share the "intent sight" of the poet, the aesthetic rewards are bound to be more satisfying. Thus the world is recreated dynamically and imaginatively (as post-Symbolist poets like Apollinaire hoped), not merely copied, or, as suggested by Krieghoff's example, trivialized by simple signs. "Krieghoff: Calligrammes" puts forth a critical view that recalls Klein's dismissive account of "Docteur [W.H.] Drummond," whose habitant poems captured the popular but not necessarily the creative imagination. In Klein's aesthetic hierarchy, good poetry achieves a level of symbolic interaction between

subject and object, and poet and reader, that Krieghoff's paintings, and Drummond's poems, scarcely acknowledge. The result is that French Canadian life is probably more authentically imaged, or at least more deeply sensed and understood, in Klein's Rocking Chair poems than in Krieghoff or Drummond's works. Of course, Klein's view of both Krieghoff and Drummond is qualified by an intense modernism. Keenly aware of his own watching, the poet acknowledges at once his mediating influence on what he sees and the marvellous ability of verbal language to express that vision. Engaged in the creation of that world with the poet, the reader is obviously rewarded for the challenge of participation.

In "Bread" (14/306), the next poem in The Rocking Chair, Klein demonstrates the symbolic potential of poetry by imposing his vision on the ordinary.³² Like "Grain Elevator," "Bread" is a tribute not only to the symbolic properties of the familiar but also to the power of metaphor itself. Indeed, the poem recovers the freshness in (the metaphor of) the staff of life. Like the rocking chair and the grain elevator, bread is both act and symbol. No less than "Creation's crust and crumbs," bread feeds the world and binds mankind through the universal--or Judeo-Christian--ritual of thanksgiving. Not surprisingly, Klein focusses on the ritual utterance of "white fiat, at feast-times

³²"Bread," Preview 19 (March 1944): 1; Contemporary Poetry 5.1 (Spring 1945): 3 ["A psalm for the breaking of bread"]; SP 002051; MS.002240-41.

said, "which accompanies the "breaking of bread." Specifically, words move the world and revive the "shrouded pulse" of ancestors. Words provide the breaking of bread with symbolic weight, transforming an ordinary act into a creative possibility. In Klein's view, the world depends not only on the consumption of bread but also on the proper appreciation of bread for its nourished future. "Bread" is thus a way of seeing bread, a way which reminds the reader at once of the symbolic significance of bread and of the shaping ability of poetry. Perhaps nothing emphasizes the poet's ordering vision so much as the extrusively rhymed quatrains which provide its form, a form that perfectly matches the poet's praise of the "geometry" of bread. Characteristic of his habit of seeing into the order of the object world, Klein celebrates the variety of bread's shapes:

O black-bread hemisphere, oblong of rye,
Crescent and circle of the seeded bun

Also characteristic of his modern fondness for paradox, Klein concludes the poem with a plea to the breadmakers to "bind" him to their creative process, which, in the poet's view, achieves a sacredness worthy of religious reverence:

Bakers most priestly, in your robes of flour,
White Levites at your altar'd ovens, bind,
Bind me forever in your ritual, your
Worship and prayer, me, and all mankind!

Like an Old Testament priest (imaged, perhaps, in one of Klein's childhood picture books), the baker involves the individual in the unity of the world. Bread is worthy of

such tribute because it arranges and unites that world by its wholesome geometry, but it is the shaping view of the poet who weds his inner eye to the outer world that makes such praise possible.

In "Political Meeting" (15-16/306-308), the next poem in The Rocking Chair, Klein returns to the more circumscribed world of Quebec.³³ Probably the most frequently anthologized poem in the collection after "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," "Political Meeting" counters the affirmation of "Bread" with a studied scepticism aimed directly at one of Montreal's most notoriously popular mayors, Camillien Houde. A deft and insidiously clever orator, Houde had already been the subject of one of Klein's 1939 Chronicle pieces in which Houde's racist and crypto-fascist sentiments are unflatteringly represented.³⁴ Clearly an outsider to the public event he records in his poem, Klein conveys a keen awareness of the context in which Houde speaks. As in "The Sugaring," Klein

³³"Political Meeting," Canadian Forum .26 (September 1946): 136; SP 002078-79.

³⁴"Little Red Riding Houde," in Beyond Sabbation: Selected Essays and Editorials 1928-1955, ed. by M.W. Steinberg and Usher Caplan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 46-47. "Camillien Houde rides again. He rides from meeting to meeting, and stops at each long enough to reveal to all who will listen, his new discovery of an ethnological American --the true form and content of the French-Canadian soul. Weary with the heavy realities of municipal finance, Camillien has decided to take a fling at folklore; his plump diminutive form stanced upon a Y.M.C.A. platform, the mayor, a born raconteur, recently delivered himself of his latest masterpiece in nursery fiction; he spoke of the nature and essence of French-Canadian blood. And his fairy tale was Grimm." Hereafter cited as Beyond Sabbation.

is both fascinated and repelled by what he sees. Both poems, in fact, implicitly challenge the French Canadian's desire to surrender himself to a facile ideology, an ideology informed by the iconography of the Catholic Church and the symbols of Quebec nationalism:

ON the school platform, draping the folded seats,
they wait the chairman's praise and glass of water.
Upon the wall the agonized Y initials their faith.

Here all are laic; the skirted brothers have gone.
Still, their equivocal absence is felt, like a breeze
that gives curtains the sounds of surplices.

These opening stanzas instantly establish the mood of the place: expectant, reverential, solemn, and oppressive. Dominating the Church hall where the "laic" crowd sits is the central symbol of Quebec--the crucifix, a symbol of suffering and death, a symbol quite foreign to Klein's religious-cultural mythology. In figuring the crucifix as a "Y," Klein both brilliantly underscores the visual symbolic power of the crucifix and punningly suggests the "agonized why" in the crowd's minds, a sign of both their desperate confusion and their need for consolation. As in "The Sugaring," "Political Meeting" shows how intimately the Church extends into the lives of French Canadians. The "meeting" itself is as controlled and ritualized as a religious service. The presence of the departed "brothers" is almost palpable in the large hall.

Following the hushed silence of the gathered assembly is the apparently spontaneous singing of the folksy "Alouette," which, as Klein's description suggests, resonates with the aggressive sounds of a predatory hungry mob. The "chairman" then skilfully prepares the crowd for Houde's presentation while

(Outside, in the dark, the street is body-tall,
flowered with faces intent on the scarecrow thing
that shouts to thousands the echoing
of their own wishes.) The Orator has risen!

From Klein's distanced point of view, the crowd becomes an amorphous, infatuated mob as its anticipation of Houde's speech grows. Easily emerging as a Christ figure to an idol-seeking crowd, Houde claims the hearts and will of the people before he begins to speak. Avuncular without appearing patronizing, intimate without seeming contriving, Houde charms his listeners with his well-considered rhetoric. After his audience's sympathetic trust is guaranteed, Houde turns to his true political purpose: the issue of (Second World War) conscription. For Houde, it is a small step from the shared idiom of "kith and kin" to the rhetorical question "where are your sons?" Exploiting national sentiment and social fear, Houde manages to convince his listeners that, perhaps, it is not to their advantage to support the Allies --"the clever English." Not surprisingly, to Klein this political meeting is an obvious breeding ground of hatred:

The whole street wears one face,
 shadowed and grim; and in the darkness rises
 The body-odour of race.

With this forceful, unambiguous conclusion, Klein summarizes the danger inherent in such group identification. The unity of the faceless mob at the end of "Political Meeting" contrasts vividly with "all the coloured faces of mankind" that conclude "Grain Elevator." It may be recalled that both "Provinces" (which affirms the "unity / in the family feature, the not unsimilar face" of Canada) and "Grain Elevator" applaud a unity comprised of diversity. Klein's ambivalence towards his French Canadian world--as expressed in "The Rocking Chair," "The Sugaring," "Political Meeting"--largely stems from his uneasiness with that culture's national insistence on and surrender to a principle of sameness, a homogenizing life-denying impulse that threatens to evolve into fascism rather quickly. Of course, as an observer of the Second World War, author of The Hitleriad, and passionate humanist, Klein could easily recognize the incipient national racism in his own provincial surroundings. In view of this, it is tempting to consider the regimented stanza form of "Political Meeting" as a perverse, even demonic version of terza rima. This somewhat bold critical emphasis may be more agreeable if it is recognized to what degree Houde manipulates (Dante's) Catholicism in the service of racial hatred. In any case, "Political Meeting" remains one of Klein's most disturbingly aggressive assaults on the weakness of French Canadian culture.

The next poem in The Rocking Chair, "The Spinning Wheel" (17/308-309), continues Klein's investigation into the complex symbolism of French Canada with a measure of affection and irony.³⁵ This time, Klein weighs the value of an object that has ceased to serve any practical function in the lives of French Canadians, but that has lingered as a token of something irretrievably lost from the feudal past of Old France. Unlike the rocking chair or the grain elevator, the spinning wheel is no more "act"--just symbol. In the modern world, the wheel has been replaced by the dehumanizing machinery--"the epileptic loom and mad factory"--of the assembly line. Klein's view of the wheel is more complex than this, however. Characteristic of the many studies of Quebec life in The Rocking Chair, this poem examines its object of attention from a comprehensive, thoroughly considered perspective. Consequently, the spinning wheel generates a set of often conflicting associations.

"You will find it only in attics or in ads," Klein begins the poem, establishing the spinning wheel's status as both a forgotten item and a prop for commercial purposes, signalling the French Canadian as

native, quaint, and to be had
at the fee feudal; but
as object it does not exist, is aftermath
of autre temps when at this circle sat
domesticity,

³⁵"The Spinning Wheel," Canadian Poetry Magazine 10.2 (December 1946): 20-21.

and girls wearing the black and high-necked blouse
at its spokes played house.

The spinning wheel may no longer occupy a prominent place in the French Canadian home as a site of order, continuity, and social relations, but, in spite of modern progress, a feudal relation still characterizes its means of production. Klein at once laments the passing of the "olden time"--when the relation between the labouring family's production and the seigneur was direct and certain--and dismisses the rigid unjust distribution of wages that made life so difficult. In the poet's imagination, the spinning wheel survives as something neither forgotten nor quaintly "picturesque," but as a perfect emblem of labour demanded by the feudal contract. The force of Klein's analysis, however, rests in his recognition that modern-day capitalism is only a more technologically disguised version of Old France feudalism:

Symbol, it still exists; the seigneur still,
though now drab and incorporate, holds domain
pre-eminent; still, to his power-foaming mill
the farmer brings his grain
his golden daughters made banality;
and still, still do they pay the seigneurie
the hourly corvée,
the stolen quotient of the unnatural yields
of their woven acres and their linen fields.

The final irony is that both the modern labourer and his once-spinning daughters work with the synthetic materials of the present, producing "unnatural yields" to feed a greedy consumer market. Far removed from both the forces of production and the natural world (which, at least, the elegant spinning wheel once made accessible), the modern French Canadian

worker shares the same unhappy alienated position as Tilly the Toiler and Winnie the Worker of Barricade Smith's speeches. Therefore, the cyclical recurrence of feudal relations is appropriately imaged in the circular figure of the wheel itself. Moreover, as in "The Rocking Chair," the formal properties of the poem embody and define the object. Each of the poem's three nine-line stanzas spins a rhyme scheme that moves from the possibility of openness (abab) to the reality of closure (ccdee). The enjambed lines that make up the stanzas convey the relentless movement of the spinning wheel but both the closing couplet and the full stop at the end of each stanza check that movement abruptly. The dynamic of the spinning wheel, in effect, repeatedly ceases to function. As in "The Rocking Chair," Klein crafts an object "moving on no space" through the delicate tension of kinetic and static effects. His use of assonance in the first stanza, for example ("attics," "ads," "a," "had," "at," "as," "aftermath," "sat," "black"), pushes the rhythmic movement of the poem forward, only to come full circle to a stop at the close of the stanza. A complex symbol of French Canadian social history, the spinning wheel "still exists" as a reminder of both what has been lost from the past and what has been carried into the future.

"Frigidaire" (18/309), the next poem in the volume, also turns concrete object into symbol with the help of the

poet's shaping imagination.³⁶ This poem particularly recalls Wallace Stevens, on whom Klein was lecturing at McGill in 1947, and whom Klein describes as "the best title writer in the language: poems in themselves." (Klein also notes that Stevens is a "Poet's poet," minimizing emotions, reaching for the purity of poetic expression.)³⁷ As in many of Stevens's poems, most notably "Anecdote of a Jar," "Frigidaire" (an inventively titled poem) privileges an object in a landscape which must conform to it.³⁸ Thus, the frigidaire, "even in July," contains a Quebec winterscape:

And when the door swings away, like a cloud blown,
the village is Laurentian, tiered and bright,
with thresholds of red, white roofs, and scattered greens;
and it has a sky, and clouds, and a northern light.

The object is, in effect, recomposed through the imagination. It is granted life and breath as Klein wittily observes in the third and fourth stanzas:

Is peopled. On its vallied streets there stands
a bevy of milk, coifed like the sisters of snow;
and beaded bosoms of butter; and red farmhands;
all poised, as if to hear from the distant meadow,

there on the heights, with its little flowers of white,
the cubes that seem to sound like pasture bells.
Fixed to that far-off tingle they don't quite
hear, they stand, frozen with eavesdropping, like icicles.

³⁶"Frigidaire," Poetry 70 (July 1947): 180-81; Poems of French Canada (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 8; Seven Poems (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 8; Huit poèmes canadiens (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 13; SP 002074; MS 002292.

³⁷McGill lecture notes, Public Archives of Canada, 006671.

³⁸Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (London: Faber and Faber, 1955) 76.

The syntactical ambiguity of "Is peopled" nicely emphasizes the poet's relation to the world he observes. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, The Rocking Chair poems often implicitly comment on the intellectual tension between an inner and outer sense of place, a tension that depends on a fortuitous meeting of the shaping mind and the objective world. As a modern poet, in his most contented moments, Klein celebrates this dialectic as an ideal relation, especially since so much value thereby accrues to the ordering human enterprise. As the many similes in "Frigidaire" suggest, the disparate elements in the natural world can be brought into harmonious interplay through the agency of poetic discourse. Indeed, the frigidaire "is peopled" as soon as the poet turns his gaze toward it, humanizing even a cold slab of white metal.

As each quatrain fills the whiteness of the page (or "paysage" to borrow Klein's earlier pun), the frigidaire assumes a solid form that transcends its own ordinariness:

And there on the heights, the storm's electric, thriving
with muffled thunder, and lightning slow and white!
It is a private sky, a weather exclusive,
a slow, sensational, and secret sight.

The splendid vision which concludes the poem may, indeed, be "private," "exclusive," and "secret"--imagined "out of the iris of intent sight"--but through language Klein shares the secret, inviting others to see how the mind transforms the ordinary world (and what is more ordinary than a frigidaire?) into something "sensational." By the conclusion of the poem,

Klein hardly seems to be talking about an icebox. Like "The Rocking Chair," "Frigidaire" achieves a clear expression of Klein's moral-aesthetic view of poetry and of the poet's dynamic relation to the world contained in it.

"Air-Map" (19/310), the short lyric that follows "Frigidaire," is precisely about the poet's self-conscious view of the landscape.³⁹ Placed as it is in The Rocking Chair, the poem assumes the allegorical weight of a Canadian theme:

How private and comfortable it once was,
our white mansard beneath the continent's gables!
But now, evicted, and still there--
a wind blew off the roof?--
we see our fears and our featherbeds plumped white
on the world's crossroads.

Klein might not only be speaking generally of the way in which air-travel has made the world smaller, less "private," but also specifically of the way in which it has made Canada vulnerable and open. Most interesting, however, is Klein's development of the dialectic of inner and outer place, of man and space. "Air-Map" acknowledges the possibility of two planes of vision at once in the modern world. Once "we" saw the world and ourselves from a stable, grounded position. "But now, evicted, and still there," Klein continues, we see ourselves both from that fixed view and from a wider, more distanced perspective. This is characteristic of psychological

³⁹"Air-Map," Poetry 70 (July 1947): 178; Poems of French Canada (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 5; Seven Poems (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 5; Huit poèmes canadiens (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 10..

alienation, of course. The world is paradoxically smaller and less secure. Even this short poem, however, affirms the geometry of such double vision. To see one's self on a point on the grid of the world is to have the ability to order that world itself.

The double vision characteristic of modern alienation is revealed in the title of the next poem in The Rocking Chair, "Dress Manufacturer: Fisherman" (20-21/310-311).⁴⁰ By trade a businessman in the garment industry, by desire a fisherman in the trout ponds far from the industrial city, the subject of this poem angles for more than fish in his leisure time. Like the Klein of "Autobiography," this dreamy fisherman seeks and finds the "fabled city" of his childhood. And like Abe Segal, Poet, the fisherman is rewarded for "his effort" only in the comforting harmony of the natural world, where the divided self can surrender gracefully to the unity of being. In fact, as Klein notes, ~~the lines~~ dividing the dress manufacturer from the surrounding world blur as he sheds the commercial-industrial clothing of his trade:

thatched and eaved with brim and circle of straw,
he'll sit for hours, himself his boat's prow
dangling the thread of his preoccupation.

Dressed now in the natural fibers of the landscape, grounded and camouflaged as a primitive hut, the fisherman's dreamy thoughts carry over into and transform the landscape itself.

⁴⁰"Dress Manufacturer: Fisherman," Contemporary Verse 22 (Fall 1947): 3.

Not surprisingly, a perfect union of inner and outer place is only possible "Far from the lint and the swatches." Recalling Hopkins' "Pied Beauty," Klein concludes the second statement of the poem by noting that in this bucolic setting the fisherman's "ardours all go out / into the stipple and smooth of natural things."⁴¹ Eventually the fisherman becomes "a correspondent of water and of fish," an agent of connectedness worthy of Wordsworthian reflection. His catch is nothing less than his "childhood summers"--that is, the fresh innocence and unsullied experience of life itself. Yet for all of its sublime resolution, "Dress Manufacturer: Fisherman" is subtly marked by traces of irony that disturb its otherwise even surface. First, Klein remains a distanced witness to the poem, not the immediate subject of it, although he is clearly a sympathetic observer. As a spectator, he underscores the difference between the observer and the observed world, thus generating a degree of tension marked by a sense of loss and separation. Second, the fisherman himself only temporarily answers his "wish / that for so many years beat from the heart / of his enterprise." A long way from childhood, the adult fisherman knows with the Klein of "Autobiographical" that "No other day is ever like that." "Dress Manufacturer: Fisherman" concludes with a measure of romantic longing for a past that an excursion away from both the city and the obtrusive "hotel" temporarily and only

⁴¹Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins, 30.

partially retrieves. The poem may not quite sob with the sweet sadness of Hebrew violins, but it does sound a decidedly nostalgic chord.

In "Pawnshop" (22-23/311-312), Klein provides a social and economic analysis of the world from which a dress manufacturer might well be eager to escape.⁴² The poem shares the same contempt for the sins of capitalism as the radical poems of the 'thirties, but it is easy to see how much more interested Klein is in the 'forties in developing a conceit, and in exploiting symbolic representation to support his analysis. "Pawnshop" does carefully construct a strong case against the evils of capitalism in the manner of Barricade Smith's speeches, but the force of the argument rests largely on the formal support of the poem's central, architectural metaphor. The building that houses pawned goods develops steadily in the poem into a symbol of the entire economic order, a house that Adam Smith built. In the first stanza, Klein confines his description to imaging the pawnshop as a gothic ruin: "Disaster haunts it. Scandals, once-renowned, / speak from its chattels." The ghosts of the "phosphor-poor" roam its bare rooms. Openly framing his argument on the dialectical theories of Marx and Engels, Klein matter-of-factly observes that

⁴²"Pawnshop," First Statement 2.12 (April-May 1945): 26-28; Accent 5.4 (Summer 1945): 195-96; MS 002513-16, 003492-94.

