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Refractions of Germany  
in Canadian Literature  
and Culture

Edited by

Heinz Antor  
Sylvia Brown  
John Considine  
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Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York

and Jenny Bingold (both University of Cologne) has been a valuable support in proof-reading and producing a printable typescript, where, again, the staff at de Gruyter have provided invaluable help. Any remaining infelicities and errors are of course entirely the first responsibility of the editors.

Düsseldorf, Cologne, Edmonton, July 2003 H. A., S. B., J. C., K. St.

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## Introduction

Germany and Canada have for well over a hundred years been engaged in a conversation of great complexity. Sometimes its tone has been lyrical, sometimes practical, sometimes murderous. It is still in progress. Four of the innumerable traces it has left in Canada may suggest something of its scope. The first is a folio Bible, in German, brought by Heinrich Stieff of Seußen, in Württemberg, to Pennsylvania in 1749, and thence to Hillsborough, New Brunswick, in 1766.<sup>1</sup> It is now in the archives of the Province of New Brunswick, where it stands not only as a material relic of the extensive German settlement along the Petitcodiac River in the eighteenth century, but also as a family heirloom of one of the so-called Fathers of Confederation, Heinrich's great-grandson William Henry Steeves. The second is a book as well, the account by Martin Nordegg (born in Reichenbach, in Silesia) of a journey which he made with his daughter in 1912, "im Pullmanwagen, im Gueterwagen, schliesslich mit Cowboys und Indianern auf Gebirgspferden."<sup>2</sup> Their destination was the coal-mining town which Martin had founded and named after himself, Nordegg, located in the high country between Rocky Mountain House and Saskatchewan Crossing in Alberta. Nordegg has kept its name, although since the closure of the mine, the surviving settlement is very small. A third moment in the conversation is represented by a list of names drawn up in 1916, when the city of Berlin in south-western Ontario, which had been named by Mennonite settlers in 1833, was in the throes of changing its name to something which did not sound so German: "Verbena, Teck [redeemed from Germanness by being the princely title of the family of Queen Mary], Khaki, Brief, Amity, Arteaga, Cosmos, Uranus." The death of Lord Kitchener provided a more generally acceptable option, and

<sup>1</sup> Rainer L. Hempel, *New Voices on the Shores: Early Pennsylvania German Settlements in New Brunswick* (Toronto: German-Canadian Historical Association, 2000), 247-49, 289, 409.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Nordegg, *To the Town that Bears your Name: A Young Woman's Journey to Nordegg in 1912*, trans. Maria Koch (Edmonton: Brightest Pebble Publishing, 1995), 12.

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## The Black Forest, the Unspeakable Nefas, and the Mountains of Galilee: Germany and Zionism in the Works of A. M. Klein

### Introduction

“Remember who you are”, A. M. Klein admonished the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, about to be awarded the Hansische Johann-Wolfgang-von-Goethe Prize, in an editorial published in *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle* in 1951, and “remember who ‘they’ are”.<sup>1</sup> Klein’s caution against accepting a prize for the “furthering of a ‘supra-national outlook’” presented by a German community, pronounced only six years after the Holocaust, is as classical an expression of the difference between “one” and “the other” as can be. Writing before and after the Holocaust and very much aware of the political and ideological developments of his time and of the precarious situation of European Jewry – and, indeed, of Jewry all over the world – Klein, Canadian poet and journalist of Jewish descent, assumed in his works the responsibility of anguished prophet and (inspired) chronicler of God’s actions in history.

Read against the foil of Klein’s notion of a Jewish eschatology, his belief in Zionism as a redeeming force and his denunciation of the evil of Nazism, whose interaction he interpreted dialectically as leading towards redemption achieved by the foundation of a sovereign Jewish State in Palestine,<sup>2</sup> it is the purpose of this article to examine A. M. Klein’s perception

<sup>1</sup> A. M. Klein, “Buber’s Prize” (21 December 1951) in M. W. Steinberg (ed.), *Beyond Sambation: Selected Essays and Editorials, 1928-1955* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 411–12, 412. Most of Klein’s essays or editorials quoted here from Steinberg’s edition appeared originally in *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*; references to those which did not give the original source in square brackets along with publication dates, which are supplied in each case. The edition will be referred to as ‘ByS’ in the following.