One should have razed it to the salted ground
antitheses ago

In the second stanza, Klein shifts his gaze from inside to outside. Now he organizes his argument around the "three gold buoys" that hang above the "wreckage" of the shop, drawing the "tattoo'd flotsam" forward to "ticket their despairs." The formal order of these ten-line stanzas, each constructed with the confident rhymes of a quatrain and a sixain (ababcdedce), lends shape to both the assorted fragments within: the dark pawnshop and the dissolute wanderers who depend on its service. In effect, the poem contains and defines an otherwise chaotic jumble of personal shards. Klein's ordered, rhyming list provides these bits and pieces with both a social context and a moral significance. In the third stanza, for example, Klein poeticizes the "boasted inventory" resting on the pawnshop's shelves:

(a) family plate--hocked for the widow's mite;
(b) birthday gifts; the cups marked champion (c);
(d) tools; (e) special, vase picked up in Crete;
en bloc: watch; ring, endowing bride;
camera; medal; crushed accordeon;--
rich votives of penultimate defeat,
weighed, measured, counted, eyed
by the estimating clerk, himself in pawn.

These material remnants sadly remind the poet of their human sources. In his imagination, the pawnshop inventory suggests failed dreams, lost loves, shattered hopes, and wasted lives. The inestimable value the items once possessed for their owners is irrelevant in view of the devalued clutter which they have become as depersonalized objects. Again, it

is the poet's formal poetic analysis which makes sense of so much waste and degeneration.

As "The Pawnshop" takes shape, Klein's metaphor expands to take in the neighbourhood of history, setting the reality of "bankrupt bricabrac" against Adam Smith's dream to build a "mansion" of wealth. Like the mythic "pleasure-dome" of Coleridge's Xanadu, Smith's house exists only in the imagination,⁴³ and only for a privileged few. In the concluding stanza, the pawnshop assumes its fullest symbolic weight as an architectural ruin, a fitting emblem of a collapsing social structure:

This is our era's state-fair parthenon,
 the pyramid of a pharaonic time,
 our little cathedral, our platonic cave,
 our childhood's house that Jack built. Synonym
 of all building, our house, it owns us, even
 when free from it, our dialectic grave.
 Shall one not curse it, therefore, as the cause,
 type, and exemplar of our social guilt?
 Our own gomorrah house,
 the sodom that merely to look at makes one salt?

In clear echo of the Old Testament (Genesis 19.26) and in sight of Marx, Klein suggests that the evil house of capitalism is doomed to catastrophe, a catastrophe as violent and final as the collapse of Sodom and Gomorrah. Possessed by a system of our own--or Adam Smith's--construction, a system based on the principles of pawnbroking, we are doomed to suffer a fate as unpleasant as Lot's wife. In the context

⁴³Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. and with notes by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912) 1: 295-98.

of The Rocking Chair, "Pawnshop" specifically evokes the string of run-down Montreal waterfront shops (not far from the "Grain Elevator" on Montreal's harbour front), but the poem clearly transcends the limitations of place. Indeed, "Pawnshop" recalls the general social criticism of the 'thirties radical series. As passionate about his social politics as Barricade Smith, the Klein of the 'forties is even more urgent about the dire consequences of capitalism. The pawnshop's "three golden buoys" become "three burnished bombs / set for a time, which ticks for almost all." "Pawnshop" moves the immediate circumstances of French Canadian life--held up for critical scrutiny in "Indian Reservation: Caughnawaga," "Spinning Wheel," "Université de Montreal," "Political Meeting"--into a more comprehensively analytic context. It is not surprising to recognize how much of The Rocking Chair shares with the radical poems of the 'thirties, but it is remarkable that this political emphasis has been largely neglected by critics who generally applaud The Rocking Chair poems as Klein's finest achievement. The arrangement of the poems in the volume builds a steady case against capitalism with a clever subtlety that eloquently suggests how much French Canadians share with all victims of an oppressive economic system.

"The Green Old Age" (24/313), which follows "Pawnshop," abruptly replaces the public topicality of social criticism with a moving personal hymn to the mixed blessing of old

age.⁴⁴ It is tempting to mark it odd that Klein would have written with such pointed interest about aging when he was still a young man. The poem hints at a weariness of spirit partially sensed in such poems as "Autobiographical" (composed even earlier) and "Pawnshop," yet absent from such affirmative examples as "Grain Elevator" and "Bread." Probably in this poem, Klein, who always seems uncannily mature and self-confident (from the lyrics of the 'twenties through the Chronicle editorials of the 'thirties), prepares for what he sees as the inevitability of corporeal decay by consoling himself with a vision of release. The poem moves from the "Pity" of the first stanza to the benediction of the last one. As the title indicates, old age is cursed with the paradox of the body's painful return to a fetal position--to a circle which draws the "spinal cord" to meet the "navel of the grave." In the final stanza, Klein thanks the doctors who "forestall" such "mooned monstrosities" with the delay tactics of modern medicine, allowing the aging to participate in the "proleptic miracle," an early release from the torment of their inevitable condition. A sad and disturbing poem, "The Green Old Age" is partially relieved by the ingenuity of its circular metaphor and by the evenness of its five-line stanzas.

⁴⁴"The Green Old Age," Preview 22 (December 1944): 10-11; Accent 5.4 (Summer 1945): 197; MS 002299-2300.

The short lyric "The Break-up" (25/313-314), which follows "The Green Old Age" in the collection, is, in some ways, as unusual and disturbing a poem.⁴⁵ Particularly modern in both its erratic rhyme scheme and its astonishing imagery, "The Break-up" recalls Eliot's metaphoric inversion at the outset of The Waste Land. For Montreal, April may well be the cruellest month, especially when the St. Lawrence River yields "last year's blue and bloated suicides." The title of the poem refers to both the cracking of the river's ice and the psycho-social disorder which leads to these suicides. At first, Klein invites his reader into the romantic inner world of the Montreal dockyards, into the "stalls" of the taverns where impatient "stevedores" and "sailors" place wagers on the time of the Spring break-up. In the second stanza, Klein extends his romantic description to the mighty St. Lawrence itself, lying "rigid and white and wise" all winter. In the third and final stanza, Klein reinforces the reader's expectation of fulfilment and liberation with the syntactical force of his parallel phrases, thus making the shock of the conclusion all-the more effective:

But it will come! Some dead of night with boom
to wake the wagering city, it will break,
will crack, will melt its muscle-bound tides
and raise from their iced tomb
the pyramided fish, the unclockered ships,
and last year's blue and bloated suicides.

⁴⁵"The Break-up," Poetry 70 (July 1947): 179; Poems of French Canada (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 6; Seven Poems (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 6; Huit poèmes canadiens (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 11.

This startling conclusion is unsettling not only because it subverts the romantic anticipation of the preceding lines but also because it grimly recalls the despair of Klein's urban satires, such as "Indian Reservation: Caughnawaga" and "Pawnshop." As The Rocking Chair poems advance, a poem like "Break-up" carries with it the weight of Klein's mounting argument against capitalism and its diseased symptoms--urban blight and moral degeneration. The white "granite" sheet that covers the St. Lawrence in winter is thus merely an icy veneer, a natural analogy for the social cover-up, temporarily disguising the ills that lie beneath. Appropriate to the theme of the break-up of the social order, Klein arranges the poem into three sixains of inconsistent rhyme and unpredictable meter. Contained within the stanzas is, in effect, a break up of order that perfectly matches Klein's subject. In contrast to the restorative waters of the dress manufacturer-fisherman's lake, the "fathom-frozen flat" ice of the St. Lawrence harbours the dead who sought refuge from the city there.

Klein offsets the cold lifelessness of "Break-up" with the tropical lushness of "Commercial Bank" (26/314), the next poem in The Rocking Chair.⁴⁶ His aim, however, is no less critical or directed. "Commercial Bank," as the title might suggest to an audience familiar with Klein's anti-capitalist leanings, indicts the central symbol of the

⁴⁶"Commercial Bank," Preview 19 (March 1944): 1; MS 002256.

economic order itself. The force of the poem rests in its vivid conceit, which unexpectedly and convincingly transforms the cool severity of the modern bank into a thick jungle thriving on predatory instincts. Klein's extrusively-rhymed quatrains frame a well-developed argument in such strikingly visual terms that the bank evokes the jungle canvases of Henri Rousseau, although Klein's tableau is far more sinister and far less naive than Rousseau's luxuriously green dream worlds.⁴⁷ More like the Tennyson of "In Memoriam" and the Pratt of "The Prize Cat," "Commercial Bank" paints a savage picture of economic relations:⁴⁸

How quiet is your shade with broad green leaves!
 Yet it is jungle-quiet which deceives:
 toothless, with drawn nails, the beasts paw your ground-
 O, the fierce deaths expiring with no sound!

The solid placidity of the bank (like the frozen St. Lawrence) encourages an illusion of social order, an order betrayed, however, by the treacherous instincts on which it is built. As with "Pawnshop," "Commercial Bank" develops a building into a social metaphor. As to be expected, the urban landscape allows Klein to follow intently his interest in the architectural arrangement of space. In both "Pawnshop" and "Commercial Bank," he exploits his own passion for geometry by underscoring

⁴⁷See Yann Le Pichon The World of Henri Rousseau trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Viking, 1982). Note especially "The Waterfall," "Exotic Landscape," "The Dream."

⁴⁸The Poems of Tennyson, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Longman, 1969) 912; Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958) 72.

the hideous disarray behind the facade of order. As always, the reasoning imagination manages to confer an order where none exists.

The title of the next poem in the collection, "Quebec Liquor Commission Store" (27-28/315) also points squarely to one of society's prominent edifices.⁴⁹ This time, Klein transforms the Quebec Liquor Commission Store into the site of an Arabian bazaar, where the senses are wholly liberated by the purple fruit of the vine. Almost comic is the implied analogy between the "rag poor" client, and the uniformed commission official who procures the requested bottle (in the days before self serve), and the "Lord" and the "Vizier" of Klein's ironic dramatic poem. As with "Commercial Bank," the Liquor store conceals its insidious practice--to encourage the oblivion of the poor--behind a facade of official control.

As if to relieve the intensifying social criticism of these poems (which might have been called radical if they had been published in the 'thirties), Klein follows with a series of poems that celebrate the abstract beauty of urban space. Like Abe Segal atop Mount Royal, away from the maddening crowds of commerce and trade, Klein relaxes his hard view of the frantic modern city. Comfortably distanced from the human drama below, and securely at home in the natural solace of the mountain, the poet can reaffirm his

⁴⁹"Quebec Liquor Commission Store," Canadian Poetry Magazine 10.2 (December 1946): 19-20 ["Quebec Liquor Commission"].

sense of place in the modern world. "Montreal" (29-31/316-317), the first of these urban tributes, is nothing less than a gorgeous hymn to Klein's bilingual city—pawnshops, banks, liquor stores, and all.⁵⁰ As Waddington rightly points out, "Montreal" is a "remarkable tour de force" of poetic expression, a poem that ingeniously invents a rich unified language out of the city's French and English tongues.⁵¹ "Montreal" is, in fact, made up of a creative macaronic that Abe Segal himself comes to realize as possible in the closing lines of his "Diary." As a witty admixture of French and English, "Montreal" attempts to capture the full sense of place that makes the city so vital and important to Klein:

O city metropole, isle riverain!
 Your ancient pavages and sainted routs
 Traverse my spirit's conjured avenues!
 Splendour erablic of your promenades
 Foliantes there, and there your masonry
 Of pendent balcon and escalier'd march,
 Unique midst English habitat,
 Is vivid Normandy!

This opening stanza establishes the strategy of "Montreal": to weave the city's texture with the rich threads of two languages. Through puns, Latinates, shared idioms, French Canadian slang—all held in place by the measured stresses of eight-line stanzas—Klein almost casually evokes the harmonious interplay of cultures. Each successive stanza

⁵⁰"Montreal," *Preview* 21 (September 1944): 3-5; SP 002071-73; MS 002493-41.

⁵¹Waddington, *A.M. Klein*, 128. Waddington quotes Klein's notes to the poem from *Preview* 21 (September 1944) explaining the bilingual method of "Montreal."

unfolds a new theme of the city's sensual appeal, an appeal first to the eyes (second and third stanzas), to the ears (fourth and fifth stanzas), and finally to the whole body.

Perhaps more than other poem in The Rocking Chair thus far, "Montreal" is informed by the poet's self-conscious awareness of his own mediating, shaping vision of what he sees before him. Indeed, it might be said that the subject of "Montreal" is Klein himself, who firmly acknowledges in each stanza that he alone is the creative animator of the cityscape. Thus in the first stanza, quoted above, he introduces Montreal as a landscape projected by the observant imagination, a landscape of his "spirit's conjured avenues." In the second stanza, the city is imaged directly as a reflection of the poet's imaginative gaze:

You populate the pupils of my eyes:
 Thus, does the Indian, pluméd, furtivate
 Still through your painted autumns, Ville-Marie!
 Though palisades have passed, though calumet
 With tabac of your peace enfumes the air,
 Still do I spy the phantom, aquiline,
 Genuflect, moccasin'd, behind
 His statue in the square!

Klein is witness not only to the city's thriving present but also to the city's vital past. The creative mind endows its object of attention with the full significance of its being, in effect, enriching and humanizing its otherwise neutral terrain. "Thus, costumed images before me pass," Klein writes in the third stanza, provocatively suggesting the complicated relations between inner and outer place. At once an active agent of sight and a passive receiver of the

urban theatre enacted before him, Klein deliberately blurs the lines between subject and object. As fixed and grounded as he is in "The Snowshoers" or "The Sugaring," he here affirms his stable and stabilizing vision, which itself is the site of past and present, English, French, Indian, and Scot. The city is an autonomous collage of working fragments (like the rocking chair, it "has a personality of its own") but everything depends on the creative act which orders the collage into being. So it is that in the fourth stanza Klein extends his sensual description to the ear with a similar complexity:

Grand port of navigations, multiple
 The lexicons uncargo'd at your quays,
 Sonnant though strange to me; but chiefest, I,
 Auditor of your music, cherish the
 Joined double-medodied vocabulaire
 Where English vocable and roll Ecossic,
 Mollified by the parle of French
 Bilinguefact your air!

Although merely an "Auditor," it is the "cherish[ing]" "I" who harmonizes the "music" resonating at the city's quays. To be sure, the fifth stanza demonstrates the poet's cacophonous arrangement of alliteration and consonance:

Such your suaver voice, hushed Hochelaga!
 But for me also sound your potencies,
 Fortissimos of sirens fluvial,
 Bruit of manufactory, and thunder
 From foundry issuant, all puissant tone
 Implenshing your hebdomad; and then
 Sanct silence, and your argent befries
 Clamant in orison!

With the sound of bells and prayers in his ears, Klein celebrates the totality of his experience in the city. "You

are a part of me, O all your quarters--" he begins the seventh stanza (recalling Whitman's effusive song to himself).⁵² The observing subject is "part" of Montreal's comprehensive whole, yet the whole is realized only through that organizing subject:

You are locale of infancy, milieu
Vital of institutes that formed my fate.

Klein owes his development to the rich source of the city's life, which the poet, in turn, recreates through the framing stanzas of his art.

As the bilingual puns of the eighth and final stanza make clear, the poet unrolls a parchment of poetry, a material token "Inked with the script" of his ordering memory:

Mental, you rest forever edified
With tower and dome; and in these beating valves,
Here in these beating valves, you will
For all my mortal time reside!

Montreal exists so long as the poet is alive to "conjure" the city, but as Klein knows, his final achievement is that he has made of the city something more than an idea. He has made of the city "eterne souvenir" in language. Paradoxically, the city exists "forever edified" for the "mortal time" of the poet. The resolution of this riddle is obviously found in the surviving evidence of the poem itself--"Montreal." As a perceiving subject, then, Klein breathes life into the object world, a world that is thereby transformed and, in

⁵²Leaves of Grass and Selected Prose, ed. and with an intro. by Sculley Bradley (San Francisco: Rinehart, 1949) 23-77.

turn, transforms the poet. As The Rock Chair repeatedly demonstrates, this dialectic of inner and outer, place, subject and object world, is excitingly complex and wondrously dynamic. So exquisitely fitted to each other are the vital city and the animating poet that Klein identifies his entire body (and all of its senses) as the map of Montreal itself. Anticipating the climactic conclusion to "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," Klein implies that until Montreal "has been praised," it "has not been." And in praising the city, Klein defines "his own body's chart" (55/335). What characterizes the achievement of "Montreal" is not only the innovative "interchangeability of English and French," as Waddington describes it, but also the harmonious reciprocity of subject and object.⁵³ Out of Klein's iris of intent sight ("Mental"), an enriched mutuality is given exciting and brilliant expression.

Appropriately enough, the three poems that follow "Montreal" situate the city's mountain (which lies at the geographic heart of the city and gives it its name) at the locus of the poetic imagination. The height of Montreal affords comprehensive vision while its pastoral tranquility invites aesthetic contemplation. As Klein implies in "Montreal," the mountain is his muse, a source of poetic nourishment ("my spirit's mother") and creative vibrancy ("scintillant"), feeding his curious imagination. The first of these poems,

⁵³Waddington, A.M. Klein, 128.

"Winter Night: Mount Royal" (32/318) is probably one of Klein's most formally experimental pieces in The Rocking Chair.⁵⁴ Through its careful patterning of words on the white space of the page ("paysage"), "Winter Night: Mount Royal" captures the paradox of motion in stillness and of music in silence sensed by the poet as he stands listening to a gentle snowfall. As in so many of The Rocking Chair poems ("The Snowshoers," "The Sugaring," "Université de Montreal"), Klein's perspective is a stable one, grounded firmly in the landscape, and observant of the moving world which enters and exits the spectator's field of vision. Such self-consciousness is a measure of the degree to which Klein frames what he witnesses, a view contained, nonetheless, only by the limits of the imagination. As in "Montreal," the subject of the poem is not so much the object world as it is Klein himself, who immediately situates himself in the landscape as the very site of the winter night:

. . . over me
 there falls a snow of sound
 tinkle of frost minims of mercury
 campanile cold

Both the visual and the aural planes of sensation are conflated to produce an immediate impression of the winter night. Through this synaesthetic process, Klein conveys the intensely realized stillness of his experience. Assisted by the three dots of the first line after "flake," by the extended spacing

⁵⁴This is just to say, however, that Klein rarely departs from traditional spacing and margination.

between "frost" and "minims," by the indenting of "campanile," and by the conspicuous absence of punctuation after "cold," Klein effectively draws attention to the absence of sound. Klein's unusual spacing (unusual for such a traditional versifier) not only visibly defines the white space of the page but it also serves to stress the discreteness of the night sounds which the auditor hears so acutely. Sound thus becomes as important to and dependent on soundlessness for its shape and meaning. To hear the "tinkle of frost" is to be intently tuned to the music of the night and the silence around that music.

The strategy of the poem is to represent, first, the gradual crescendo of noises approaching the listener and, second, the gradual diminuendo as the source of the sounds--a horse-driven sleigh--passes beyond him into the winter night. At the almost still centre of the poem, however, the poet not only hears everything but he also sees everything as clearly as possible in the dark night:

Now nearer, and jollier, and fourtimed, canters
 the bend of the road this jingle of this silver!
 Big-eyed, equestrian, trotting
 the nickle blossoms,
 the bells and hells of his yolk and harness!

Heraldic, guled, the sleigh in a flurry of sound--
 hooves upon snow the falsettos of water
 and bells cavalier--
 passes before me, is festive, and passes beyond
 the curve of the road, the heels of its runners
 scrolling it into the mist.

Notable is how the sleigh runners, like the snowshoes of the colourful winter athletes in an earlier poem, write patterns

in the winterscape, "scrolling" on the canvas of the snow. Probably most remarkable is the way in which Klein achieves an elegant balance between the fixed poet-listener and the constantly moving sleigh. Moreover, he manages to convey the unhurried, but steady pace of the moving object through an unusual combination of poetic devices. The run-on lines stopped at well-timed moments by dashes and commas help to achieve the cantering, "trotting" movement of the sleigh as it reaches its closest point of contact to the listener. The silent break between the two central stanzas quoted above paradoxically captures the momentary crescendo of "bells and hellos of . . . yoke and harness!" For a brief, frozen moment--the time it takes between sounds--the listener-observer and the sleigh inhabit an enclosed intimate space. But that moment is only frozen temporarily, for the sleigh, like the poem, keeps moving forward in time and space. As the sounds of the sleigh diminish in the invisible space beyond the poet's fields of vision and hearing, he returns fully to an awareness of his own fixed and utterly contented self. The sensual experience that he has just shaped, and been shaped by, now frees him to imagine that he hears the music of other natural spheres:

They are now fainter, have no direction, lost.
 One would say the hidden stars were bells
 dangling between the shafts of the Zodiac.
 One would say
 the snowflakes falling clinked together their sparkles
 to make these soft, these satin-muffled
 tintinnabulations.

Significantly, Klein abandons the firm subjectivity of first person certainty to the more general construction of third person speculative. "One would say," he repeats cautiously, conveying at once the incantatory power of the winter night music and his hesitation to surrender himself completely to its seductive charm. As tempting as it might be to abandon himself to the sublime peace of a winter night on Mount Royal, Klein resolutely maintains his ground.

"Lookout: Mount Royal" (33-34/319) develops Klein's poetic study of inner and outer place in Montreal even further.⁵⁵ Moreover, the poem combines the dialectical play of age and youth found in "Autobiographical" with the dialectical study of motion and motionlessness found in so many of The Rocking Chair poems. The photographic strategy of "Lookout: Mount Royal," like that of "The Rocking Chair," is to "click the eye on motion forever stopped." Klein, now an older man, returns to the mountain top of his childhood. As he ascends to the "Lookout" in the first stanza, he knows that this trek to the top is made meaningful in the light of all the previous treks to the same location. Memory enriches the journey with layers of past experiences, allowing him not merely to recall his boyhood but to relive it too:

Remembering boyhood, it is always here
 the boy in blouse and kneepants on the road
 trailing his stick over the hopscotched sun;
 or here, upon the suddenly moving hill;
 or at the turned tap its cold white mandarin mustaches;

⁵⁵"Lookout: Mount Royal," MS 002402-04.

or at the lookout, finally,
breathing easy, standing still. . . .

In these remarkable opening lines, Klein skilfully and unobtrusively conflates the past and the present, while still guarding the certainty of the older self. The act of "remembering" is casual, involuntary, a consequence of just being on the mountain. Boyhood is "always" there to return to. To renew himself, Klein need only journey on the same well-marked path to the lookout, which is obviously not only a geographical but a psychological site as well. As the present participles which propel the journey forward (and upwards) suggest, all past journeys are relived in this one: "remembering," "trailing," "moving," "breathing," "standing." This is hardly an event recalled in tranquility. This is an active process experienced in the present. As the Klein at the conclusion of "Autobiographical" declares, it is a "fabled city" of "nonage" days which he seeks and finds at the "Lookout: Mount Royal," a city found not by dreaming it but by returning to it, and being renewed by it. Indeed, here the tension between the boyhood self and the older remembering man is not a source of dismay but, rather, one of creative delight.

As he comes full stop at the lookout, "standing still" before the city itself, he is keenly aware of the fixed self of the present, who, like the photographer snapping tourist's faces, frames the movement around him in a momentarily caught tableau. Not only does his poem shape and freeze the

images of the present moment but it also captures the impressions of the past embedded in the present. His boyhood sensations are now imbued with a richness that only memory can determine. Since the point of view on the mountain remains constant, Klein can easily situate himself to the "sought point," his home. The familiar spot marks a point on a grid of both interior and exterior space. Characteristic of the conventions of landscape views--in painting and literature--Klein's lookout perspective is divided into three planes of vision: fore/middle/background.⁵⁶ First, he notes the descending mountain roads that lie immediately beneath him and on which he spots "horsemen on their horses like the tops of f's," once again drawing (like the poet of "Krieghoff: Calligrammes") an alphabet of nature. His range then widens to embrace the outspreading map of the city which is manifested in a comforting geometry:

or from the parapet make out
 beneath the green marine
 the discovered road, the hospital's romantic
 gables and roofs, and all the civic Euclid
 running through sunken parallels and lolling
 in diamond and square, then proud pedantical
 with spire and dome
 making its way to the sought point, his home.

home recognized: there: to be returned to--

In effect, every trip to the lookout is a recursive process as Klein sees again his relation to his past. Interestingly,

⁵⁶See D.M.R. Bentley, "Thomas Cary's Abram's Plains (1789) and its 'Preface,'" Canadian Poetry 6 (Fall/Winter 1979): 23. Bentley writes of the "picturesque convention" of dividing a "scene into three distances."

the two selves--boyhood and adult--do not so much merge as meet. The younger self is frozen in the imagination, but the older self continues to see the world anew. Although "standing," his gaze "circles round that water-tower'd coast."

As the poem concludes, Klein shifts suddenly to the future tense, to stress the fact that the older self keeps, and will keep, dreamily imagining, as the boy once did:

. . . then,
 --and to be lost--
 to clouds like white slow friendly animals
 which all the afternoon across his eyes
 will move their paced spaced footfalls.

Just as only a boy would imagine clouds as animals, so only a living man can imagine a future into which he will soon be moving. In other words, Klein achieves a remarkable harmony between the past and present selves who meet at the "Lookout: Mount Royal." The poem finds a parallel in the affirmative conclusion of "Autobiographical," where, as noted earlier, the older man claims to hear the Hebrew violins of his childhood. Yet the nostalgic melancholy that almost overwhelms "Autobiographical" and that threatens to overtake "Lookout: Mount Royal" is offset by the uplifting vision that concludes the latter, a vision that puts one of Klein's critical theories of poetry to practice. In the same year that The Rocking Chair was published (1948), Klein published a series of articles in The Chronicle on the aesthetics of poetry in which he offered the view of the poem as "circular force." Particularly favoured by him is the "centrifugal" poem,

which launches the reader "forth with accumulated force, from a tangent into space."⁵⁷ Indeed, the casual direction of "Lookout: Mount Royal" leads the reader to "look out" and upwards towards imaginative possibilities far above the physical map of the city itself. Moreover, the "paced space footfalls" of the animal clouds brilliantly and concisely attest not only to what the boy-man sees but also to how he sees. The white clouds assume a form dependent on and defined by the plane of sky--or spaces--that surround them. An analogy between this process of sight and the process of shaping (and reading) words against the white space of the page is unavoidable, especially since so much of The Rocking Chair seems to be about this process. This way of seeing involves a comprehension of quality--of absence (space) and presence (clouds, words)--that finds analogues in the motion and motionlessness dialectic of "The Rocking Chair" poem, in the diversity and unity dialectic of "The Provinces," and in the ground and aerial dialectic of "Air-Map," just to name three examples. In "Lookout: Mount Royal," this attention to the way in which perspective is shaped extends to the dialectic of presence--the "standing" "remembering" man--and absence--the boy who no longer exists. It is also understood to include implicitly the dialectic of inner place--the mountain of personal memory--and outer place--the mountain

⁵⁷"The Poem as Circular Force" ["Marginalia"], Canadian Jewish Chronicle 11 June 1948: 8-9; MS 005228-30.

which one climbs, drinks water on, and so on. Again, Klein's "Autobiographical," which is largely about this set of dialectical relations, is a useful reference for this poem about looking out at the world and at one's past.

"The Mountain" (35-36/320-321) offers another variation on the themes of "Winter Night: Mount Royal" and "Lookout: Mount Royal." This time, however, Klein considers the mountain while actually at a distance from it. This is no matter since the mountain is a site in the mind, as well as a place in the heart of Montreal. As the poem implies, the mediating imagination can reshape the mountain according to a private mythology:

Who knows it only by the famous cross which bleeds
into the fifty miles of night its light
knows a night-scene;
and who upon a postcard knows its shape--
the buffalo straggled of the laurentian herd,--
holds in his hand a postcard.

Obviously more than a trite and fixed image of an historical mound of grass, the mountain is for Klein nothing less than a living, regenerative place--both an "act and symbol" of his creative life:

In layers of mountains the history of mankind,
and in Mount Royal
which daily in a streetcar I surround
my youth, my childhood--
the pissabed dandelion, the coolie acorn,
green prickly husk of chestnut beneath mat of grass--
O all the amber afternoons
are still to be found.

As in "Autobiographical" and the two preceding mountain poems, Klein manages to close the gap between now and then,

subject and object, inner and outer place. Layers of memory colour the boyhood afternoons "amber," yet those afternoons "are still to be found," Klein insists. Retrieving the innocent freshness of those days seems to be a fairly effortless process. The imagination recalls the favoured haunts of the mountain in a catalogue of flower-filled "Aprils" that uncannily echoes the Confederation poets' songs of Nature.⁵⁸ But the sensual delights of the past are reanimated, or "recognized" to use Klein's own expression, by the confident first person subject of the poem, who gathers and shapes and colours all those afternoons into an ordered, resonant narrative of experience. Always mindful of asserting his own stable, framing consciousness on what he sees--whether before him in the landscape or behind him in the past of his mind's eye--Klein refuses to surrender the ground of the present. He concludes "The Mountain" with the resolve to return to the bench where he first declared his love for another:⁵⁹

One of these days I shall go up to the second terrace
to see if it is still there--
the uncomfortable sentimental bench
where,--as we listened to the brass of the band concerts
made soft and to our mood by dark and distance--
I told the girl I loved
I loved her.

⁵⁸Compare with Lampman's "April," Carman's "Windflower," Roberts' "The Mowing" and "The Pea-Fields."

⁵⁹In David Kaufman's film A.M. Klein: The Poet as Landscape (1979), David Lewis attests to the autobiographical details of this poem.

Both the future possibility of a return to the bench and the past declaration of love that transpired on it are deliberately and self-consciously conjoined in the present imaginative moment through the obtrusive, repeating, first person subject. Klein's poignantly romantic conclusion to "The Mountain" is thus cleverly offset by his need to acknowledge the source of love within the alert, remembering mind. Whatever the mountain may be to others, it remains above all a source of love to the poet, who encircles it ("I surround / my youth") with his animating imagination.

Although not strictly speaking a "mountain" poem, "The Lone Bather" (37-38/321-322) that follows the three "Mount Royal" poems in The Rocking Chair studies similar themes and in the same relaxed form--that is, a modern lyricism composed of loose rhymes, alliteration, enjambment, syntactical parallelism, unpredictable meter--as the preceding poems.⁶⁰ In "The Lone Bather," Klein self-consciously watches someone who is unaware of another presence. Since the bather lacks self-consciousness, or, at least, thinks himself "unseen," he is "free." The observer luxuriates in this voyeuristic opportunity because it, in turn, frees him to witness someone participating in natural play in a relatively unmediated way. Characteristic of his shaping perspective, Klein images the bather's stance geometrically. First "poised for parabolas," the diver then "lets go his manshape to become a

⁶⁰"Lone Bather," Here and Now 1.3 (January 1949): 76.

bird." The water above him, to the well-placed observer, shapes "crazy hexagons." The diver then metamorphosizes from bird to "dolphin" to "plant with lilies bursting from his heels" as he surfaces. Suddenly he turns into "merman," his body half submerged in the water. As the lone bather continues to play in the "deserted pool," Klein's catalogue of organic metaphors expands to comprise a wide set of fanciful possibilities. Fixed, as customary, at his invisible spying post, the poet locates himself at a comfortable distance from the dynamic theatre enacted unknowingly for his gaze. Such poetic metamorphoses occur only because the poet fashions them, of course, delighting in the freedom of creative associations as much as the bather seems to enjoy his play in the water. Away from the city, "far from the world," and completely naturalized by his adventure in this green watery setting, the bather is seen as a projection of the observer's own contentment with his sense of place. As the bather returns by slow paces to the world of other men, he sheds his transformed selves until he stands firmly in the world of self-consciousness once again, "personable plain." But, for a moment, both the observer who spies and the bather who is spied upon experience the complete interfusion of Nature and the self, blurring the contours of subject and object- in a vision that resonates with natural beauty. Indeed, for Klein, this is a rare and desirable achievement.

The title of the next poem in this series of Montreal mountain poems, "Pastoral of the City Streets" (39-40/322-323) points directly to the naturalization of urban space itself.⁶¹ The two parts of the poem arrange the summer day into a narrative of a heat-infused afternoon and an early evening. At the peak of the day, the poet's vision is lit by the indiscriminating glare of the sun, which bathes everything with its relentlessly beating rays:

BETWEEN distorted forests, clapped into geometry,
 in meadows of macadam,
 heat-fluff-a-host-of-dandelions dances on the air.
 Everywhere glares the sun's glare,
 the asphalt shows hooves.

Of course, it is a poetic vision that illuminates the summer day in this way, conjoining the organic ("meadows") and the inorganic ("macadam") in the urban order violently ("clapped") shaped into existence. It is also the poet's wit to conceal Wordsworth's "host of daffodils" in the mid-summer "dandelions" of the city.⁶² As in Wordsworth's poem, "Pastoral of the City Streets" records the process of seeing many discrete objects through a unifying sensibility. But Klein's modern landscape is a long way from Wordsworth's pleasant unpeopled meadow. Moreover, Klein's heat-infused city is a long way from Wordsworth's comfortably breezy field. As the Klein of "Autobiographical" admits, the record of experience is preferably not a tranquil recollection so much as a reanimated

⁶¹"Pastoral of the City Streets," MS 002511-12.

⁶²The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, 2: 216.

vision. Thus Klein's "Pastoral" abandons Wordsworth's distinction between then and now, and recreates, instead, the impressions of a summer day with full and unmediated attention. In other words, "Pastoral of the City Streets" aims at being an impressionistic piece, not a meditation in reflection on a day that has passed. The result is thus an effectively drawn sensual representation of the subtle passing of hot day into relieving twilight; a passage peculiar to the geography and climate of Klein's Canadian city. Wordsworth's untroubled recollection is as impossible in the paralyzing heat of Montreal as are his dancing daffodils.

During the lazy afternoon of a city dogday, the poet's gaze--like the sun--unites the "asphalt," the "dray-horse," and the "clustered kids" in a way that particularly recalls Lampman's sun-drenched summer landscapes.⁶³ Klein manages the gradual passing of time elegantly by introducing the welcome relief of a hose, setting the youngsters into "crisscross" patterns as they burst in and out of the cooling spray. "And at twilight," Klein concludes in the second short section of the poem, the day recedes more hurriedly "until mothers, like evening birds call from the stoops." This final comforting image rounds off the natural rhythms of this urban day and closes the poem on a note of reluctance,

⁶³See Lampman's "Heat," in particular. The Poems of Archibald Lampman [1900, 1943], with an intro. by Margaret Coulby Whitridge (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1974) 12-13.

evoking the children who long to keep playing in the cool of the evening. Whereas the summer afternoon is long and lazy, the quickening evening curtails both the children's play and the poet's watching. Although "Pastoral of the City Streets" maintains a rather free verse form, the poem relies largely on a steady repetition for its formal support. In the first section, the parallel phrasing considerably slows the pace of the poem ("in meadows of macadam"; "the sun shines, sun shines down"), as if the poet were too hot and lazy to use fresh synonyms. In the second section, however, the repetition is calculated to effect the acceleration of the darkness as the children first "count a last game, or talk, or rest" and then have "a last game, talk, or rest." Their activities --like the poem's telegraphic phrases--are necessarily curtailed.

As the last of a series of songs praising the urban spaces in which Klein was raised, "Pastoral of the City Streets" reflects the poet's continuing contented apprehension of his environment. Offsetting the gloomy realism of "Pawnshop" and "Indian Reservation: Caughnawaga," these lyrical tributes to Montreal prove that poetic vision can transform even the sordid squalor of urban ruins. To examine the city so closely and to note its vibrantly rich possibilities is to inhabit the tradition of the French Symbolists, of Baudelaire, and of Eliot (as chapter iii has already shown), modern writers who legitimized the urban environment as a suitable subject of aesthetic attention. But it is both interesting

and instructive to see how the Canadian Poet, Klein, claims the pastoral tradition of his nineteenth-century mentors--from Wordsworth to Lampan--and marries it to the same urban world of his contemporaries. Neither sordid nor unreal, Klein's Montreal, especially from atop the mountain--invites a promise of renewal that relieves the modern burden of social disorder. Just as Abe Segal, Poet, once found creative consolation there, so does Klein seek and find comfort and inspiration from the mountain's vantage point.

Closer to the human, social world, and further from the green world of Mount Royal, Klein's point of view tends to become less benevolent, more discriminating and analytical. There is much, it seems, in the French Canadian milieu to distract him from his enthusiastic affirmations of abstract space. Not for too long does Klein abandon his urge for social reform and political commentary. The final set of poems that follow Klein's urban-mountain celebrations in The Rocking Chair have human weakness and personal vanity as their common theme. Significantly placed in the volume with both the symbolic, analytic poems ("The Rocking Chair," "Spinning Wheel," and so on) and the Mount Royal poems behind them, these satirical sketches of modern French Canadian life serve to fill out Klein's increasingly complex description of his provincial environment. Probably most securely placed near the end of The Rocking Chair (where they are less likely to be accused of W.H. Drummond's

stereotyping), this series of character poems focusses intently on the types who contribute to the social system articulated in "Spinning Wheel," "Pawnshop," and "Commercial Bank." Indeed, Klein implies in these poems that the new French Canadian bourgeois (like the avocats of "Université de Montreal"), have purchased the values of the society that colonised and exploited them in the first place. This, Klein would argue (and as he suggests in "Spinning Wheel"), is a function of capitalism to which French Canadian culture has accommodated itself remarkably well.

In the first of these portrait poems, Klein relies on his skill as a wry commentator of human nature ("Portraits of a Minyan," "Design for Mediaeval Tapestry," "Five Characters") to describe the hopelessly unctuous "M. Bertrand" (41/324).⁶⁴ After his education at the Sorbonne, Bertrand returns home, only to patronize his own people to whom he now refers as "barbarians." Ashamed of his own kind ("he winces when his brother says icitte"), the "nostalgic" Bertrand finds "consolation" in the visit of his "old classmate" to whom Bertrand is ostentatiously sycophantic:

Then is he revived, like a dotard by the Folies Bergères,
revived, stimulated, made loquacious with argot,
and can't do enough for his guest, but would lavish on him
jowl-kiss, hand-kiss, and other kisses Parisian.

⁶⁴"M. Bertrand," Poetry 70 (July 1947): 179-80; Poems of French Canada (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947): 7; Seven Poems (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 7; Huit poèmes canadiens (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947) 12; MS 002436.

Klein is too polite, and too witty, not to conceal the vulgar implication of where M. Bertrand's "other kisses" are placed, but the reader sees the picture. This rather deftly drawn cameo of an insufferable Quebec character hints at a complex social world divided by class and language that is elaborated in the next poem in The Rocking Chair. In "The Notary" (42/324-25), Klein finds an especially suitable subject for his lampooning wit.⁶⁵ Well placed in the French Canadian social order, the notary is empowered to authorize all capitalist exchanges--that is, transactions of property:

NEXT to the curé, he is hierarch,
 the true poet functional of this place,
 laureate of its lands.
 O, as longing's redacted, hope given witnesses,
 its scarlet seal ambition, through his work
 the larger myths and motives, and the heart
 counts its beats on the margin, and our country lies
 cadastral on his hands!

Less a poet than a public functionary, as Klein's puns suggest, the notary seals his papers with the "O" sign--a sign of insubstantiality--of his authority. Indeed, any exalted notion of the poet as a benevolent creator is mocked by the notary's suspect "motives" ("money and love are his themes"): Like a poet, he "speaks, for all, the imprescriptible word," but Klein deflates any suggestion that the notary's authority is based on creative inspiration or well-meaning communication:

and with his name, sacred upon the roll,
 makes rich a date, and permanent a wish,

⁶⁵"The Notary," MS 002490-91.

giving desire its deed, and the blessing of the hands
to the English-measured dreams.