<sup>2</sup> See e. g. Roger Hyman, *Aught from Naught: A. M. Klein’s The Second Scroll* (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria Press, 1999), 54.

of “Germany” and “the Germans” as “the other” in his journalistic writings from the early 1930s to the mid-1950s and to trace it in his mock epic poem *The Hitleriad* (1944) and his only published novel, *The Second Scroll* (1951).

### The Continuation of Holy Writ and the “Unspeakable”

It is a central tenet of Jewish belief that God, while remaining disincarnate, acts in history to redeem His people.<sup>3</sup> The books of the *tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, are consequently also understood to be historiographic in character, linking the experience of Jewish existence in the world to God’s plan. When with the Holocaust the single most devastating catastrophe since the expulsion from Spain was visited on Jewry, posing an absolute and existential threat to Jewish survival, it did call into question the very belief in a God-who-acts-in-history as well as the achievements of human culture and civilization. “Auschwitz negates any form of literature”,<sup>4</sup> Elie Wiesel maintained, reinforcing Theodor W. Adorno’s famous dictum that to write any poetry after Auschwitz would be barbaric.<sup>5</sup> Yet for A. M. Klein, who perceived in contemporary Jewish history the old pattern of exile and redemption, the writing of this history was, in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, an act of imparting meaning to the otherwise meaningless.<sup>6</sup> Suggesting a latter-day continuation of Holy Writ, Klein proposed to read eschatological significance into contemporary Jewish history and thus, in effect, to justify the ways of God to man.

As early as March 1944, anticipating an Allied victory, Klein had put forward, in a satirical vein, that naturally “a *megillah* will have to be

<sup>3</sup> See e. g. Hyman, *Aught from Naught*, 56, 87.

<sup>4</sup> Elie Wiesel, “For Some Measure of Humility” (1975), quoted from Hyman, *Aught from Naught*, 41.

<sup>5</sup> See Theodor W. Adorno, “Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft” (1951) in Petra Kiedaisch (ed.), *Lyrik nach Auschwitz? Adorno und die Dichter* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995), 27–49, 49. For a further discussion and partial retraction of his dictum, see Theodor W. Adorno, “Engagement” (1962) in *Noten zur Literatur III* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1966), 125–26.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of Klein’s novel as “Holocaust fiction”, see Hyman, *Aught from Naught*, 38–61, and for Klein’s approach to history and the Bible, esp. 49–52; see also Michael Greenstein, “History in *The Second Scroll*”, *Canadian Literature* 76 (1978), 37–48, and Linda Rozmovits, “A Narrative Messiah: The Redemptive Historiography of A. M. Klein’s *The Second Scroll*”, *Prooftexts* 11 (1991), 25–39.

composed, recounting the narrative of *der Fuehrer’s* rise and fall”.<sup>7</sup> And in 1949, “[in] anticipation of the Passover Seder”,<sup>8</sup> Klein had stated, much more seriously, that “there is another Haggadah which clamours to be written”.<sup>9</sup>

*Megillah* is the Hebrew word for “scroll”, used for each of the five biblical books of Ruth, Esther, Qohelet, the Song of Songs, and Lamentations. It is sometimes applied in particular to the Book of Esther which tells the story of Jewish survival in defiance of the genocide plotted by Haman. As with the Book of Esther, which is read in the synagogues on Purim, Klein envisaged the story of the new *megillah* to be recited annually, and as it is the custom to efface the name of Haman whenever he is mentioned with the noise of rattles, so Klein imagined that “every time the name of Adolf will appear therein, the *gragers* [i. e. rattles], as of old, will sound again”.<sup>10</sup> May we then read Klein’s refusal to name the enemy in *The Second Scroll* in this tradition? For although he proposed to “leave it to the inspired scribes of the future to determine the form and content of this new *megillah*, the final negating appendix to *Mein Kampf*”,<sup>11</sup> in the end it was Klein himself who felt inspired to compose another *megillah*, a second scroll. The form he chose was that of the novel which, however, he structured according to the model of Jewish religious writings, appending in the talmudic tradition glosses to its five books whose headings coincide with those of the pentateuch and whose content corresponds