Most ironic is the fact that in French Canada the notary authorizes real estate transactions on behalf of English imperialism. Each of the three rhyming eight-line stanzas (abcbadec) that shape "The Notary" frames a scathing satire not only on the pretentiousness of the functionary's office but also on the implied unjust distribution of wealth in the province, with French Canada being the victim of the unhappy situation. Not surprisingly, concealed in Klein's puns and verbal play is a strong argument against capitalist exchange, which is based on the ownership of the properties that the notary authorizes. Since the notary sanctions and perpetuates such a system of unequal distribution, he is particularly suited to Klein's satire:

he it is makes all getting honourable, --
truly our poet, coining the bride her song,
and making even out of the last will
our cherished elegies!

This conclusion, which joins marriage and death in the interest of property (and recalls Wordsworth's complaint against the "getting and spending" of the material world),⁶⁶ blackly implies that the notary signs nothing less than the province's death warrant, directing its "will" to serve the materialistic dreams of others.

⁶⁶The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, 3: 18-19.

"Monsieur Gaston" (43/325-26), the next poem in this series of sketches, highlights a familiar enough French Canadian character.⁶⁷ Gaston rises from humble working-class origins to a position of control in the criminal underworld through a corrupt network of political bribery. In fact, the poem deliberately blurs the distinction between crime and politics. Gaston, once a sleazy pool-room regular, becomes "almost a civil servant," Klein notes amusedly. The poem effectively achieves a comic distance from its subject since Klein casts it in the form of "neighbour's gossip," to borrow his own description. "You remember the big Gaston, for whom everyone predicted / a bad end?" he invitingly begins this one-sided conversation. Of course, from Klein's point of view, Gaston does come to a bad end as a questionable character inhabiting a sordid reality, but from the French Canadian gossip's point of view, Gaston has achieved a remarkable measure of success, a way out--perhaps, one of the only ways out--of the working-class ghetto. The poem thus achieves a complex set of ironies. Gaston is, in some ways, a hero for having risen from his unsavoury life to a position of such control. In view of "The Sugaring," "Spinning Wheel," "Pawnshop," and even "The Rocking Chair," it is understood that Gaston had few choices. As trapped by material desire and as victimized by social disorder as a

⁶⁷"Monsieur Gaston," Contemporary Verse 22 (Fall 1947: 5; SP 002075; MS 002437-38.

member of Barricade Smith's audiences, the speaker of this dramatic poem unwittingly conveys the complexity of life in modern French Canada:

A changed man, Gaston; almost a civil servant.
 Keeps records, appointments, women; speaks tough English;
 is very much respected
 You should hear with what greetings his distinguished
 approach is greeted;
 "You should see the gifts he gets,
 with compliments for his season.

The grim humour in these closing lines arises not only from the tidy job description of the civil servant but also from the audible French Canadian inflection which resonates through the *véry* conversational speech itself. Probably the most successful of the character satires, "Monsieur Gaston" draws an unflattering, yet revealing portrait of both Gaston and his admiring audience.

In "Librairie Delorme" (44/326-27), Klein continues the casually observant tone of "Monsieur Gaston," but this time he levels his stinging insolent wit more directly at the social system which has overtaken a man like Monsieur Delorme, "one who loves bindings and the old regime" but who is forced to sell "his family heirlooms and his family plate." As usual, Klein's terse poetic analysis is neither frivolous nor superficial. Delorme, an aging patrician, "Stooped and with doctoral beard," represents old world ways. As a surviving member of a nearly extinct French aristocracy (to which M. Bertrand aspires), Delorme persists with his learned courtliness in a world of modern shabbiness. His archival

bookstore both houses a past that only the "bibliophile" seeks and is itself a relic of an age long overtaken by the modern urban main street:

AMONG the penny arcades and the dime shows,
 attic above the dark raked secondhand stores
 its number; neighbour to cubicles in heat,
 hashjoints, vodvils, poolrooms--the scuffed doors
 the derelict swings, the cop on the corner knows--
 Far from the pomp epopie of its themes,
 far from the pennican West, out of the storm
 confederate, upon a city street:
Canadians: Librairie Delorme:
 door grated: wooden stairs: the incunabulate dreams
 stacked: shadows catalogued.

In carrying the last line of the first stanza over into the second one, Klein moves the pace of his directions to the bookstore forward. The labyrinthine route to the end of the first statement of the poem appropriately reflects the almost imperceptibly situated Librairie Delorme itself. Set unobtrusively amid the clutter of cheap storefronts, Delorme's store protects the historical texts that comprise the earliest literary and historical achievements of New France, achievements that ironically led to the modern street of French Canada. The once-confidently written documents of a new world (early plans for the territory, Bishop Laval's papers, the Jesuit Relations, explorer's claims, speeches of a new state) inhabit a "runted past," a past that never developed fully into the world once envisioned by ambitious, powerful, and imaginative men. To be sure, Klein laments both the unfulfilled dreams of that past and the sad fate of one of its survivors,

Monsieur Delorme, a man forced to sell his estate to a modern world to which he has no real attachment:

Nonetheless seems at peace with the conqueror's state,
is casual, diffident, a-political;
and from his manner you would never dream
he was a man was putting up for sale
his family heirlooms and his family plate.

In spite of the radical breach with the past that Delorme's situation represents, the old world patrician conceals his trauma behind a mask of "anecdote and courtesy." Klein's attitude toward Delorme is finally ambivalent. Sorry to see the old gentleman, himself a relic, so utterly defeated by the new world on the one hand, Klein underscores the ineffectual irrelevance of Delorme's old world charm on the other. Each of the poem's ten-line stanzas is subtly comprised of two five-line groups, thereby formally reinforcing the doubleness of Klein's theme. "Librairie Delorme" also develops Klein's ambivalent considerations of French Canada begun in "The Rocking Chair" and elaborated in "The Spinning Wheel." It might be recalled that in both poems Klein defines French Canada with qualified admiration as a site of cultural continuity. In "Librairie Delorme," even such continuity is threatened with disruption in the face of modern commercial development. On the spreading map of modern dissolution, "hashjoints, vodvils, poolrooms" (the places where Monsieur Gaston was educated) invariably overrun such an antiquated monument as Delorme's shop, and the past housed within it.

It would appear that the French Canadian circle of unchanging values may, indeed, be finally broken.

"Sire Alexander Grandmaison" (45/327), the next poem in The Rocking Chair, thoroughly proves this theory.⁶⁸ Adopting a remarkably conversational structure, Klein once again distances himself from the proper subject of the poem, another old world patrician aristocrat whose name symbolizes the large estate from which he has always controlled his interests. In the new world of modern Quebec, Grandmaison's "ancient rights" are disclaimed by the needs of a more democratic government:

King Louis' honour, which not even the English would
touch
paid off at six per cent:
pious ceremony reduced
to legal tender at a banker's wicket!

Mais, que voulez-vous? It was a parliament
of grocers, notaries, farmers' sons who would
crate custom, barter the fleur de lys for leeks.
It was a too commercial age.

It is difficult not to think of Pound's Mauberley, and particularly "The Age Demanded," in the closing lines of "Sire Alexandre Grandmaison."⁶⁹ If Klein's poem echoes Pound's contemptuous account of the tawdry commercialism of the modern age, however, it does so ironically. For all of his old world connections to culture and the past (summed up by his "heirloom desk"), Grandmaison's unsympathetic view of

⁶⁸"Sire Alexander Grandmaison," MS 002637-38.

⁶⁹The Collected Shorter Poems of Ezra Pound (London: Faber and Faber, 1952) 210.

the new political order made up of a wide cross-section of French Canadian life is unacceptable. Klein masterfully undercuts Grandmaison's resigned attitude to the "too commercial age" by providing the aging patrician with an uncomfortable degree of snobbish disdain. (Klein's own view of Pound's determined elitism can be traced more directly in the Chronicle.)⁷⁰ Nonetheless, "Sire Alexandre Grandmaison" does complicate Klein's social and political analysis of French Canada in several ways. The modern "parliament" of which Grandmaison is so contemptuous is made up of the new French Canadian middle class, including the bourgeoisie of "notaries (derided earlier) and "farmer's sons" (implied in "The Spinning Wheel"). Klein's own view of an evolving French Canada is, therefore, increasingly difficult. On the one hand, the likes of M. Delorme and Sire Alexandre Grandmaison persist with the values of a feudal past that, as charming and elegant as it might be for those privileged enough to benefit from its advantages, cannot earn the poet's absolute approval. On the other hand, the modern, Eliotesque world rapidly replacing the bookstore and the grand estate operates according to the demands of a commercial capitalism which privileges material over culture and the present over the past. For one so committed to cultural inheritance and

⁷⁰In "Old Ez and His Blankets," Canadian Jewish Chronicle 4 March 1949: 4, 13, Klein describes Pound as a "megalomaniac traitor . . . who prostituted his talents to the designs of the blackshirts and the bullboys."

moral-aesthetic humanism as Klein, this direction is also unacceptable. Such a divided view of modern French Canada illuminates the complexity of The Rocking Chair poems, a complexity born out of Klein's sophisticated appreciation for what is both valuable and shabby in the modern age itself. It might be useful at this point to recall the romantic longing of "Autobiographical," which partly offsets the social reforming impulse of so much of Klein's writing. It is, perhaps, not surprising that as a modern humanist, Klein wishes to carry the best of the cultural past forward into the democratic age. That such a social resolution may be as "fabled" as the innocent city he seeks in "Autobiographical" never deters Klein from the challenge of realizing it--at least, not until the mid-'fifties.

Perhaps no poem speaks so pointedly to the dangerous weaknesses inherent in French Canadian life than the short "Hormisdas Arcand" (46/328), which falls near the conclusion of The Rocking Chair.⁷¹ Regardless of its social and political complexities, its divided loyalties and confused progress in the twentieth century, French Canada can never expect to earn Klein's absolute sympathy so long as the culture breeds anti-semitism. "Political Meeting" brilliantly elaborates the source of tribal identification and racial hatred. "Hormisdas Arcand" is a terse, uncomfortable reminder of the consequences of this social phenomenon. Presumably alive

⁷¹"Hormisdas Arcand," MS 002305.

and well-grounded in Quebec after the Second World War, anti-semitism could even provide the motive of a "new party," the poem observes.⁷² Again, Klein distances himself from his subject by adopting the diffident tone of a detached French Canadian observer:

Et, pour vrai dire, what more political
is there to say after you have said:
A bas les maudits Juifs!

Of course, the acidity in Klein's authorial voice is easily sensed between the lines. There can be no ambivalence regarding this matter. The issue, as Klein would say, is clear.⁷³

Partly as a relief to the concentrated social criticism of the preceding poems, "Les Filles Majeures" (47/328-29) returns Klein to the more abstract metaphorical observations marking the earliest lyrics in the collection. Whereas the portrait satires are loosely rhymed and casually arranged to convey the open randomness of occasional conversation, "Les Filles Majeures" (like "The Rocking Chair," "The Cripples," "Grain Elevator," "For the Sisters of the Hotel Dieu," and so on) tightly arranges space into parallel stanzas which unfold on the page with a neat precision. What such formality signals is Klein's self-consciously imposing presence in the poem, a presence that, in fact, becomes the shaping subject

⁷²See Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 75-77, 150.

⁷³This is one of Klein's favourite editorial expressions. See "The Issue is Clear!" in Beyond Sabbation, 59-61.

of the poem itself, as noted in the earlier examples. Thus although "Les Filles Majeures" focusses on aging French Canadian spinsters, Klein's controlling voice becomes clearly audible:

EVENINGS, they walk arm in arm, in pairs,--
 as if to emphasize their incompleteness,--
 and friendly together make an ambiguous form,
 like a folded loneliness,
 or like mirrors that reflect only each other.

The ambiguity of these spinster's lives is suggested first in the title of the poem. As "older (young) daughters" they rely on one another for a wholeness they can never fully achieve. Their ambiguity is reinforced by each of the stanzas, which is not only made up of an uneven number of lines but also formed by an audibly strained rhyme scheme (abcba). Klein's use of parallel syntax and measured phrasing, together with his disciplined metrical concentration, provides the necessary check to the "incompleteness" of "Les Filles Majeurs." The poem manages to convey not only the sense of the spinster's repressed potential but also the feeling that the world they inhabit is at least two removes from something vital and real:

For them, for them the world lacks symmetry!
 And they themselves seem to themselves
 like vases, broken in half, the halves perversely
 stood upon shelves
 unfinished, and rich with flowers never to be...

As the rhyme tightens in the last stanza around the closed lives of these women, it is clear just how impossible any escape from their situation might be. Here, too, the syntactical

ambiguity of the final line reflects the lives of the titular figures--replete with a potential never realized. Klein's "broken vases"--never to be filled with flowers--also recall the flowering "rightangle" box that concludes "Grain Elevator," a geometrical symbol of a unity that the spinsters could never appreciate. Finally, it is worth noting that in its uncanny sensitivity to the loneliness of these women, "Les Filles Majeures" probably signals Klein's own occasional, perhaps increasing, sense of separateness and alienation from the world. Already sensed in "Autobiographical," fully acknowledged in his elegy to the hangman, "Arthur Ellis," admitted in "The Cripples," and partly explained in "The Green Old Age," such profound knowledge of an asymmetrical, isolated life finds remarkable representation in "Les Filles Majeures."

"Filling Station" (48/329), which follows "Les Filles Majeures" in The Rocking Chair, provides a partial explanation for the latter's moody observations. An imagist's complaint against the modern world, both the poem's subject and its manner of representation particularly suggest William Carlos Williams' "The Great Figure."⁷⁴ Less benign, however, than Williams' ode to a speeding fire truck, "Filling Station" turns the racing vehicles of the modern thoroughfare into monsters:

⁷⁴See The Collected Earlier Poems of William Carlos Williams (New York: New Directions, 1938) 230.

With snakes of rubber and glass thorax,
 like dragons rampant,
 statistical, red with ambush,
 they ambuscade the highway.

Contrasted to these skittishly punctuated lines that read like rapid bursts of engine fire are the more slowly paced lines of the next stanza:

Only, in the hinterland, and for neighbours,
 the extant blacksmith drives
 archaic nails into the three-legged horse.

At the filling station, the poet presumably watches from a characteristically stable perspective, not unlike William Carlos Williams' grounded view of motion. In Klein's case, his steadiness provides him with the advantage of a dual perspective: both the foreground of the highway (the baseland of development and technology), which is terrifying and exciting; and the background of the country (the "hinterland" of untouched nature), which is tranquil and inviting. The strategy of "The Filling Station" is to alternate between both perspectives, concluding with the painterly vision (particularly recalling Constable's "Haywain" and Lampman's "Heat")⁷⁵ of the rural past. The final tableau is bracketed to frame both the geographic distance ("Beyond the hills, of course") into which the poet sees the "limping wheels" of the ox cart and the imaginative distance ("archaic") into which he sees a way of life vanishing. Although not an especially memorable poem in view of the many startling

⁷⁵See note 63 above and Basil Taylor, Constable: Paintings, Drawings and Watercolours (London: Phaidon, 1973).

7

OE/DA

7

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achievements in The Rocking Chair, "Filling Station" is interesting to consider as a sign that Klein was beginning to experiment with new avenues of poetic expression. In its Romantic-Imagism, a combination of the keen and clear observations of Nature celebrated by Wordsworth and Lampan and the shorthanded precision of William Carlos Williams and A.E.M. Smith; "Filling Station" points to an inventive Canadian modernism that Klein might have fruitfully pursued if illness had not interfered with his creative development.

In some ways, "Annual Banquet: Chambre de Commerce" (49/330) is oddly placed as the penultimate poem in The Rocking Chair. A dramatic piece of social criticism, "Annual Banquet" properly belongs to the series of lyrics inveighing against capitalism and the rising Quebec bourgeoisie ("Pawnshop," "Université de Montreal," "Commercial Bank"). As the last poem of this kind in The Rocking Chair, however, "Annual Banquet" serves as a fitting preface to the complex complaint of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," in which a drowned poet seeks refuge from, among other things, such a chamber of commerce. A savage summary of all that Klein regrets in modern French Canada, the poem seats an American guest, the "man of capital," next to his "host," "Mr. Damase Laberge," at the annual banquet. Long the site of both financial exploitation and feudal servitude, Klein's province now willingly sells itself to its profit-greedy "neighbour":

Quebec: The place for industry
Cheap power. Cheap labour.
No taxes (first three years).
No isms (forever).

Like the feudal descendant of the first workers of the spinning wheel, the thirty-two offspring of the naive Quebec patriarch will serve a commercial world owned and operated by others. Ironically evoking the last line of The Divine Comedy ("By the love which moves the sun and the other stars"),⁷⁶ Klein concludes "Annual Banquet" with a fitting summary of the state of the French Canadian future ("O love which moves the stars and factories..."). . . Dante's elegant declaration of the power of Christian love is thus brilliantly contained in Klein's satiric observation of the consequences of French Canadian Catholicism. Laberge's children will keep the "factories" running for a capitalist machine endorsed by the Church. The ambivalence which marks the ancestral continuity of "The Rocking Chair" finds a full resolution in "Annual Banquet: Chambre de Commerce." For Klein, the emerging bourgeois of modern Quebec, rapidly and inevitably assimilating into the modern economic-industrial world (or moving from "left to right" as the poem suggests), must be held responsible for the erosion of ancient values that once kept the community alive.

⁷⁶Dante, The Divine Comedy, trans. C.H. Sisson and with an intro. by David H. Higgins (London: Pan, 1981) 499.

Perhaps the most telling indication of the commercialization of culture is to be found in the absence, or apparent death, of the poet himself. Certainly the most sustained and accomplished expression of this unfortunate phenomenon is to be found in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" (50-56/330-35), the long poem to which, in a sense, all of The Rocking Chair (and this discussion) has been moving.⁷⁷ It is almost a commonplace by now that the poem was first entitled "Portrait of the Poet as a Nobody" in 1945 when it appeared in First Statement. It is worth remembering, though, that Klein's original title immediately signaled the paradoxical challenge of constructing a portrait from an absent figure. Of course, Klein's "Nobody" is at once colloquially understood as a social loser and symbolically appreciated as an invisible presence in the modern world. The modern poet's epistemological dilemma, therefore, is that his existence is denied by default. Without being, he is, in effect, a "nobody." That Klein later changed the vehicle of his title from a noun denoting absence--"a Nobody"--to one denoting presence--"Landscape" implies a change of grammatical emphasis and a shift of symbolic significance that need to be considered not only in view of the poem's apparent aims and intentions but also in the light of The Rocking Chair where it appeared with its new heading.

⁷⁷"Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," First Statement 3.1 (June-July 1945): 3-8 ["Portrait of the Poet as a Nobody"] SP 002044-50; MS 002546-61.

It is, perhaps, too impressionistic an observation, although a tempting one, that the changed title sounds less indulgently complaining and more detachedly positive than the original. It is safe to say, however, that the later title partly confounds the reader with its evocative ambiguity, suggesting a metaphoric possibility scarcely imaginable. A portrait of the poet as a nobody, epistemological challenges notwithstanding, is less demanding a consideration than a portrait of a poet as landscape. Klein's conspicuous omission of a modifying article preceding the objective noun in the Rocking Chair title is especially telling. A portrait of a nobody directs attention to, one figure, and a concrete, recognizable one (even if a no-body) at that. A portrait of landscape significantly alters the concreteness of the metaphor, so that the governing sense of the noun is abstract, general, even vaguely and uncertainly apprehended. How a poet is like landscape becomes the initial question--the first of many difficult ones--in this difficult poem. It can be stated before proceeding with a full discussion of the poem that the changed title impresses abstractedness itself upon the reader, thus providing an immediate sense of the degree to which the poet is disengaged from and unconnected to the world, even if this sense is only dimly realized. Indeed, the challenge to imagine a poet as landscape neatly complements what is soon to be discerned as the poet's dilemma itself--that is, the failure to be seen, recognized,

or read at all. Klein's own comments on the title of the poem in Longer Poems for Upper-School 1955-1956, where it was reprinted and which provides part of the sound basis of one recent study of the poem (about which more shortly), tell of a decided emphasis on the visual representation of a figure who has been completely absorbed into the nightmare world of modern life:

The modern poet is so anonymously sunk into his environment that, in terms of painting, his portrait is merely landscape.⁷⁸

Perhaps it hardly needs to be said that the new title's evocation of landscape painting metaphorically satisfies the poem's concluding (painterly) image of the poet submerged in a watery world. Indeed, by the conclusion of the poem, it is possible to imagine the poet in a landscape, for one comes to a recognition of the poet's topographical place--"At the bottom of the sea." What is initially only vaguely apprehended--a portrait of the poet as landscape--becomes clearly discernible--a portrait of the poet both as part of and separate from the landscape. This dual relation to the landscape is possible because the poem slowly and methodically draws a portrait of a poet who, although not recognized or distinguished by the landscape of modernity, comes to see himself as a distinctive presence in--or beneath--it. In addition to its obvious symbolic value as a source of spiritual

⁷⁸Longer Poems for Upper-School, 1955-1956, ed. and with notes prepared by Roy Allin and Alan F. Meiklejohn (Toronto: Ryerson, 1955) 60-65. See note below.

and physical nourishment (a symbolic value measured by Eliot's Waste Land to which "Portrait" owes a debt), the watery realm which harbours the poet and closes the poem offers a clear verbal and visual alternative to the vaguely realized landscape with which the poem begins. The portrait finally frames both land and water, with the poet visibly present in the latter. It is the reader who comes to draw this portrait, with Klein's help, of course, and it is the reader who manages to finish the portrait satisfactorily only when the poet's correct relation to the landscape is fully appreciated--that is, as a shining, patient, creative presence "At the bottom of the sea."

All that said, it should, by now, be nearly impossible to read "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" without a full awareness of the most recent exhaustive commentary on the poem thus far, D.M.R. Bentley's "A Nightmare Ordered."⁷⁹ To say that this glaringly illuminating textual study adumbrates the poem's "richness and complexity" is to risk understating the achievement of both Bentley's analysis and Klein's poem. Certainly, it is correct to say that the former does justice to the inviting accessibility and technical subtlety of the latter, demonstrating enthusiastically to what extent Klein harnesses his poetic resources and individual talent to

⁷⁹D.M.R. Bentley, "A Nightmare Ordered: A.M. Klein's "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," Essays on Canadian Writing 28 (Spring 1984): 1-45. All subsequent references are to this article and are noted in parentheses in the chapter.

create what many consider to be his finest poem.⁸⁰ It is, therefore, fitting for this discussion of "Portrait" both to acknowledge and to respect Bentley's commentary, which makes plain and clear not only so many of Klein's literary sources in the poem but also the multi-layeredness of the poem's allusions which help to brace its formal narrative design.

In Bentley's view, "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" can be most fruitfully understood as a quest, only partially a conscious one, for the poet's correct relation to the modern world from which he seems irreconcilably alienated. This bluntly stated thesis belies the sophisticated development of both the poem's and Bentley's analysis, however. That there is a quest at all suggests a narrative line that needs elaborate tracing. As Bentley demonstrates from the outset, the movement of "Portrait" involves a dual perspective--the voice of the speaker and the view of the modern poet, the speaker's object of attention. It is a facile observation that the speaker and the poet are related, but it is rather enlightening to see, as Bentley does, that this relation is central to the poem's narrative resolution. The initially alienated modern poet, Bentley persuasively argues, comes to

⁸⁰See Waddington, A.M. Klein, 119-26; S.J. Stephen, "Adam in Exile: A.M. Klein's 'Portrait of the Poet as Landscape,'" Dalhousie Review 51 (Winter 1971-72): 553-58; Margaret Avison, rev. of The Rocking Chair in A.M. Klein, Critical Views on Canadian Writers, ed. and with an intro. by Tom Marshall (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970) 57.

a gradual recognition--marked by psychological stages of development--of his own creative humanity. This recognition signals his integration not only with the speaker and the author of the poem, but also with the reader. So it is that by the conclusion of "Portrait," the speaker, the author, the poet, and the reader share an admittedly small but vitally necessary human community that sounds what Bentley calls the "muted triumph" of the poem's conclusion. The victory is, indeed, tempered by a reminder that the now fully human and mature poet still faces the predicament with which the poem begins. Ignored by Klein's ironically phrased "real world," not recognized as anything but landscape and so not recognized as human by the cultural waste land around him, the modern poet has no choice but to wait patiently at the bottom of the sea, like an embryo prepared for the moment of (re)birth. Until that condition of acceptance is reached, "Portrait" follows the poet's waking recognition of his own humanity, which, as Bentley notes, means for Klein a full appreciation of the Judeo-Christian humanist tradition of his inheritance and the need to push beyond towards a new creativity that would still affirm the value of that tradition. For Klein (the integrating authorial voice behind the dual perspective of the poem), such an awareness is informed by the sighting of order in the otherwise fragmented, discontinuous chaos of modern existence. The poet thus matures sufficiently to recover the order taken for lost in his world. When he sees

his own humanity shaped and ordered through language (section ii), the very instrument of order itself, he begins to return to himself, so to say--to a new wholeness that makes joy and love possible again.

As one would expect of a craftsman like Klein, the order that the poet comes to see as possible in the modern world is reflected in the sculpted verses that constitute the "Portrait" of Klein's design. Bentley's own words on the subject of the poem's formal arrangement are most pertinent here:

For the most part, "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" is written in six-line stanzas which are rhymed through assonance, half rhyme, and full rhyme, on every other line (abcdbd). Not only does this six-line stanza reflect the division of the poem as a whole into six parts, but it may well correspond in the poem's precise calculus to the ambition which Klein gives to the poet in its sixth and final section "to say the word that will become sixth sense." Be this as it may, Klein's sixains certainly provide evidence of their author's ability to perceive and to project order in a world that is superficially chaotic and insane: their composed, artful, and balanced structure is a manifestation of his mental composure, of his control over his subject matter, and of the sense of balance which differentiates him from many inhabitants of the modern world....

(8)

Of course, Bentley's account of Klein's ordering, balanced and balancing, composition could well apply to most of Klein's poetry, as this thesis has been attempting to demonstrate. Even more interesting than Klein's artful manipulation of the affirmative six-line stanza in "Portrait"

is his brilliant use of the seven-line stanza form. Again, Bentley points out the ingenuity of Klein's choice:

In the formalistic realm, the relative imbalance of such figures as the Freudian poet of section III has an obvious corollary in the seven-line stanza (abcdbde) which begins "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" and which reappears at key points later in the poem, usually with a truncated and asymmetrical line at or near its end, to reinforce the balance/imbalance theme.

(8-9)

Bentley's discussion of the thematic function of the seven-line stanza continues to include a number of helpful allusive possibilities, most provocative of these being its association with Dante:

Another function of the septain can be discerned in the poem's opening section where its seven lines provide a corollary for the "seven-circled air" which a spiritual ancestor of the poet once "made articulate." The "seven-circled air" does not, as might easily be expected, refer primarily to the planetary system but, rather, to "Dante's Inferno," for as Klein notes: "in Hell, various actions were punished in different circles, the total being seven according to Aristotle". . . . Since the poem begins in seven-line stanzas and refers directly in one of these stanzas to the Inferno, it seems plausible to suggest that Klein, perhaps drawing on the connection made by Eliot, Pound, and others, between the modern world and infernal regions, intended the poem's opening section, with its gruesome speculations ("It is possible that he is dead, and not discovered") and nightmarish images ("a shouting mob, somebody's sigh"), to be seen as analagous to Dante's Hell: a place where the principle inhabitant of interest, the poet, seemingly must by definition be considered dead, "lost," and beyond hope.

(9)

It is hardly "far-fetched," as Bentley modestly supposes, to see Dante's Inferno as one of the central instructive sources

for both Klein's seven-line stanza and the poet's traumatic journey through and out of a nightmare world of contemporary fragmentation, especially when it is recalled just how frequently Klein draws directly on Dante for help in providing an infernal setting for his alienated personae. Consider the early sonnet, "My Literati Friends in Restaurants" (42-43), where the abstracted poet doodles the last line of the Comedy while his ideologically-fired friends argue loudly around him. Even more instructive is "Annual Banquet: Chambre de Commerce," which immediately precedes "Portrait" in The Rocking Chair. The satiric last line of that poem, which also evokes the last line of the Comedy, not only summarizes the degraded, even the demonic, state of Quebec economics but it also prepares the reader for the infernal nightmare landscape in which the poet of "Portrait" finds himself.

Most illuminating, however, Klein's "Diary of Abe Segal, Poet"--which is, in several notable ways, an early blueprint for "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape"--directly invokes both the journey through the infernal region of Dante (via Eliot and Baudelaire's urban hells) and the liberating release from that region atop the mountain in the concluding section of Segal's "Diary." Of critical importance, too, is the parallel between the dual narrativity of "Diary"--Segal and the impersonal persona on whom he comments--and the dual narrativity of "Portrait"--the speaker and the

poet. Each poem not only traces the social reasons for and the psychological manifestations of the alienated condition of the two-voiced narrative but each also resolves the conflict of this obviously divided consciousness through the fully integrated awareness of a creative, ordering response to the chaos of the world. Both Segal and the poet-speaker of "Portrait" quite literally and figuratively, rise, like Dante and Vergil at the conclusion of the Inferno, above the landscape of their despairing conditions. In each poem, there is, at least, a personal victory, if not a social one. All of this is meant to demonstrate not only the degree to which Dante is compatible with the significances of "Portrait" but also the extent to which the poem is a reworking of Klein's long-held moral-aesthetic preoccupations. In fact, it is most instructive to recall the narrative development of Abe Segal's diary as one of the several guides through the landscape of Klein's "Portrait." The similarities between the two poems are strikingly obvious, especially in view of both the earlier discussion of "Diary of Abe Segal, Poet" (chapter iii) and Bentley's discussion of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape."

As Bentley observes, and as some readers have pointed out, there are other several deliberately obvious allusions to writers and literary works in "Portrait" that furnish part of its thematic context and provide a formal key to the

poem's structure.⁸¹ Bentley adds to an earlier list of "Lycidas" (most obviously behind the first section's elegaic lament for the putative death of the poet) by noting that Auden's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" also provides a reference relevant to Klein's partially ironic treatment of the pastoral tradition. Perhaps an even more appropriate reference for Klein's mock-elegaic beginning is Auden's "The Unknown Citizen," which satirizes the modern compulsion to reduce individuality to calculable statistics, a focus especially pertinent to Klein's complaint against the dehumanized landscape into which the modern poet ("a number, an x, / a Mr. Smith in a hotel register") has fallen.⁸² Be that as it may, "Portrait" begins with a weighty catalogue of literary figures (as "Diary of Abe Segal, Poet" does), notably Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton (the final stanza of section 1), that provides indexical measure of how far from the great literary tradition the modern poet has had to travel. (Remember Abe Segal's complaint that the modern poet lacks even the time to sing the praises of the morning, as Shakespeare's characters once did.) The borrowed allusions and direct literary references in "Portrait" work, as they do in "Diary," on several levels at once. But the extent to which the poem

⁸¹See Milton Wilson, "Klein's Drowned Poet: Canadian Variations on an Old Theme," in *A.M. Klein* (Marshall), 94f.

⁸²W.H. Auden, *Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966) 141-43, 146-47.

gradually abandons its habit of audibly borrowing from other sources signals the degree to which the poet enters a new creative phase of existence. Maturely independent and energetically confident in his own creative potential to originality, the poet no longer needs to rely solely on what the speaker of "Portrait" calls the "ape mimesis" (section v). Of course, it takes some time before the poet can achieve this stage, a stage that Segal himself realizes in the final hours of his day when he learns to reanimate, not just to borrow from, his favourite literary sources.

In the second section of "Portrait," the speaker admits what the reader already suspects, that the poet is "not dead, but only ignored--"like the mirroring lenses forgotten on a brow / that shine with the guilt of their unnoticed world." As Bentley points out, "the subtle and complex simile with which the stanza gets under way . . . reveals in its general application to a world of reprehensibly unobservant people and superficially lustrous surfaces . . . that the speaker well understands the characteristics of modern society (Bentley 17). Specifically, as Bentley notes, the "mirroring lenses" probably prefigure the "laurel" of section iv and the "rich garland" of section xi, suggesting "that the speaker still has a considerable way to go towards a full understanding of the function of poetry." It is likely, too, that the "mirroring lenses" shine not only with the poet's "guilt," a result of his "inattention to the external

world," but also with the guilt of that external world, which the poet will have to accept and transcend in order to achieve a true creativity. It is even more likely that the speaker borrows his complex simile from another poem that mirrors "Portrait" remarkably closely--Karl Shapiro's "Poet." Klein's interest in Shapiro's work is well-known, and, as Usher Caplan observes, "Echoes of Shapiro's rhythm and syntax can be heard in many of Klein's poems from the mid-'forties."⁸³ Indeed, the pentameter eight-line stanzas of Shapiro's "Poet," an acid-edged complaint against the abject condition of the modern poet, obviously influenced the opening sections of Klein's "Portrait." Compare Klein's complex simile of the "mirroring lenses forgotten on a brow" with the fourth stanza of Shapiro's poem:

And child-like he remembers all his life
 And cannily constructs it, fact by fact,
 As boys paste postage stamps in careful books,
 Denoting pence and legends and profiles,
 Nothing more valuable.--And like a thief,
 His eyes glassed over and congealed with guilt,
 Fondles his secrets like a case of tools,
 And waits in empty doors.

It is interesting to see how Klein elaborates Shapiro's more direct and accessible simile of the poet as "thief," a comparison designed to enoble his outlawed creativity, by equating not the poet but the poet's condition ("only ignored") with the "mirroring lenses forgotten on a brow." Klein's

⁸³Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 151. See The Collected Poems of Karl Shapiro 1940-1978 (New York: Random House, 1978) 41.

simile deepens the ironic complexity of the poet's situation both by stressing the unfortunate isolation which he must bear and by suggesting that he has contributed to this isolation by not noticing the world. Shapiro's neurotic poet pays little attention to the external world, for that matter (he is "Ignorant as dirt, erotic as an ape, / Dreamy as puberty--with dirty hair!"), but such ignorant dreaminess is, to Shapiro, a measure of the poet's noble eccentricity, a sign of his necessarily nonconforming abstractedness, not a sign of either an undeveloped consciousness or an immature irresponsibility. Klein's poet, by the second section of the "Portrait," is guilty of both these things, and it thus remains his greater challenge (and the poem's greater accomplishment) to resolve the conflict between the poet and the world which he ignores and, in turn, is ignored by. Moreover, the distance in Shapiro's poem between the speaker and the poet is necessary only to convey the unbridgeable gap between the poet and the world that excludes him. The adopted impersonal voice of "Poet" successfully reinforces the irony inherent in this unfortunate situation, but it is also clear at the same time that this voice is the poet himself, obviously and self-consciously speaking on his own behalf. "And when will you exist?--Oh, it is I," Shapiro begins the second stanza. Evidently, the speaker, the poet, and Shapiro wear the same scraggly clothes, peer absent-mindedly out of the same "Beautiful eyes," and bound "Into

the room" with the same social clumsiness. Klein recognizes the nature of this intimate identification in a Chronicle piece on Jewish Self-Hatred," where he notes that Shapiro is "Writing of the poet, presumably himself . . ." whom he unflatteringly compares with a "Jew"⁸⁴ (eighth stanza). Since "Poet" tracks no path of awakening consciousness, there is no motive for an ironic gap between the speaker and the poet. If Shapiro's modern poet maintains a dual perspective it is to mark his social alienation, not his psychic fragmentation. But Klein's "Portrait" does track an awakening consciousness, one that moves steadily towards an affirmative integration of the divided self which comes to rest "At the bottom of the sea" by the end of the poem. Dangerously close to drawing an indulgent, self-glorifying conclusion, Shapiro forecasts the tragic end of the poet's life "by drowning," a symbolic death that, ironically, no one shall heed ("And none shall speak his name"). Klein not only refrains from the indulgence of foretelling the (in)significance of the poet's death but he also turns the negativity of the poet's "status as zero" into a creative possibility--"a rich garland, / a halo of his anonymity." This is a long way from the "Blackest wave" which kills Shapiro's anonymous poet.

⁸⁴"Jewish Self-Hatred," rev. of Person, Place and Thing by Karl Shapiro, Canadian Jewish Chronicle 14 January 1944: 14, 15.

Of course, for all of its self-important indignation, Shapiro's "Poet" undoubtedly struck a deeply responsive chord in Klein distressed by the fallen role of the modern artist and by the continuing isolation of that artist in the world. A glance at "Poet" immediately recalls the intellectual moodiness of "Portrait." Especially telling of Klein's indebtedness to Shapiro are the familiar tone and diction of "Portrait" (and of such 'forties poems like "Frigidaire," "Pawnshop," and "The Green Old Age"). Certainly, Klein found in the "incandescent syntax" and the "richness and vividness" of Shapiro's poetry, as he once described it, much to admire and emulate.⁸⁵ As already noted several times in this thesis, Klein's habit of borrowing openly from his literary mentors almost always signals (as it does in the radical poems, especially Segal's "Diary") a dependence on the past to help fill the moral-aesthetic vacuum perceived to characterize the present. The catalogue of literary giants that helps support the septains of the first section of "Portrait" (Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, and, less directly, Eliot) extends into the sixains of the second section to include Shapiro's "Poet" and, as Bentley notes, Eliot's Prufrock, whose almost comical timidity can be heard in the self-effacing lines that conclude the first stanza. But Klein's poet, although at this time suffering from a similar anxiety as the creatively paralysed Prufrock, is almost

⁸⁵"Jewish Self-Hatred," 15.

ready to enter the first stage of his moral and aesthetic development, and thus the first step away from Prufrockian immobility. Before this stage--what Bentley refers to as a "Joycean adolescence"--the poet's moody depressions are acknowledged as understandable, if necessarily, transient, responses to the poet's misunderstood character. When so morally defeated, the poet is likely to "curse his quintuplet senses," a wrongheaded gesture against the very source of his "intellectual and humanistic development" (Bentley 20). Without full attention to his senses, the poet could never aspire to creating the "word" (in the sixth section of the poem) that becomes the "sixth sense," or the "new thing" that recreates the world. Bentley is correct to point out the relation between the attention given the five senses in "Portrait" (sections ii and vi) and the description of the ideal poet as one who would engage the "whole person" in a Chronicle essay applauding the achievement of Robert Frost.⁸⁶ Probably less well known is the relation between the poem's "quintuplet senses" and Ranier Maria Rilke's writings about "synaesthesia," the "modern theory" which Klein notes in Longer Poems for Upper-School 1955-1956 that he has in mind for "Portrait."⁸⁷

⁸⁶"Robert Frost and the Five Senses" ["Marginalia"], Canadian Jewish Chronicle 25 June 1948: 8.

⁸⁷See Bentley's comments on Klein's annotations to the "quintuplet senses," 19-20.

Klein's admiration of Rilke's poetry, particularly the German poet's Duino Elegies and his Sonnets to Orpheus, is openly declared in Klein's prose essays and more subtly implied in "Portrait," as shall be demonstrated shortly.⁸⁸ In 1919, Rilke published a remarkable prose-fragment entitled Ur-Gerausch (Primal Sound) which Klein may have come across in his pursuit of information concerning the phenomenon of synaesthesia. Even if Klein had not read "Primal Sound" after it appeared in the fourth volume of Rilke's collected works in 1927, it is highly likely that he would have noticed it in Carl Niemeyer's 1943 translation of Primal Sound and Other Prose Pieces.⁸⁹ (Klein does acknowledge an early essay--"The Rodin Book"--which demonstrates more than a passing interest in Rilke's critical writings.)⁹⁰ "Primal Sound," one of Rilke's prose meditations on the aesthetics of poetry, contains a passage that rings remarkably true to Klein's interest in the poet's "quintuplet senses":

⁸⁸Klein's "Raw Material" file on "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" contains at least one direct allusion to Rilke, MS 003554. See note 96 below.