<sup>7</sup> “Of the Purim to Be” (10 March 1944) in ByS, 210–11, 211. In 1938 Al Segal had published “Another Megillah” in *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, of which Klein was editor at that time; in Segal’s parody Esther can only save Jewry by persuading Ahasuerus of the exigency of having a scapegoat; she, in turn, is certified by him to be Aryan (*Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (18 March 1938), 5, 13). While this text could hardly have been an inspiration for Klein’s own idea of a new *megillah*, it may have suggested to him the rewriting of the “genre”. Incidentally, the Book of Esther had been the model already for the Hebrew “reports” on the two Paris Talmud disputations of 1240 and 1269 which alluded to, and quoted literally from, the biblical book to describe contemporary Jewish plight and which portrayed the Christian disputants as persecutors seeking the destruction of Jewry. Ursula Ragacs, *Die zweite Talmuddisputation von Paris 1269*, *Judentum und Umwelt. Realms of Judaism* 71 (Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2001), 60.

<sup>8</sup> “The New Haggadah” (13 April 1949) in ByS, 335–37, 335.

<sup>9</sup> “The New Haggadah” in ByS, 336. See also Klein’s “The Feast of Passover” (7 April 1944) in ByS, 211–13, where he systematically explains how the story told in “the first twenty chapters of Exodus and the embellishing narrative of the Haggadah [...] is far more contemporaneous than historical”, 211–12.

<sup>10</sup> “Of the Purim to Be” in ByS, 211.

<sup>11</sup> “Of the Purim to Be” in ByS, 211.

with the pattern of exile and redemption prefigured there. But not once, in his novel, does he refer to Adolf Hitler by name, and only once does he use the word German – to refer to the invasion of Poland at the beginning of World War II.<sup>12</sup>

In general applied to any narrative of religious import, the term Haggadah more particularly signifies the Pesach-Haggadah which is an account of the archetypal story of Jewish deliverance as told in the Book of Exodus, read every year on Passover in Jewish homes. The idea of writing a new Haggadah is, of course, strongly reminiscent of Klein's earlier notion of writing a new *megillah*. It is, however, even more meaningful in the religious and historical contexts of his time, because, as Klein himself pointed out on occasion of the first Purim celebrated after Hitler's death in 1946:

Purim is, after all, an exile festival. It commemorates, not liberation, but the alleviation of suffering upon alien soil and under foreign dominance. It is token not of a positive good, but of a lesser evil. The real historic repetition for which a harrassed Jewry hungers and longs is that of the feast of Passover, the redemption from Exile. For ease under the Medes and Persians is still not to be compared to constructive struggle in Palestine.<sup>13</sup>

After the creation of the State of Israel, writing a new Haggadah, therefore, was to conform most aptly with Klein's attempts to read eschatological significance into contemporary Jewish history. Due to its structure and title, Klein's novel has often been interpreted as a second "Torah".<sup>14</sup> Even so, the idea of adding to Holy Writ by writing a second "Torah", another *megillah*, or a narrative commentary to the historical pattern of

<sup>12</sup> See A. M. Klein, *The Second Scroll*, introd. M. W. Steinberg, New Canadian Library Classic 22 (1951, this edn. 1961. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 26. This is the only explicit reference to the non-Jewish German "other", apart from which only "German" Jews or Jews from "Germany" are mentioned, see e. g. *The Second Scroll*, 77, 78. For a textual history of Klein's novel, see Hyman, *Aught from Naught*, 152 n. 4; the edition prepared for Toronto University Press by Elizabeth Popham in 2000 was not yet available to Hyman. Further page references to *The Second Scroll* in the text, abbreviated as 'Scroll'.

<sup>13</sup> "The Feast of Purim", *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (15 March 1946), [Editorial Comment].

<sup>14</sup> See e. g. M. W. Steinberg's "Introduction" in Klein, *The Second Scroll*, viii-ix and Solomon J. Spiro, *Tapestry for Designs: Judaic Allusions in The Second Scroll and The Collected Poems of A. M. Klein* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 120-21, 194-211; or Rachel Fieldhay Brenner, *A. M. Klein, the Father of Canadian Jewish Literature*, *Jewish Studies* 7 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 114-15.

exile and redemption in the style of the Haggadah – or by blending all three – seems to originate with Klein's reflections on the contemporary significance particularly of the Haggadah, although, in contrast to the Haggadah, Klein's narrative is not interpolated with ritual performances.<sup>15</sup> For, as Klein explains in 1949: "It is the Haggadah of these our recent years" that needs to be written. "Here, too, there was trial and suffering and at last promise and redemption, here, too, the tyrant and his thwarting, the exodus and its consummation."<sup>16</sup> The thwarted tyrant is, of course, Adolf Hitler, whom Klein, as in his novel, does not mention by name in this text. In fact, he even hints at the seamliness of blotting out his name forever from the new Haggadah, which, originally, he envisaged to be written in Hebrew, by asking: "Shall the vanquished enemy be named by name? Or shall his unspeakableness be kept from out the canon of Hebrew diction?"<sup>17</sup>

Eliminating all overt references to Hitler and to Germany, although in the canon of English diction the name of the "enemy" had, of course, long been established, Klein still found alternative ways of speaking of Germany and of expressing the "unspeakable" – in both its senses of the "terrible" and the "inexpressible" – in his novel. More explicit were his com-

<sup>15</sup> For Klein's religious, and ideological, evaluation of the Haggadah see e. g. "Our Haggadah", *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (31 March 1939), [Editorial Comment]: "though the Haggadah carries on through its opening paragraphs in a spirit of pessimism, dwelling meticulously upon the afflictions which were visited upon our ancestors, its conclusion is a paean of praise, a Hallel. And this, indeed, has been the formula of our existence. The days which we have lived, no matter how dark, inevitably saw the ray of sunshine break through at this least expected moment. It is true that this method of approach hardly constitutes a rationale of living; the fact, however, remains that history, that great plagiarist, has a way of repeating itself, we can do no better now, than to oppose our Haggadah to 'Mein Kampf.'" See also, "And It Was Midnight" (11 April 1941) in ByS, 96-98, 97: "History repeats itself, and the saga of the exodus from Egypt is the forecast of the saga from the exodus from the dark contemporary Mizraim. The Haggadah is the exemplar, the prototype; the place-names are changed, but the formula of preservation remains the same." For a rather indignant comment in view of the still delayed creation of a Jewish State in Palestine and the continuing existence of DP-camps after the war see also "The Feast of Passover" (4 April 1947) in ByS, 335-37, 336: "The chief glory of the Haggadah [...] is the fact that it records the passage of a people from bondage to freedom; and from that freedom, to great constructive achievement. In the present instance, we have reached only the stage where the Pharaoh and his sorcerers are doomed; but complete liberation, let alone entry into the area of constructive endeavour, still remains as remote as ever."

<sup>16</sup> "The New Haggadah" in ByS, 336.

<sup>17</sup> "The New Haggadah" in ByS, 336.

ments in his journalistic writings, and since the sentiments expressed there seem to permeate also the aesthetically informed refractions of Germany in *The Hitleriad* and in *The Second Scroll* I will now, cognizant of the methodological caution that the genres are very different in outlook, first try to sketch Klein's preoccupations with Germany by giving an outline of refractions of Germany in his journalistic writings from the 1930s to the 1950s before turning to a more detailed examination of Klein's mock epic and his novel.

### Refractions of Germany in A. M. Klein's Journalistic Writings

From 1928 to 1932 Klein, himself a dedicated Zionist, was educational director of the Zionist youth organization Canadian Young Judaea whose monthly magazine, *The Judaeon*, he edited during this period. In 1936 he had been editor, for a while, of *The Canadian Zionist*, the monthly of the Zionist Organization of Canada, before, from 1938 to 1955, he assumed editorship of *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, a weekly based at Montreal which also espoused the Zionist cause.