⁸⁹"Primal Sound" in Where Silence Reigns: Selected Prose by Rainer Maria Rilke, trans. G. Craig Houston, foreword by Denise Levertov (New York: New Directions, 1978) 51-56. Hereafter cited as Where Silence Reigns. See also Primal Sound and Other Prose Pieces, trans. Carl Niemeyer, (Cummington, Mass.: Cummington Press, 1943).

⁹⁰"Rilke and His Translators," rev. of Thirty-one Poems by Rainer Maria Rilke, trans. Ludwig Lewisohn, Canadian Jewish Chronicle 2 August 1946: 8, 13. See "The Rodin Book: First Part" in Where Silence Reigns, 89.

It is, perhaps, not premature to suppose that the artist, who develops the five-fingered hand of his senses. (if one may put it so) to ever more active and more spiritual capacity, contributes more decisively than anyone else to an extension of the several sense fields, only the achievement which gives proof of this does not permit of his entering his personal extension of territory in the general map before us, since it is only possible, in the last resort, by a miracle.⁹¹

If Klein had, indeed, encountered this passage he would not only have recognized its relevance to his own aesthetic preoccupations but he would also have been challenged to convey the "miracle" of creation which Rilke hints at in these lines. The "sixth sense" which the poet aspires to achieve in the last section of "Portrait" may very well be the agent of that miracle. For both Rilke and Klein, such an achievement requires an extraordinary degree of creative wilfulness. As Rilke observes in "Primal Sound,"

the perfect poem can only materialize on condition that the world, acted upon by all five levers simultaneously, is seen, under a definite aspect, on the supernatural plane, which is, in fact, the plane of the poem.⁹²

It is tempting to make a connection between Rilke's declaration of the necessary "supernatural plane" of the "perfect poem" and the conclusion of "Portrait," where the poet climbs "another planet" to see the world's "total scope, and each afflated tick." It is safe to say first that Klein would have sought inspiration from Rilke's Sonnets to Orpheus,

⁹¹Where Silence Reigns, 55.

⁹²Where Silence Reigns, 54.

where attempts are made to realize the "five-fingered hand of the senses,"⁹³ and, second, that the relentlessly aspiring romantic movement of the Sonnets and the earlier Duino Elegies seems to drive the ascending poet at the conclusion of "Portrait."

When Klein writes in 1946 that "Rilke is probably one of the greatest, and certainly the most sensitive poet of this century," he is inviting a serious consideration of Rilke's influence on his own writing.⁹⁴ Reading Klein's "Portrait" against Rilke's Duino Elegies and Sonnets to Orpheus points up similarities quite clearly, although, appropriately enough, these shared characteristics are sensed in the general mood and tone of the work rather than specifically recognized in it. It is probably more accurate to say, therefore, that both the Duino Elegies and Sonnets to Orpheus inspired "Portrait" in a general way, in terms of the broad focus of Rilke's romantic search for aesthetic transcendence over sorrow and human weakness, occasionally direct echoes notwithstanding. As modern elegies, of course, the Duino poems stand behind Klein's elegy, in all of its modern flexibility, to the absent poet. The opening rhetorical question of Rilke's "First Elegy," for example ("Who, if I

⁹³Ranier Maria Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus, trans. and with an intro. and notes by J.B. Leishman (London: Hogarth Press, 1967) 59 (First Part: sonnet 13), 63 (First Part: sonnet 15).

⁹⁴"Rilke and His Translators," 8.

cried, would hear me among the angelic / orders?"), an implicit complaint against the universe's silent indifference to the poet-singer, largely informs Klein's drowned poet's modern dilemma.⁹⁵ Further, the ideal of complete and undivided consciousness ("sixth sense") to which Rilke's poet continually aspires can, in great measure, compare with the sought-for goal of Klein's often frustrated poet. In Sonnets to Orpheus (to which Klein's "Raw Material" file on "Portrait" refers directly),⁹⁶ the predominant symbol of Orpheus, the ideal poet who provides a key to the transcendence of the human condition through his glorification of the earth, or, more pointedly stated, through his praising of the earth in poetry, provides an obvious model for the gravity-defying poet who concludes "Portrait." Indeed, it might be said that the predominant theme of Rilke's works--praise of the earth--is as fundamental to the resolution of Klein's "Portrait" as it is to the Sonnets.

For a poet, praise is only possible through language. It is not surprising, then, that in the second section of "Portrait" the poet's memory of his first encounter with the power and beauty of the body of language marks the formal beginning of his journey towards self-realization:

⁹⁵Ranier Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies, trans. and with an intro. and commentary by J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender (New York: W.W. Norton, 1939) 21.

⁹⁶See note 88 above. In his notes, Klein refers to "Rilke's poem on air"--that is, to Sonnets to Orpheus, Second Part, sonnet 1, "Breathing, invisible poem!"

Then he will remember his travels over that body--
 the torso verb, the beautiful face of the noun,
 and all those shaped and warm auxiliaries!
 A first love it was, the recognition of his own.
 Dear limbs adverbial, complexion of adjective,
 dimple and dip of conjugation!

And then remember how this made a change in him
 affecting for always the growth and glow of his being;
 how suddenly was aware of the air, like shaken tinfoil,
 of the patents of nature, the shock of belated seeing,
 the lonelinesses peering from the eyes of the crowds;
 the integers of thought; the cube-roots of feeling.

Language is the poet's instrument of what Rilke would call "transformation" and of what Klein simply calls above "change," shaping existence out of chaos, actually making sense of the world. Although these remarkable lines describe the poet's discovery of language in what are essentially sexual terms (what Bentley calls "adolescent fantasy," 22), the poet's memory is imaged with the force of religious illumination as well, "like shaken tinfoil." Borrowing from Hopkins, Klein's speaker thus ensures the sacred inviolability of the poet's creative awakening.⁹⁷ For the modern poet, this revelation suddenly animates the once "unnoticed world," a world now conspicuously visible as an Eliotesque landscape of lonely crowds. As grim a reality as this may be, at least the poet learns to identify himself as one of a human community, albeit one made up of alienated figures. His new perspective does offer the possibility of escape from unbearable solitary confinement, if only as a "convict on parole." The

⁹⁷"God's Grandeur" in Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins, 27.

"inescapable" nature of Klein's pun, as Milton Wilson once described it, also places final emphasis in this second section of "Portrait" on the ambiguity of the poet's progress thus far.⁹⁸ Knowledge of the word (parole) both liberates and entraps the poet, allowing him at once to recognize his own humanity and to notice the quiet desperation that undoes so many around him. To the extent that the poet is a "convict," he probably shares with Shapiro's "Poet" in the crime of theft. What he unlawfully borrows, however (unlike Shapiro's "Poet," who conceals his guilty secrets with pleasure), is a set of characters not, properly speaking, his own. Bentley's illuminating comments on this last stanza aside, for the moment, it is possible to see the poet finally despairing--"deflated again"--at the degree to which he addictively relies on the well-stocked past to carry him forward through the undernourished present. Having already evoked Eliot and Shapiro in this section, the poet now considers, in the wake of fond memories of creative discovery, another set of literary possibilities, each one a "rehearsed role" that he might play to survive the anguish of alienation: the "Count of Monte Cristo, come for his revenges," Hamlet ("the unsuspected heir, with papers"), Lycidas ("the risen soul"), "or the chloroformed prince awaking from his flowers" in a fairy tale. Klein's poet is ultimately aiming not at a "rehearsed

⁹⁸Wilson, "Klein's Drowned Poet: Canadian Variations on an Old Theme," 95.

role," however, but at a "new thing," at original statement, regenerative creativity, and fresh possibilities. Indeed, — this poet will be most satisfied playing an original part in the human comedy, not a time-tested, wearily familiar stock role. After contemplating these reliable but ineffective parts, therefore, he understandably becomes "deflated again," resigned, for the time being, to his ambiguous status as a "convict on parole." Bentley is wise to suggest, nonetheless, that there may be

intrinsic merit to such role playing if the possibility be granted that the experience gained in posing may be a valuable part of the process of learning which issues finally in poise, in the composure which will enable the poet to "defy / the gape of gravity" and to seed his truly creative "illusions." A word (parole), it may be said, must be made up of letters (characters).

(22)

The next two satiric sections of "Portrait" divert attention from the poet's journey towards moral-aesthetic acceptance and fulfilment by accounting for the limitations of his own artistic cohort in the third section and for the bizarre world which ignores the poet completely in the fourth. Both sections provide weighty justification for the poet's estrangement from the social enterprise. Most, if not all, spheres of human activity offer only a slim promise of creative stimulation. What choice does the poet then have but to persist alone in his quest for significance, impossible though it seems in the face of such formidable indifference? Bentley's analysis of the third section of "Portrait" is so

complete that it would be injudicious to dwell on his provocative associations generated by the egocentric modern poets, those who have lost their composure ("the bevel in the ear"), their ability to see, think, or write straight. It should be stressed, however, that for all of its dazzling insolent wit, the speaker's catalogue of neurotic poets does bear a notable degree of pathos, for surely the poet of Klein's "Portrait" shares in some if not all of the conditions so brilliantly summarized. It is a measure of his maturing humanity, of course, that the speaker can recognize the relation between the poet's solitude ("He is alone") and the community of lesser bardlings suffering the symptoms of a debased and stale creativity in colleges, museums, and libraries ("He is . . . not completely alone"). Many of the caricatures of the third section of "Portrait" do "suggest particular external enemies in the Canadian literary world of the mid-to-late forties" (Bentley 24), but Klein may also have more international figures in mind. When the speaker observes in the fifth stanza that at least one poet "courts / angels,--for here he does not fear rebuff," he probably means Rilke. The significance of alluding to Rilke, who "invoked angels," as Klein once observed,⁹⁹ is deepened by the recognition that Klein's speaker identifies himself on the one hand with Rilke and distances himself from the German poet's infantile timidity on the other. In this vein,

⁹⁹"Rilke and His Translators," 8.

the "third" poet of the fifth stanza, "alone, and sick with sex, and rapt," may very well be Yeats, who "doodles him symbols convex and concave," an oblique allusion more clearly understood in the light of Klein's comment elsewhere that Yeats's "esoterically private" vocabulary comprises "towers, cones, gyres, mummies, winding-sheets, dolphins, tinctures."¹⁰⁰ Appropriately enough at this stage in the "Portrait" poet's own development, both sympathy for and detachment from at least these two literary mentors constitutes a measure of his necessary attachment to a humanistic literary tradition and his emerging independence toward a newer creativity. The third section of the poem thus concludes with an apostrophic cry to the "schizoid solitudes" and the "purities / curdling upon themselves" that characterize the psychotic, imbalanced personalities described above. That cry also resonates with a complicated mixture of charity and disgust, echoing the poet's own profound appreciation for the unpleasant consequences of a divided existence.

The fourth section of "Portrait" is an ingeniously contrived fantasy of the extreme schizophrenia to which the poet's solitude has taken him. The double-visioned narration functions especially well here to remind the reader that at least the speaker, whom one suspects to be intimately related

¹⁰⁰"The Masked Yeats," rev. of Yeats: The Man and the Masks by Richard Ellman; The Golden Nightingale by Donald Stauffer; The Permanence of Yeats, ed. James Hall and Martin Steinman, Northern Review 3.5 (June-July, 1950): 43-45.

to the poet, is fully aware of the psychosis plaguing the poet. Consequently, the horror of this nightmare of paranoia is continuously offset by a witness who maintains an almost comic ironical control over it. The melodramatic scenario imaginatively described here also looks back to the second stanza of section i, where the speaker lists several possibilities to account for the poet's absence. The body feared missing in section i, however, is only separated from the mind of the poet, as section iv explains, although this is, indeed, a seriously uncomfortable way to live. Both the tone and the subject of this section particularly recall what Klein calls elsewhere the "callous drama and [the] tragic farce" of a Kafka story.¹⁰¹ It is easy to appreciate that the modern existential anxiety which characterizes the poet's dilemma in so much of Klein's poem derives its nightmarish quality from Kafka's frighteningly ordinary landscape. But nowhere is the Kafkaesque combination of the macabre and the comic more pointedly manifest than in the poem's fourth section where the poet's suspicion that "something has happened" reflects an inevitably paranoid view of reality. Bentley details the significance of this section quite fully, but it is also worth considering the Kafkaesque nature of the narrative as a way of appreciating the modern context which has forced the poet to such mad imaginative

¹⁰¹"Hemlock and Marijuana," rev. of The Penal Colony: Stories and Short Pieces by Franz Kafka, Canadian Jewish Chronicle 17 December 1948: 8.

extremes. The "calamity" of a Kafka story, Klein notes, is "likely to fall upon any one at all, even upon the unobtrusive, even upon insignificance reduced to an initial (K), even upon you and me."¹⁰² That Klein shared Kafka's infamously insignificant initial must have greatly appealed to him. It is useful to point out here that a manuscript prose version of the third section (deleted from the First Statement version of the poem for The Rocking Chair) makes the intimate relation between Klein, Kafka, the poet, and the speaker of "Portrait" immediately obvious: "But I don't fool myself, I am simply Kay," the passage self-reflexively and self-effacingly begins.¹⁰³ As Bentley observes (with the help of Waddington's comments), Klein probably deleted section iii of the First Statement version of the poem to diminish the autobiographical emphasis of the satire (and to deflect the charge of narcissism, too).¹⁰⁴ The fourth section of The Rocking Chair "Portrait," however, does align itself remarkably closely with Klein's description of Kafka's insect parable, The Metamorphosis.

¹⁰²"Hemlock and Marijuana," 8.

¹⁰³Deleted section of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," MS 003544. The passage continues, "I am simply Kay, kindler of copy, delving at desk, sheepskin for show, hung over hilding, swinking in slogans for mongers and martmen, writing their warwhoops, helling their heroes tobacco triumphant victorious vests, skop of the sales-force, bard of their booty with zest for zippers, for gussets gusto, shrilling the shoddy, hawking at hest; Kay, kinsman and conman, homey with housewives, chaffering chattels, pally with paters, buttering buyers, frighting with fable the yokels unyielding, fighting the foeman in safety, for silex."

¹⁰⁴see Bentley, 24; Waddington, A.M. Klein, 104.

which succeeds, as Klein notes, by "pointing up the peril, the uncertainty, the sheer unreality of the total human situation." Further Klein observes that Kafka's story achieves its grotesque lucidity in a deceptively simple way:

Horror spawns horror: the obvious revulsion of the plight described is after all, merely the beginning of this nightmare narrative. The sense of alienation; the kick of rejection . . . the deprivation of love . . . the final nullification . . . these are the stages and stations of an ordeal which begins like a simple piece of ingenuity and ends as a Dantesque "human comedy."¹⁰⁵

Strictly speaking, of course, Klein's thematic chronology of The Metamorphosis does not match the poet's imagined nightmare ordeal in the fourth section of "Portrait," where the poet watches someone enact his life, domestic banalities and all. The general thematic parallels, however, not to mention the relevant reference to Dante's "human comedy" in the same breath as Kafka's parable, should be obvious. Significantly, the human comedy into which "Portrait" shapes itself is far more affirmative than Kafka's hopeless, albeit comically structured, conclusion to The Metamorphosis. Indeed, it remains the poet's task in the next two sections of "Portrait" to shed once and for all the profoundly alienated condition that he shares with Kafka's inferior-feeling beings, and to effect a metamorphosis that would liberate him from the absurdity of schizophrenic detachment.

¹⁰⁵"Hemlock and Marijuana," 8.

The poet's progress is soon evident. Section v of "Portrait" finally marks the fusion of the speaker and the poet anticipated in section ii: "the two," as Bentley observes, "are now at one" (31), forming a unity of sympathies conveyed by the third person pronoun "one" in the fifth line of the first stanza. Lucid and composed, purged now of acrimony and resentment, the poet-speaker of this section calmly and elegantly explains (with audibly positive stress on one of Hamlet's limited options) what drives him "to be-- / to be." As glamorous are its "attractions," the italicized "Fame" which begins the section is not "it." Klein, quoting Rilke on Rodin, once paraphrased that "Fame is ultimately but the summary of all misunderstandings that crystallize about a new name."¹⁰⁶ A vicarious and short-lived thrill, as Klein obviously knew, fame would be insufficient cause to motivate an ascendant leap across the abyss that the poet-speaker unconsciously ("undressed, asleep") takes. Both the "ape mimesis" and the "merkin joy" of the second stanza are also rejected as inauthentic conditions of creativity. For the poet-speaker (as for Klein and Abe Segal), an imitative, purely derivative poetry can no more pretend to inspire or regenerate the world than a false "joy" that serves only the ego of the creator. That Klein at one time considered "ego's" for "merkin" joy suggests the importance of stressing

¹⁰⁶"Rilke and His Translators," 8; "The Rodin Book: First Part" in Where Silence Reigns, 89.

the true poet's necessary humility. Of course, the very unconsciousness of the poet's drive, as mentioned above, is a mark of an egoless will that operates involuntarily, at risk and at peril, perhaps, but appropriately to the romantic direction of the poem. Such a sleepwalking journey is unquestionably necessary to the purity of the poet's experience. Klein's own notes to the conclusion of this section in which the poet's motive is simply stated (in Longer Poems for Upper-School, 1955-1956)¹⁰⁷ are summarily enlightening enough to be repeated:

The poet wishes to defy the law of gravity which drags all toward the earth, the grave, and ultimate anonymity. The enormity of the challenge renders him unhappy (stark infelicity), but he is willing, for such an object, to do the unusual, such as investigate the modes and covers (window sills and roofs) of human living, and even make complete revelation (undressed) of his own psychic strengths and weaknesses.

(Bentley 32)

That the poet-speaker dreams such possibilities is, of course, a sign of his personal victory against the obstacles in the modern landscape.

The sixth and final triumphant section of "Portrait" has been much discussed, most comprehensively in Bentley's consideration of the poem. "Through the joyful and affirmative, extroverted and unselfish activity of praise a jailbreak has been effected from the self without the loss--indeed with an enhancement--of the sense of self" (Bentley 35). It needs

¹⁰⁷MS 002554.

to be restated, however, that in the sixth section, the poet-speaker's inspirational "breath" with which he praises and animates the world is partly drawn from Rilke. This is not to charge Klein or his poet with irresponsible derivativeness, for surely the act of praising and naming the world acquires its symbolic and mythical weight as early as Adam, the first on a list of which the "Portrait" poet is an "nth," but significant, entry. Rilke, too, would be an "nth Adam," even invoking angels as he did. In the ninth Duino elegy, for example, Rilke's speaker overcomes his previous negativity with an exuberant dedication to praise ("Here is the time for the Tellable, here is its home / Speak and proclaim").¹⁰⁸ In this complete submission to the specifically human can be found a parallel with Klein's accepting and transcending poet who is also strengthened by what he has overcome. And in Rilke's Sonnets to Orpheus, which even more so than the Duino Elegies sing of the freedom available through praise, an association can be found with Klein's life-breathing poet. Indeed, it is to Rilke's "sonnet on air" (the first sonnet of section ii) that Klein specifically alludes in his notes for "Portrait," a difficult, elusive sonnet that, nonetheless, renders the breathing subject and the animated "world-space" indistinguishable.¹⁰⁹ This is the ideal state of creative harmony between inner

¹⁰⁸Rilke, Duino Elegies, 75.