As he registered the upheavals of his time, especially, but not solely, with regard to Jewish persecution, the political development in Germany was of necessity a major concern of Klein's from the early 1930s onwards. Commenting on the German elections of July 1932, in which Hitler's National Socialists managed to achieve the majority of votes, Klein had expressed his sympathy with "a nation victimized by the Versailles treaty and burdened with debts which visit the sins of the fathers upon the third and fourth generations".<sup>18</sup> Thus making allowances and seeking a rational explanation of the rise of the Nazis, he asserts that "[it] is wrong [...] to explain the spread of the Nazi epidemic as due entirely to the proliferation of the antisemitic germs". Rather:

The overwhelming success of German Fascism was caused, it seems, by the despair of an oppressed people, which, like a captured beast, now groans under twenty yokes, branded and muzzled. In their darkness and agony, it is no wonder that they put their trust in false prophets. Hitler is an orator, and Hitler promises salvation.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> "The German Elections" (*The Judaeon*, 5 August 1932) in ByS, 29–31, 29.

<sup>19</sup> "The German Elections" in ByS, 29–30.

Nonetheless, Klein presages a very sinister future for German Jewry. Seemingly mocking and exhortative, though in truth quite serious and apprehensive of the things to come, he interprets the turning of German Jews to Zionism, making a virtue out of necessity, as an "irony of facts", attributing their present plight to the fallacy of assimilationist tendencies: "For the German Jews, the first in our history to accept in theory and practice the doctrine of assimilation, are now being rudely rejected even by those to whom they made amorous racial and cultural advances."<sup>20</sup>

Once more imposing a religious reading on contemporary events, Klein refers to a "Hebrew legend" which has it "that in the darkest hour of Israel's need the Messiah will appear, and that when he appears the bodies of the dead will roll underneath the earth until they rise in the Holy Land".<sup>21</sup> The forced exodus of the German "Zionists" towards Palestine appears, in Klein's reading, if tempered with dark satire, to augur the fulfilment of this prophecy, for: "The darkest hour, it seems, is at hand; and the spiritual corpses are already crawling towards the East."<sup>22</sup> Thus, even in 1932, Klein had set the interpretive pattern which almost twenty years later informed *The Second Scroll* and which links Jewish persecution to the redemption to be achieved with the then still doubtful creation of a Jewish State in Palestine.

In November 1938, after what has been called the "Kristallnacht", Klein once more invokes the treaty of Versailles. But now his perspective has changed. Germany, having appeared, as Klein writes, "in its true colour", has shown itself to be "the Jack the Ripper among nations".<sup>23</sup> Imagining a German victory in the Great War he reflects upon this hypothetical contingency:

If the treatment visited upon helpless Jews, a nation of hostages in the hands of political racketeers, is any kind of criterion as to their manner with the conquered, then the treaty of Versailles was a monument of generosity compared to the *vae victis* terms which Germany would have imposed upon its victims.<sup>24</sup>

Decidedly critical of Chamberlain's appeasement policy towards the ruthless aggressor,<sup>25</sup> Klein urges opposition to Germany's expansionism,

<sup>20</sup> "The German Elections" in ByS, 30.

<sup>21</sup> "The German Elections" in ByS, 31. See also Klein, *The Second Scroll*, 89 and Ezek. 37:1–14.

<sup>22</sup> "The German Elections" in ByS, 31.

<sup>23</sup> "Vandal and Victim" (18 November 1938) in ByS, 35–37, 35.

<sup>24</sup> "Vandal and Victim" in ByS, 36.

<sup>25</sup> See e. g. A. M. Klein, *The Hitleriad*, in *Complete Poems*, ed. Zailig Pollock, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), II, 581–606, 595, I. 457.



arguing that “to co-operate in the extension of the influence in Europe of this citadel of barbarism [...] is to betray the interests of humanity; to accord them new colonial territory is callously to throw some additional sacrifices into their cauldron of hatred”.<sup>26</sup>

Klein’s extravagant use of hyperbole and metaphor is typical of the linguistic vehemence with which he fought against fascist barbarism, in Germany or elsewhere, even in his native Canada.<sup>27</sup> Already in 1932 he had announced: “If ever there was a necessity for action, it is now. [...] Barbarism cannot be dismissed with an epigram, nor murderous demagoguery with a jest.”<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, during the years of the war, Klein pillories Hitler as “the son of Belial”<sup>29</sup> or as “Hamaniac”<sup>30</sup> and the German Reich as “the cesspool of wickedness”<sup>31</sup> which inundates the world with “abysmal iniquity”,<sup>32</sup> denouncing “the abattoir tenets and hangman doctrines of the Prussian supersavages”<sup>33</sup> he brands “the Nazi pest”<sup>34</sup> as an “abomination”,<sup>35</sup> the Nazis as a “crew of unspeakable malefactors”<sup>36</sup> and the Germans as “marauding denizens of the Black Forest”,<sup>37</sup> in fact, the Black Forest, divested of any romanticism or claim to culinary fame, is used by Klein, time and again, as a metaphor for everything that is dark and evil in Germany.<sup>38</sup> But the word he uses most often – in conjunction with adjectives

<sup>26</sup> “Vandal and Victim” in *Bys*, 36.

<sup>27</sup> See e. g. “Little Red Riding Houde” (24 February 1939) in *ByS*, 46–47, and “The Fifth Column on Parade!” (27 March 1942) in *ByS*, 135–38. On Fascism in the United States, Britain and Spain, see “He Is Not Alone!” (26 September 1941) in *ByS*, 112–13, “The Mosley Affair” (26 November 1943) in *ByS*, 194–95, and “Rejoice, Ye Bulls of Bashan” (26 May 1939) in *ByS*, 53–54. On the connected issue of anti-Semitism see “*Le Devoir* Sees Its Duty” (2 December 1938) in *ByS*, 37–39, “Quebec City Gets Another Park” (18 June 1943) in *ByS*, 190–91, “Incendiary Antisemitism” (26 May 1944) in *ByS*, 219–20, “The Tactics of Race-Hatred” (29 December 1944) in *ByS*, 230–31, and “*Le Canada* and ‘This Hatred’” (16 November 1945) in *ByS*, 250–52.

<sup>28</sup> “The Twin Racketeers of Journalism” (8 July 1932) in *ByS*, 26–29, 28.

<sup>29</sup> “The Son of Belial” (9 May 1941) in *ByS*, 98–99, 99.

<sup>30</sup> “The New Year” (19 September 1941) in *ByS*, 109–12, 110 and *passim*.

<sup>31</sup> “The Mystery of the Mis-laid Conscience” (17 July 1942) in *ByS*, 153–56, 154.

<sup>32</sup> “The Mystery of the Mis-laid Conscience” in *ByS*, 154.

<sup>33</sup> “The Last Jew of Danzig” (3 March 1944) in *ByS*, 208–10, 210.

<sup>34</sup> “The Dark Decade” (5 February 1943) in *ByS*, 179–82, 179.

<sup>35</sup> “The Slaughter of the Children” (11 December 1942) in *ByS*, 176–77, 177.

<sup>36</sup> “Reflections on V-E Day” (11 May 1945) in *ByS*, 236–38, 238.

<sup>37</sup> “The Dark Decade” in *ByS*, 180.

<sup>38</sup> See e. g. “The New Order: Murder and Ransom” (27 November 1942) in *ByS*, 173–75, 175, “The City of Chelm” (5 March 1943) in *ByS*, 184–87, 187, “The Feast of Passover” in *ByS*, 211–13, 212 and *passim*.

tives like “bestial”,<sup>39</sup> “efficient”<sup>40</sup> and “Assyrian”<sup>41</sup> – is the German word *schrecklichkeit* (terribleness).<sup>42</sup> In his plea to “Remember Lidice!”, a village in Czechoslovakia razed by the SS and all its male inhabitants executed in reprisal for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich by Czech patriots in 1942, Klein declares that “Lidice symbolizes the essence of the entire German psychology, its paganism, its disregard of life, its wantonness, its Assyrian *schrecklichkeit!*”<sup>43</sup>

In spite of Klein’s vehement disclaimer that the war being fought against Germany was a Jewish war,<sup>44</sup> as had been suggested by antisemitic propaganda, all the four traits said to make up German psychology are recognisably antithetical to Jewish values which, in turn, are implied to be the general values of humanity. For it is “for the maintenance of the very elementary and very essential principles of the Decalogue”, Klein insists, “that the free world is fighting to-day”.<sup>45</sup> Disregard of life and wantonness are corollaries of German paganism, which is essentially the negation of the Decalogue, as is, of course, also German *schrecklichkeit*, likened here to that of Israel’s ungodly foe of biblical times.