¹⁰⁹Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus, 89.

and outer place, subject and object, long sought for not only in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" but also in much of The Rocking Chair, as this chapter has been demonstrating. That Rilke may have inspired the final imaginative achievement of "Portrait" is not only a tribute to his romantic, evocative, and difficult poetry but also an indication of how elegantly Klein's poet now assimilates another poetic source to his own creative originality. As Bentley notes of section v, Klein refrains from condemning "outright . . . the imitation of precursors that is a legitimate activity of all poets" (31). It is "Creative mimesis" to which the poet aspires, and which he achieves, as has become obvious by the conclusion of "Portrait." (Recall the creative "macaronic" with which Abe Segal is inspired to close his day.) Of course, it is essential to the Klein of Hath Not a Jew..., Poems, and The Rocking Chair that the poet perpetuate the continuity of the Judeo-Christian humanist tradition--from Adam through Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Rilke Eliot, and so on--so it is hardly surprising that the balance achieved by the planet-scaling poet of the sixth section of "Portrait" partakes of the past as it looks towards the future.

As for the present, the poet is compelled to come back down to earth, so to say, and face the solitude of his uniqueness as gracefully as possible. This is more comfortably managed after the poet's imaginative journey away from a self-defeating resignation and towards a whole and healthier

self-definition. Having (re)affirmed the value of his "déclassé craft," and secured the knowledge that his "ambitions" --"to make a new thing; / to say the word that will become sixth sense"--are not "mean," the poet patiently and temporarily retreats to his shelter "At the bottom of the sea." Unlike Shapiro's "Poet," who "Fondles his secrets" with "guilt" and "waits in empty doors," Klein's poet "in his secret shines / like phosphorous. At the bottom of the sea," waiting "to generate his own light, to become a lamp rather than a mirror" (Bentley 39). The sentence fragment which concludes the poem has, as Bentley explains, a twofold purpose: to return the reader back to the beginning of the poem "to the initial reference to the drowned or 'shelved Lycidas,' in the hope of finding a fuller explanation for the poet's submerged condition in the last stanza" and as a "gesture of incompleteness," whereby the reader himself at this point of departure can engage in a process of poetic construction, completing the statement started by the poet of "Portrait" (Bentley 40). As pointedly cogent is this commentary, it is also likely that the poet wishes to remind both himself and his reader that the self-actualizing process through which he has just journeyed is a necessarily recurring one, especially in the face of the solitude imposed on the would-be creator by the modern world. That in order to regenerate his creative will the poet relies on a memory of his discovery of language --and hence of his own identity--reinforces the sense of an

inevitable lapse. It is, indeed, difficult to avoid the sense that more memories of discovery, more lapses of faith, and more recovery periods are in store for the temporarily comfortable poet. Certainly the present tense in which almost all of "Portrait" is recorded conveys an unceasing contemporaneity of the poet's struggle to accommodate himself to an unavoidable reality. The astonishing gravity-defying feat of the sixth section is cast in the past tense, partly to catch and capture such an achievement permanently, but, significantly, the poet returns to the present tense ("Meanwhile, he / makes of his status as zero . . .") to signal the ongoing nature of his situation. The sentence fragment which concludes the poem thus serves to generate the incomplete, unsettled experience confronting the poet as soon as the poem itself ends.

All of that said, "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" does end with a decidedly affirmative tone. Klein's poet has, after all, come to grips with his own "status" in an age of disassociation by recognizing language as a means of identifying and praising the world. It is the least he can do, even if few seem to be listening to him. In fact, as is the case with Abe Segal, Poet, the "Portrait" poet comes to realize that creative order can be shaped from the apparently dehumanizing and fragmented world of the present. "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" is, indeed, the example of such a transformation, one enacted by the specifically human task

of shaping that world. In another context, Leo Kennedy once wrote Klein that he was still writing the same poem he had been writing for years.¹¹⁰ Kennedy might have been speaking of "Portrait of a Poet as Landscape" if he had had "Diary of Abe Segal, Poet," "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," and "Autobiographical" in mind. The "fabled city" sought by the Klein of "Autobiographical" has links to Abe Segal's "Diary" achievement, Spinoza's well-grounded vision of Nature, and the "Portrait" poet's "new thing," or "sixth sense." In several ways, of course, "Portrait" is a superb mature treatment of earlier themes, but it is fruitful to recognize a remarkably firm line of continuity in Klein's writing, from the 'twenties onwards, that draws an intensifying commitment to the humanist tradition. As the final Rocking Chair poem, "Portrait" also elaborates the tensions established throughout the volume between the subject and the object world. In a way, many of The Rocking Chair poems, in their quest for a balanced relation between inner and outer place, between the life of the mind and the life of the world, do bring a "new thing" into line with the humanist literary tradition. Whether in the complex explorations of symbols ("The Rocking Chair," "Provinces," "Grain Elevator," "Bread"), in the political satires ("Pawnshop," "Commercial Bank," "M. Bertrand"), or in the lyrical Mount Royal perspective poems,

¹¹⁰Letter from Leo Kennedy, 12 November 1940, Public Archives Canada 000110. Kennedy was responding to Klein's "In Re Solomon Warshawer."

Klein's confidently vigilant speaker shapes the world he watches through identification and, as often as possible, through praise. That the tension between the observer and the observed world lingers at the conclusion of "Portrait" is fitting in a volume that recognizes such tension as a requirement for creativity itself.

It needs to be said that as the concluding entry in The Rocking Chair, "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" transforms the geographic and cultural specificity of the French Canadian milieu into as wide and modern a context as possible. Waddington's observation that "Portrait" is the "most profound statement that has yet been made about the position of the artist in Canadian society" probably places too much emphasis on the poem's national importance.¹¹¹ To see the poem as the "autobiography of all Canadians" is to underestimate its significance as a brilliant statement, albeit one made by a Canadian, about the existential vulnerability of all thinking, potentially creative men. The patient hero of "Portrait" is, in fact, notably free of religious or national affiliation. Indeed, his ties are with the literary luminaries--including Adam--of the Judeo-Christian tradition. What The Rocking Chair volume as a whole demonstrates--and so what marks Klein's supreme accomplishment--is that the geographic and cultural specifics of one man's place can be transformed through poetry into a symbolically charged landscape inhabited

¹¹¹Waddington, A.M. Klein, 119-20.

by all men. Ultimately, The Rocking Chair affirms the value of experience itself--modern alienation, cultural imperialism, economic exploitation and all--by praising the world which the poet has little chance but to accept and to aim to reform. It is a little-known but significant point that one of Klein's editors at Ryerson Press may have unwittingly isolated the volume's central celebratory theme in a postscript to the poet:

Has it ever been drawn to your attention how many "O's" appear in the MS. I think it appears over fifty times. Often it gives the same impression as Matthew Arnold's "Ah's."¹¹²

To be sure, the impression that Klein "O's" share with Arnold's "Ah's" is partly rhetorical--a way of controlling sonority and orchestrating cadence, particularly at the emphatic start of a line. But Klein's "O's," perhaps even more than Arnold's "Ah's," are also visual breaths of utterance that punctuate and encircle Klein's delight in the world he intently examines. In effect, each "O" is a way of breathing back "the daily larcenies of the lung" about which the "Portrait" poet speaks. Not surprisingly, the "zero" that characterizes the "Portrait" poet's "status" in the modern age is transformed, as Bentley observes, into a

perfect circle, as a sign of psychic order and spiritual stability, which has been made over by the imagination that both seeds fruitful illusions and accepts present conditions into the bright and

¹¹²Letter from Frank Flemington, 26 February 1948, Public Archives Canada 000316.

evergreen emblems of the poet's God-given talent: his "rich garland" and his incandescent "halo."

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It can be said, then, that the poet transforms not only the sign of nothingness, by which he initially sees himself in "Portrait," but also all the circles of The Rocking Chair, which add up, as Klein's editor only vaguely realized, to something quite new and startingly familiar at once.

III. Conclusion

Before concluding both this chapter and this thesis on the achievement of The Rocking Chair, a few words are in order regarding both the success of the volume and what it did to establish Klein's status as a modern poet at the midpoint of this century.

Perhaps Klein knew that The Rocking Chair would appeal to a wider reading audience than had any of his previously published works. Shapiro himself, to whom Ryerson had been instructed to send a copy, responded with laudatory generosity, a gesture that could only have delighted Klein. And, as Caplan notes, "Canadian reviewers and critics who had been following Klein's progress over the years immediately recognized The Rocking Chair as his most accomplished work."¹¹³ However, even after the volume earned Klein the Governor General's

¹¹³Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 151.

Award for Poetry, it remained largely unread, critical acclaim notwithstanding. This fact probably had more to do with the general lack of attention in the late 'forties and 'fifties, particularly in Canada, to the celebrity of artists. Some who did read The Rocking Chair were quick to point out that the work identified Klein too closely, and to his detriment, with a specifically Canadian context. Louis Dudek, for example, protested the "Canadianism" of the work as "a program of a low order for a poet," and went on to say that there is "something obvious, even crudely materialistic about such an attempt."¹¹⁴ Milton Wilson also focussed on Klein's "new regionalism," which was for Wilson "as much an inhibition as a release."¹¹⁵ Others like Margaret Avison, however, recognized the universality of Klein's achievement: "So Mr. Klein can speak of Canada and sound the note that wakens vibrations through all times and places."¹¹⁶

Ironically enough for a poet with such a high Jewish Canadian profile, Klein was never quite comfortable with any kind of tag that fixed him as either the consummate "Jewish" or "Canadian" poet. Given the opportunity, he was quick to protest any such catch-all association. In 1943, for example,

¹¹⁴Louis Dudek, "A.M. Klein," in A.M. Klein (Marshall), 75.

¹¹⁵Wilson, "Klein's Drowned Poet: Canadian Variations on an Old Theme," in A.M. Klein (Marshall), 93.

¹¹⁶Margaret Avison, rev. of The Rocking Chair, in A.M. Klein (Marshall), 58.

he had complained to A.J.M. Smith that the selection of Klein poems in the Book of Canadian Poetry overemphasized the "Judaica." Klein continued: "Simply expressed, I write poetry only to reveal my civilization, my sensitivities, my craftsmanship. This, however, is not to be quoted."¹¹⁷ Characteristically, Klein would not have wanted to offend an appreciative Jewish reading audience eager to claim him as an authentic spokesman. As for the label "Canadian," Klein was not altogether comfortable with it either, preferring to disassociate himself from the sort of frenetic nationalism satirized by his colleague and friend, F.R. Scott, in "The Canadian Authors Meet" and by Klein himself in the third section of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape." The most illustrative example of Klein's appeal to a trans-national cultural aesthetic is, interestingly enough, The Rocking Chair volume, a collection of poems largely focussed on a specific Canadian region. As is obvious by now, the work ultimately reaches far beyond provincial borders.

Two years before publication of The Rocking Chair Klein published a rare piece detailing his view of "Writing in Canada." This "Reply to a Questionnaire" from Raymond Souster remains the one lengthy critical source of Klein's

¹¹⁷Letter to A.J.M. Smith, 21 January 1943, Public Archives Canada 000198. See also Caplan, Like One That Dreamed, 219.

views on his own Canadian literary identity.¹¹⁸ To Souster's question regarding the influence--healthy or otherwise--of English and/or American writing on Canadian writers, Klein unhesitatingly responds in promoting a cosmopolitan view:

I have never really made a distinction--except for the Customs department--between the one and the other. I have considered all English writing--Australian, South African, Canadian, and American . . . as a single entity. They all stem from the same tradition, though each is subjected, of course, to local modification.

Klein then turns his defense of a broadly based literature to himself:

As for myself, I am influenced--forward or backward --by everything I read, or see. I do not distinguish reading from living; that mirror metaphor is phoney. A writer speaking to me from print--if he's a good writer--is as real as himself in the flesh; and often more acceptable; I don't have to take the worse with the better. I get the silk and throw the worm away. Moreover, since what I seek is the human, I do not confine myself to writing English or American.

Finally, Klein dismisses the question of a "healthier influence" as an "irrelevancy":

There are no influences characterized by place of origin which can be deemed either healthy or unhealthy. In the final analysis, a writer gets influenced by those things which do best harmonize with his own temperament. For Milton--even Hebrew influence was healthy.

Clearly Klein did not feel the need to mince words about the place of other national cultures in his own literature.

¹¹⁸ "Writing in Canada: A Reply to a Questionnaire," Canadian Jewish Chronicle 22 February 1946: 8, 16; 1 March 1946: 8.

To Souster's next question directed at the relevance of Canadian references in modern writing, Klein is even more facetious:

The very form of the question, I must say, exposes the naiveté of the philosophy of those who go out of their way to stress Canadian backgrounds. The writer who is concerned with his writing, and not with his passport, neither stresses nor ignores that background; inevitably, if he is honest and sensitive, it will emerge in the totality of his work. This business of indicating longitudes and postal addresses is a procedure so superficial that far from stressing the Canadian background, it merely caresses it.

To lend credible support to his argument, Klein marshals the authority of the very writers with whom he most ardently wishes to identify himself. This list of "big shots," as he colloquially puts it, includes Dante and Shakespeare, probably the two most frequently referenced figures in Klein's creative repertoire, whose nationalities are important, but not "the thing" itself. The essay is sprinkled with numerous allusions, some more direct than others, to Wordsworth, Eliot, Marvell, Auden, Kipling, Whitman, and so on. Of course, the easy familiarity with which Klein relies on these writers is designed to demonstrate how useful a humanist cosmopolitan view of literature is. "The proper study of mankind is Man --not paysage," Klein argues. "Man, he is the measure." Anticipating the themes of The Rocking Chair, he then presents some possibilities for an authentic Canadian poetry:

It well may be--and I look forward to its demonstration--that a writer may be prompted to choose his Canadian subject so that his universal attitudes, since confined to a given locale, may be accentuated the more. The problem of man's aloneness on the face of the earth--is there a better milieu for its exposition than our wide grain-filled or snow-filled spaces? Man's relationship to his different fellow--a bilingual culture seems made to order for such a theme! The universal desire for adventure, conquest over nature--why, we who sit on the roof of the world ought to be able to see further these possibilities than others. The new orientation of geography, an orientation which makes us neighbor to the hitherto remote, which emphasizes the oneness of this globe--the dialectic comes around full circle--is also ironically enough, a Canadian theme! But whatever the writing, it will be its seriousness, and not its local color, which will give it whatever character it may have.

Here can be detected the shadowy shapes of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," "Grain Elevator," "The Snowshoers," "Montreal," and "Air Map." Here, too, Klein's comfort with a symbolic geometry is given familiar emphasis. To praise a "full circle" drawn in Canada by a new geographic "orientation" is to recognize and celebrate an order in the vast expanse of the country and in the chaotic fragmentation of the age. The Rocking Chair becomes, in the light of this Chronicle essay, a self-fulfilling example of how to transform the given "locale" into a universal landscape. Stridently against "provincialism," both in writing and reviewing--that is, a provincialism which, "either through obtuseness or wilfulness, segregates itself from the more advanced literary influences," Klein cites the "poetry of Dylan Thomas or of T.S. Eliot" and "Ulysses, the masterpiece of our century,"

as works fatuously ignored by the Canadian reading audience. These examples are meant to be self-evident proof of the limitations of a narrowly defined national literature.

It is important to mention, by way of conclusion, that the very cosmopolitan allusiveness of Klein's reply to Souster's questionnaire points up the modernist's belief in the value of placing poetry within the collective experience of the society for which it is written. For Klein, as for Eliot, Pound, and A.J.M. Smith whose international approach to poetry Klein could readily sympathize with, some notion of a wide literate audience is essential to establish the positive, creative relationship with a text that good poetry demands. As The Rocking Chair ably demonstrates, finding such an audience in the modern age is possible, although difficult, since the poet must continuously question the fitness of his traditionally sound and innovatively exciting language. The rich poetic legacy that Klein left behind testifies to the uncompromising nature of his search for poetic excellence, in spite of an indifferent modern world. Perhaps no other Canadian poet so fully reveals and often resolves the complexities of a modern sensibility as Klein. Reading his poetic accomplishments from the 'twenties through to the late 'forties provides access to a time in (Canadian) cultural history which, in view of the late stages of the twentieth century, seems remarkably innocent and fresh. Yet, perhaps few Canadian poets worked so tirelessly against

the apparent degeneration of the age. Not long after The Rocking Chair, and for permanently mysterious reasons, Klein relaxed his commitment to the cause of the reasoned imagination, although the fictional achievement of The Second Scroll had still to follow in 1951 as the crowning laurel of Klein's literary career. Fortunately, Klein began writing early--and then often--so that the extensive collection of poems that remains appreciates handsomely the more complex, allusive, cosmopolitan, unified, challenging, symbolic, and imaginative it is recognized to be. As no doubt only Klein himself could have known once, the more closely and more often his poems continue to be read, the more will they reveal the modernist's struggle to locate order in a rapidly changing, regretfully forgetful world.

Appendix A

XXII Sonnets (1931)

The numbers beside the poems indicate their placement in Public Archives of Canada. Asterisks indicate published poems.

"Why do you love me as you say you do"	001468
"The prince to the princess in the fairy-tale"	001469
"Think not, my dear, because I do not call"	001470
"Seventy regal moons, with clouds as train"	001471
"This is too terrible a season! Worms"	001472
"Would that three centuries past had seen us born"*	001473
"Betray me not. Treat me as scurvily"	001474
"Speak me no deaths. Prevent that word from me"	001475
"Age draws his fingernail across my brow"	001476
"'Tis very well to parrot the nightingale"	001477
"Not from a hermit's grotto, nor monk's cell"	001478
"These nothern stars are scarabs in my eyes"	001479
"Loosen the drawbridge, men! I am pursued"	001480
"Upon a time there lived a dwarf, a Jew"*	001481
"Within my iron days, my nights of stone"	001482
"Without your love, without your love for me"	001483
"Consider, then, the miracle you wrought"	001484
"Let them pronounce me sentimental. I"	001485
"From beautiful dreams I rise; I rise from dreams"	001486
"My literati friends in restaurants"*	001487

Appendix A--XXII Sonnets (1931)

"I shall not bear much burden when I cross"*

001488

"Were I to talk until the crack o' doom"*

001489

Appendix B

Poems (1932)

The numbers beside the poems indicate their place in Public Archives of Canada. Asterisks indicate published poems.