*Schrecklichkeit* was to remain, during the war, a constant concern of Klein’s. Its manifestations serve not only to support his claim that World War II is not “a war between nations” but “a war between principles”.<sup>46</sup> To him it is, moreover, in itself despicable, the expression of a bestiality which makes him propose that to “remedy the situation, one does not lecture the beasts; one merely takes one’s hunting rifle”.<sup>47</sup> Klein’s invocation of this drastic panacea seems to be echoed in his postwar statement that “[no] one, indeed, would have seen anything wrong if the Belsen bandits had been summarily shot immediately upon capture”. He continued, though, by saying that “since they have been put before a tribunal, let the trial proceed according to all the rules”. Adherence to the ethical principles and judiciary tenets of the free world is, in fact, essential, the more so because “[the] fact is, of course”, as Klein concluded, “that it is not

<sup>39</sup> “The Issue is Clear!” (8 September 1939) in *ByS*, 59–61, 60.

<sup>40</sup> “The Journalist in Chains” (4 April 1941) in *ByS*, 95–96, 95.

<sup>41</sup> “Remember Lidice!” (19 June 1942) in *ByS*, 151–53, 151.

<sup>42</sup> See also “The New Order: Murder and Ransom” in *Bys*, 174 and *passim*.

<sup>43</sup> “Remember Lidice!” in *ByS*, 151.

<sup>44</sup> See “That Jewish War” (31 October 1941) in *ByS*, 114–15, 115.

<sup>45</sup> “That Jewish War” in *ByS*, 115.

<sup>46</sup> “That Jewish War” in *ByS*, 115.

<sup>47</sup> “The Slaughter of the Children” in *ByS*, 176.

only Belsen which is on trial, but all of Germany".<sup>48</sup> The notion of individual and collective responsibility as it is expressed in this passage was central to Klein's stance; that justice be done was, to his mind, a *sine qua non*, a necessary prerequisite of "the future peace of the world".<sup>49</sup>

Calling upon the world to remember Lidice, Klein also advocates holding the "Heydrichs, the Goebbels, the Goerings, the Himmlers, and Hitler"<sup>50</sup> personally responsible for the bestial crimes committed upon their orders. Invoking once more the treaty of Versailles, which he now criticizes as "a poor amalgam where pity for Germany was ousted by considerations of conquest, and where the demands of security were thwarted by misdirected compassion",<sup>51</sup> Klein cautions: "Let us not ever again be befuddled by doctrinaire shibboleths applied in favor of an enemy who will only use our 'effete pity' as an invitation to leap at our throats again."<sup>52</sup>

In this reflection on the general terms of a future peace treaty are already intimated Klein's strong apprehensions about Germany's ability, or willingness, to reform which he was to reiterate time and again. His deeply rooted misgivings were expressed, after the war, also in voicing his suspicion of the unexpected leniency accorded to so many of those implicated and of its potential political import: "Can it be", he queries in an editorial on "The Nuremberg Trial" in 1946, "that in the list of the spared and acquitted, one may read the names of some future German cabinet?"<sup>53</sup> Not at all satisfied with the process of the dispensation of justice, he questions the legal niceties which "serve to whitewash, or at least to

<sup>48</sup> "The Judicial Process" (19 October 1945) in ByS, 248–50, 249. In response to Hitler's call for Germans all over the world to become citizens of the German Reich Klein had stated in March 1938: "We are not oblivious to the fact that not all Germans are Nazis", "Calling all Germans", *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (4 March 1938), [Editorial Comment]; his change of mind is to be explained by the notion of collective guilt.

<sup>49</sup> "Crimes and Punishment" (15 May 1945) in ByS, 239–41, 241.

<sup>50</sup> "Remember Lidice!" in ByS, 153.

<sup>51</sup> "Remember Lidice!" in ByS, 152–53.

<sup>52</sup> "Remember Lidice!" in ByS, 153. The sentiment expressed here by Klein is very similar to that conveyed by the concluding remarks in Robert Vansittart, *Black Record: Germans Past and Present* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1941), 56–57. However, extremist views about the punishment to be meted out to the Germans were deplored by Klein just as much as untoward leniency since extremism of any kind "assures reactions equally extreme", "Post-War Germany", *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (10 December 1943), [Editorial Comment].