"Sacred Enough You Are"*	001599
"Why do you love me as you say you do"	001600
"The prince to the princess in the fairy-tale"	001601
"Think not, my dear, because I do not call"	001602
"Seventy regal moons, with clouds as train"	001603
"This is too terrible a season! Worms"	001604
"Would that three centuries past had seen us born"*	001605
"Betray me not. Treat me as scurvily"	001606
"Speak to me no deaths. Prevent that word from me"	001607
"Age draws his fingernail across my brow"	001608
"'Tis very well to parrot the nightingale"	001609
"Not from a hermit's grotto, nor monk's cell"	001610
"These northern stars are scarabs in my eyes"*	001611
"Loosen the drawbridge, men! I am pursued"	001612
"Upon a time there lived a dwarf, a Jew"*	001613
"Within my iron days, my nights of stone"	001614
"Without your love, without your love for me"	001615
"Consider, then, the miracle you wrought"	001616
"Let them pronounce me sentimental. I"	001617
"From beautiful dreams I rise; I rise from dreams"	001618

Appendix B--Poems (1932)

"My literati friends in restaurants"*	001619
"I shall not bear much burden when I cross"*	001620
"Were I to talk until the crack o' doom"*	001621
"Litany"*	001622
"Homage"	001623
"This is no myth"	001623
"Gargoyle"	001624
"Business"*	001625
"Histrionic Sonnet"	001626
"Dark Cleopatra on a Gilded Couch"	001627
"Sybarite though I be"	001628
"Five Weapons Against Death"*	001629-32
"Where Shall I Find Choice Words"*	001633
"Coward in Consolation"	001634
"Prayer"	001635
"Bounty Royal"	001636
"A Sequence of Songs"*	001637-40
"Frankly"	001641
"Finis"	001642
"Pathetic Fallacy"	001643
"Haunted House"*	001644-48
"Assurance"	001649
"Funeral in April"	001650
"Resurrection"	001651

Appendix B--Poems (1932)

"Advice to Young Virgins"	001652
"Letters to One Absent"	001653-54
"Invitation"	001655
"Last Will and Testament"	001656
"Words in their Season" ["Seasons"*)	001658-61
"Anguish"	001662
"Nocturne"	001662
"Fable"	001663
"Old Maid's Wedding"	001663
"Figure"	001663
"Autumn"	001664
"Autumn Night"	001664
"Discord of the Crow"	001665
"October Heresy"	001666
"Wood Notes Wild"*	001667-69
"Fixity"	001669
"Sleep Walking Scene"	001670
"Song Before Winter"	001671
"Song"	001672
"February Morning"	001673-
"Reveille in Winter"	001673
"What Winter Has Said is Said"	001674
"April Fool"	001675
"April Disappointments"	001676

Appendix B--Poems (1932)

"April Fulfilment"	001677
"Discovery of Spring"	001678-79
"Manuscript: Thirteenth Century"*	001681-95
"Preface"	001697
"Christian Poet and Hebrew Maid"*	001698
"Falstaff"	001700
"Orders"	001701
"Market Song"*	001702-03
"Protest"	001704
"Composition"	001705
"Momus"	001706
"Soror Addita Musis"	001707
"Lothario"	001708
"Symbols"	001709
"The Poet to the Big Business Man"	001710
"Boredom"*	001711
"Desiderata"*	001712
"Divine Tittilation"*	001712
"Elegy"	001712
"Probabilities"	001713
"An Old Dame Prates in Galilee"	001714
"Blind Girl's Song"	001715
"Dissolution"	001716
"Resurrection"	001717

Appendix B--Poems (1932)

"Advice to the Young"	001718
"Ecclesiastes 13"*	001719
"Shelley"	001720
"Fragment on the Death of Shelley"	001721
"A Coloured Gentleman"	001722
"Bion in his Old Age"	001723
"Request"	001724
"Oracles of the Clock"	001725-26
"Astrologer"	001727
"Out of a Pit of Perpendiculars"	001728-31
"Arbiter Bibendi"	*001732

Appendix C

Gestures Hebraic (1932)

The numbers beside the poems indicate their placement in Public Archives of Canada. Asterisks indicate published poems.

"Greeting on This Day"	001495-1501
"Direction to the Scribe" ["To the chief scribe, a psalm of Abraham, in the day of the gladness of his heart"*]	001502
"Song for Canopies" ["For the bridegroom coming out of his chamber, a song"*]	001502-03
"With Clean Lips" ["For the bride, a song to be sung by virgins"*]	001503
"Benediction" ["A Benediction"*]	001503-04
"Bring on the rich, the golden-dotted soup" ["A psalm of Abraham, which he made at the feast"*]	001504-05
"Old Maids"	001505
"Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens"*	001506-12.
"Arabian Love Song"	001513
"Litany"*	001514
"Prothalamium" ["A psalm of Abraham, touching the crown with which he was crowned on the day of his espousals"*]	001515
"Lost Fame"	001516
"Bounty Royal"	001517
"Invocation to Death"*	001518
"Kalman Rhapsodizes"*	001519
"Design for Mediaeval Tapestry"*	001520-27
"Portraits of a Minyan"*	001528-33

Appendix C--Gestures Hebraic (1932)

"Talisman in Seven Shreds"	001534-37
"Preacher"*	001538-39
"Ballad of the Dancing Bear"*	001540-47
"Ballad of Signs and Wonders"*	001548-51
"Dialogue"*	001552
"Kaddish" ["A psalm forbidden to Cohanim"]*	001553
"Koheleth"*	001554
"Scribe"*	001556-57
"The Words of Plauni-Ben-Plauni to Job"*	001558-59
"Heroic"*	001560
"Satirical" ("Now we will suffer loss of memory"*)	001561
"Sentimental"*	001562
"Haggadah"*	001563-66
"Dance Chassidic"*	001567-68
"Plumaged Proxy"*	001569
"Reply Courteous"	001570
"Oriental Garden"	001571
"Nehemiah"*	001672
"Exorcism Vain"*	001573
"Portrait"	001574
"Saturday Night"	001575
"Incognito" ["Lamed Vav: a psalm to utter in memory of great goodness"]*	001576
"These Candle Lights"*	001577
"Joseph"*	001578

Appendix C--Gestures Hebraic (1932)

"Ecclesiastes 13"*	001579
"Cargo" ["A song that the ships of Jaffe did sing in the night"*]	001580
"Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger"*	001581-85
"Reb Levi Yitschok Talks to God"*	001586-88
"Rather than have my brethren bend the knee" ["Against Mammon, a Murmuring"]	001589
"Ave atque Vale"*	001590-92

Appendix D

Gestures Hebraic and Poems (1932)

The numbers beside the poems indicate their placement in Public Archives of Canada. Asterisks indicate published poems.

"Greeting on This Day"*	001739-44
"Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens"*	001746-51
"Arabian Love Song"*	001752
"Lost Fame"	001753
"Invocation to Death"*	001755
"Kalman Rhapsodizes"*	001756
"Design for Mediaeval Tapestry"*	001757-65
"Portraits of a Minyan"*	001766-73
"Talisman in Seven Shreds"*	001774-78
"Preacher"*	001779-80
"Ballad of the Dancing Bear"*	001781-88
"Ballad of Signs and Wonders"*	001789-92
"Dialogue"*	001793
"Kaddish" ["A psalm, forbidden to Cohanim"]*	001794
"Koheleth"*	001795-97
"Scribe"*	001798-99
"The Words of Plauni-Ben-Plauni to Job"*	001801-02
"Heroic"*	001803
"Satirical" ["Now we will suffer loss of memory"]*	001803-04
"Sentimental"*	001804

Appendix D--Gestures Hebraic and Poems (1932)

"Haggadah"*	001805-09
"Dance Chassidic"*	001810-11
"Plumaged Proxy"*	001812
"Reply Courteous"	001813-14
"Oriental Garden"	001815
"Nehemiah"*	001816
"Portrait"	001817
"Saturday Night"*	001818
"Joseph"*	001819
"Ecclesiastes 13"*	001820
"Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger"*	001821-25
"Reb Levi Yitschok Talks to God"*	001826-28
"Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet"*	001829-38
"Rather than have my brethren bend the knee" ["Against Mammon, a Murmuring"]	001839
"Ave atque Vale"*	001840-42
"Sacred Enough You Are"*	001843
"Why do you love me as you say you do"	001844
"The prince to the princess in the fairy-tale"	001844-45
"Think not, my dear, because I do not call"	001845
"Seventy regal moons, with clouds as train"	001845-46
"This is too terrible a season! Worms!"	001846
"Would that three centuries past had seen us born"*	001846
"Betray me not. Treat me as scurvily"	001847
"Speak to me no deaths. Prevent that word from me"	001847

Appendix D--Gestures Hebraic and Poems (1932)

"Age draws his fingernail across my brow"	001848
"'Tis very well to parrot the nightingale"	001848
"Not from a hermit's grotto, nor monk's cell"	001849
"These northern stars are scarabs in my eyes"*	001849
"Loosen the drawbridge, men! I am pursued"	001850
"Upon a time there lived a dwarf, a Jew"*	001850
"Within my iron days, my nights of stone"	001851
"Without your love, without your love for me"	001851
"Consider, then, the miracle you wrought"	001852
"Let them pronounce me sentimental. I"	001852
"From beautiful dreams I rise; I rise from dreams"	001853
"My literati friends in restaurants"*	001853
"I shall not bear much burden when I cross"*	001854
"Were I to talk until the crack o' doom"*	001854
"Litany"*	001855
"Homage"	001856
"This is no myth"	001856
"Gargoyle"	001857
"Business"*	001858
"Histrionic Sonnet"	001859
"Dark Cleopatra on a Gilded Couch"	001860
"Sybarite though I be"	001861
"Five Weapons Against Death"*	001862-65
"Where Shall I Find Choice Words"*	001866

Appendix D--Gestures Hebraic and Poems (1932)

"Coward in Consolation"	001867
"Bounty Royal"	001868
"A Sequence of Songs"*	001869-71
"Frankly"	001872
"Finis"	001873
"Pathetic Fallacy"	001874
"A Haunted House"*	001875-78
"Assurance"	001879
"Funeral in April"	001880
"Resurrection"	001881
"Advice to Young Virgins"	001882
"Letters to One Absent"	001883
"Invitation"	001884
"Last Will and Testament"	001885
"Words in their Seasons" ["Seasons"]*	001886-88
"Nocturne"	001889
"Anguish"*	001890
"Old Maid's Wedding"	001890
"Fable"	001891
"Figure"	001891
"Autumn"*	001892
"Autumn Night"	001892
"Discord of the Crow"	001893
"October Heresy"*	001894

Appendix D--Gestures Hebraic and Poems (1932)

"Wood Notes Wild"*	001895-96
"Fixity"*	001897
"Sleep Walking Scene"	001897
"Song"	001898
"Song Before Winter"	001898
"Reveille in Winter"	001899
"What Winter Has Said Is Said"	001899
"February Morning"	001900
"April Fool"	001901
"April Disappointments"	001902
"April Fulfilment"	001903
"Discovery of Spring"	001904-05
"Manuscript: Thirteenth Century"*	001906-19
"Preface"	001920
"Christian Poet and Hebrew Maid"*	001921-22
"Falstaff"*	001923
"Orders"*	001924
"Market Song"*	001925
"Protest"	001926
"Composition"	001927
"Momus"	001928
"Soror Addita Musis"	001929
"Lothario"	001930
"Symbols"	001931

Appendix D--Gestures Hebraic and Poems (1932)

"The Poet to the Big Business Man"	001932
"Boredom"	001933
"Desiderata"*	001934
"Divine Titillation"*	001934
"Elegy"	001934
"Probabilities"	001935
"An Old Dame Prates in Galilee"	001936
"Blind Girl's Song"	001937
"Dissolution"	001938
"Resurrection"	001939
"Advice to the Young"	001940
"Ecclesiastes 13"*	001941
"Shelley"	001942
"Fragment on the Death of Shelley"	001943
"A Coloured Gentleman"	001944
"Bion in His Old Age"	001945
"Request"	001946
"Oracles of the Clock"	001947-48
"Astrologer"	001949
"Out of a Pit of Perpendiculars".	001950-52
"Arbiter Bibendi"	001953

Appendix E

Poems (1934)

The numbers beside the poems indicate their placement in Public Archives of Canada. Asterisks indicate published poems.

"Heirloom"*	001958
"Mourners"*	001959
"Town Fool's Song"	001960
"Into the Town of Chelm"*	001961
"Scholar"*	001962
"Yossel Letz"*	001963-64
"Jonah Katz"*	001965
"Doctor Dwarf"*	001966-67
"Jonah"*	001968-69
"A Deed of Daring"*	001970
"Baldheaded Elisha"*	001971
"Song of Sweet Dishes"*	001972
"Biography"*	001973
"Riddle"	001974
"Bestiary"*	001975-76
"Gift"	001977
"Lullaby for a Hawker's Child"	001978
"Fairy Tale"	001979-81
"Concerning Four Strange Sons"*	001982
"Bandit"*	001983

Appendix E--Poems (1934)

"Toys" ["Song of Toys and Trinkets"*)	001984
"Paradise" ["Psalm of the fruitful field"*)	001985-86
"Song of Exclamations"*	001987
"Elijah"*	001988-89
"Messiah"*	001990-91
"Arithmetic"*	001992
"Song" ["Song to be sung at dawn"*)	001993
"Counting Out Rhyme"*	001994
"On the Road to Palestine"*	001995
"Market Song"*	001996
"Gessel Gelt"	001997-98
"Nose Aristocratic"	001999
"Chatzkel the Hunter" ["A psalm of the mighty hunter before the Lord"*)	002000-01
"Calendar"*	002002
"Baal Shem Tov"*	002003
"Sonnet of the Starving One"	002004
"The Venerable Bee"*	002005
"The Mad Monarch"	002006-07
"Captain Scuttle"	002008-13
"Cantor"*	002014-15
"King Elimelech"	002016-17
"Wandering Beggar"*	002018-19
"Rev Owl"*	002020
"Madman's Song"	002021

Appendix E--Poems (1934)

"Cavalcade" ["A psalm of horses and their riders"]*	002022
"Pigeons"	002023
"Ballad for Unfortunate Ones"*	002024-25
"King Dalfin"*	002026-27
"Orders"*	002028
"Ballad of the Dancing Bear"	002029-40

Appendix F

Selected Poems (1954-1955)

The numbers beside the poems indicate their placement in Public Archives of Canada. Asterisks indicate published poems.

"Portrait of the Poet as Landscape"	002044-50*
"Bread"	002051
"Bestiary"	002052-53
"Plumaged Proxy"	002054
"Market Song"	002055
"A psalm to teach humility"	002056
"Portraits of a Minyan"	002057
"Sonnet Semitic" ["Would that three centuries past had seen us born"]	002058
"A Benediction"	002059
"Talisman in Seven Shreds"	002060-61
"Against Mammon, a Murmuring"	002062
"Desideratum"	002063-64
"Basic English"	002065-67
"The Rocking Chair"	002070
"For the Sisters of the Hotel Dieu"	002070
"Montreal"	002071-73
"Frigidaire"	002074
"Monsieur Gaston "	002075
"The Snowshoers"	002076-77
"Political Meeting"	002078-79

Appendix F--Selected Poems (1954-1955)

"A psalm of Abraham, concerning that which he beheld upon the heavenly scarp"	002080-8
"Re Solomon Warshawer"	002082-8
"A Song of Innocence"	002090
"Psalm of Justice" ["A psalm of justice and its scales"]	002091
"The Prowler" ["A psalm of Abraham of that which was visited upon him"]	002092
"Come Two Like Shadows"	002093
"Sonnet Unrhymed"	002094
"Ni la mort ni le soleil"	002095
"The Library"	002096-9
"Penultimate Chapter"	002098-9
"In Memoriam: Arthur Ellis"	002100-0
"Actuarial Report"	002103-0
"Sestina on the Dialectic"	002105-0
"Les Vespasiennes"	002107-0
"Spinoza: On Man, On the Rainbow"	002109
"A psalm of Abraham, to be written down and left on the tomb of Rashi"	002110-1
"Psalm" ["A psalm of Abraham, when he hearkened to a voice, and there was none"]	002112
"autobiographical"	002113-16

Appendix G

Pratt and Klein

When Northrop Frye describes Pratt's attention to the "demonic in human life which expresses itself in a peculiar form of mechanism: in the developing of a technology which symbolizes a will to merge human life in a vast destructive machine," he might well be speaking of Klein's psalter (The Bush Garden 194). Pratt's "Prize Cat," for example, which so brilliantly captures the relationship between technology and nature in a single word--the "ignition" of the cat's gleam--finds a parallel in Klein's "carnivorous Messerschmidt" of "Psalm IV" (Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt 72). And Pratt's description in "Dunkirk" of bombing planes as "great birds" laying explosive eggs is a possible source for Klein's description of German planes "on the kill" (Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt 308). Similarly, Pratt's "The Dying Eagle" with its "nerveless claws" might be the inspiration for Klein's "eagle talons dropping volcanic rock" in "Psalm V" (Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt 99). Worthy of note is Klein's phrase, "the son of man," which ironically echoes Pratt's "Son of Man" in "The Highway" (Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt 44). Of course the phrase "son of man" is Ezekiel's (2.1), not Pratt's, but the central question of Pratt's "The Highway"--"but what made our feet miss the road" of evolutionary progress?--is implicitly raised in Klein's "Psalm V." Klein

shares with Pratt the view that man's evolutionary development is marked, at least in the mechanical age, by regression, not progression. Several of Klein's Chronicle editorials written in 1939 (when so many of the psalms were being composed) voice this very theme in a way that suggests the degree of Pratt's influence. In "War: The Evolution of a Menagerie," for example (Beyond Sambation 44-45), Klein mounts his case against "that terribly horrific, new instrument of destruction --the bombing plane" by cataloguing the "methods" of warfare that man has borrowed from the animal kingdom. Included in his list are not only the specific "beasts of the field" which "Psalm V" describes (the "elephant," the "porcupine," the "tortoise," the "skunk") but also the "sword-fish of battle"--the submarine which recalls the "tubular, tapered" fish of Pratt's "The Shark" (Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt 5). Equally remarkable for its echoes of Pratt is Klein's editorial "The Issue is Clear" (Beyond Sambation 60) in which he inveighs against Hitler's "domination of earth" by means of "the metal vulture that flies through the air, the iron animal that crawls on earth" (recalling Pratt's description of tanks in "Dunkirk" [Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt 306]), and "the motorized fish that swims beneath the surface of the waters." These allusions not only indicate the deep affinity that Klein held for Pratt but they also prove inaccurate Waddington's claim that Klein was the only [Canadian] who responded poetically to a historical event at that time

it was actually happening (A.M. Klein 84). Indeed, in Pratt's poetry, from the early Newfoundland Verse of the 'twenties to the 1942 example of "Dunkirk," Klein probably recognized a kindred spirit who responded immediately to the dangers inherent in technology, as well as to the war, and so he did not hesitate to acknowledge his admiration for Pratt openly in his poems. Moreover, Pratt's continuing endorsement of man's spiritual invincibility in the face of such horrors of the mechanical age ("The Iron Door," "The Highway," "The Truant," "Brébeuf and his Brethren") most likely appealed to Klein whose own Poems collection as a whole supports the same faith.

The "witch's brew" of Klein's "Psalm VIII" also points to Pratt. In its firm identification of the inherent goodness of the natural world, "Psalm VIII" deeply sympathizes with the major themes of early Romantic poetry voiced by Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, and so Frye's contention that "Pratt was a Romantic poet in the Romantic tradition" helps to explain the attraction that Pratt held for Klein (The Bush Garden 88). It should be noted that Frye makes a point of stressing Pratt's urge to be a popular poet, one who desired to speak on behalf of his community and its values, and it is this feature of his poetry which, in Frye's view, identifies him most firmly as a "Romantic poet." Certainly the same can be said of Klein. What partially makes both Pratt and Klein modern poets is what Frye describes as the "employing of

topical themes," and "the tendency to direct statement of a social attitude which the audience is expected to share" (The Bush Garden 190). Thus both poets, while they draw on the traditional impulse of Romantic poetry, and even on traditional meter and rhyme, fulfil some of the requirements, as least as Frye states them, of modernism. It might be more accurate to say that both Pratt and Klein were cautious modernists--poets whose profound humanism made them suspicious of technological progress on the one hand and curious about it on the other.

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Most of the research for this dissertation was done at the Public Archives of Canada, the location of the principal collection of Klein material. The most complete bibliography of these holdings to date is to be found in the following:

Caplan, Usher. "A.M. Klein: A Bibliography and Index to Manuscripts." The A.M. Klein Symposium. Ed. and with an Introduction by Seymour Mayne. Reappraisals Canadian Writers. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1975: 87-122.

Caplan's "Bibliography and Index" is an indispensable guide to Klein's work, much of it as of yet unpublished and uncollected. Caplan's index, however, is admittedly incomplete: unsigned editorials (for the Judean, the Canadian Zionist, and the Canadian Jewish Chronicle), Klein's so-called "anonymous work" for Samuel Bronfman, notebooks, diaries, miscellaneous fragments, and letters are not included. Whenever quoted in this dissertation, such sources are identified by their locating number in the Public Archives of Canada.

What follows is a bibliography of Klein's work (A) and then a bibliography of edited and collected primary material (B). Since Caplan's "Bibliography and Index," the A.M.

Klein Research and Publication Committee has been editing the Klein material for publication. The resulting volumes thus facilitate the search for primary material, especially the uncollected and unpublished efforts. Miriam Waddington's Collected Poems, a necessary if flawed text, now provides the most accessible source of Klein's published poetry. A complete Poems, in addition to a Literary Essays and Reviews volume, is being edited for publication by the University of Toronto Press at the time of this dissertation. References to the Poems manuscript (ed. Zailig Pollock) are acknowledged as ts.

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