<sup>53</sup> "The Nuremberg Trial" (4 October 1946) in ByS, 276–78, 278.

render immune from punishment, an entire nation banded together for the exercise of 'sovereign crime'".<sup>54</sup>

Discerning the tendency to forget and forgive motivated by mere political expediency and recognizing the futility of his frequent appeals to engrave incidents of German evildoing "upon the tablets of our memory",<sup>55</sup> seems to have resulted in Klein's loss of faith in the course of justice. Probably the most palpable expression of his disillusionment is his comment on the reconciliation of the Western Powers with Germany in 1951. "Perhaps international necessity called for a peace to be struck with the heirs of Nazidom at the present time", Klein concedes, only to continue:

Certainly there is no one who imagines that it is with a changed and reformed Germany that formal relations are now being instituted. From all sides, indeed, there come reports of diehard fascism, of recrudescing Nazism, of a Reich repentant only of its defeat. Only a desperate expediency can justify, if anything at all can justify, this much too early re-admission of the bandit polity into the comity of nations.<sup>56</sup>

Anticipating attempts at glossing over the past Klein envisages that

[we] shall now see the German foreign office send forth its emissaries to the various United Nations, *herren* immaculately dressed, gentlemen softvoiced and full of quotations from Goethe, diplomats making nice distinctions between the "true" Germany which they represent and that optical illusion which for a decade managed somehow, despite its unreality, to create so much misery in the world.<sup>57</sup>

When German chancellor Konrad Adenauer proposed to alleviate some of this misery by offering to pay reparations to the State of Israel in 1952 Klein, once more, was sceptical. "That Jew would indeed be bereft of all sensitivity who did not find it distasteful to think of negotiating, or having any truck or traffic with the heirs and assigns of the butchers of but seven years ago",<sup>58</sup> he asserted in language no less explicit than that he had found for German iniquity during the war. German attempts to further the convenient bias of forgetting and forgiving and to affect a normalization were regarded by Klein with disgust. It had been only the year be-

<sup>54</sup> "Crimes and Punishment" in ByS, 240.

<sup>55</sup> "The Slaughter of the Children" in ByS, 177. See also e. g. "Remember Lidice!" in ByS, 151–53, and "The Pleas Begin" (8 February 1946) in ByS, 253–54.

<sup>56</sup> "Peace with Germany" (13 July 1951) in ByS, 407–09, 407.

<sup>57</sup> "Peace with Germany" in ByS, 408.

<sup>58</sup> "German Reparations" (18 January 1952) in ByS, 412–14, 412.

fore that he had advised Martin Buber to refuse the Hansische Goethe Prize by invoking the memory of the Holocaust and the unbridgeable chasm between “us” and “them” in the editorial quoted at the beginning of this article – Buber, incidentally, advocating a reconciliation, had accepted the Goethe Prize in 1951.<sup>59</sup> “How great is the temptation to say: [...] let them remain gorged with that blood and that plunder, the abomination of mankind, and to us, excommunicate and anathema; we shall not step within the four cubits of their ambience”,<sup>60</sup> Klein held even now; but, he continued, “[u]nfortunately, most of the important problems in life bewilder with alternatives more complex than that which beckons between black and white”.<sup>61</sup> Thus, in the end, he argues on pragmatic grounds:

The resources of the State [of Israel], as is well known, are limited; to refuse alleviation would mean, at worst, to grant charter for the continuance of the Nazi havoc. At best, it would mean that American Jewry would be compelled, *pro tanto*, to come to the rescue; in other words, American Jewry would be called upon to pay German reparations! Nor is this gesture possible morally. For what, in the long run, would such a gesture effect? It would effect an immunity for robbers.<sup>62</sup>

But still Klein was not in favour of what he considered to be a “premature act of oblivion”, a “cynical act of reconciliation”,<sup>63</sup> when the Treaty of Bonn, an important step towards full sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany and, indeed, German rearmament, was signed in May 1952. However, his feelings are ambiguous because he discerns a causal relationship between the horrors of the Nazi period and the creation of the new Jewish State. Therefore, once more invoking the biblical Book of Esther, Klein rejoices that redemption resulted from the conflagration: “Our own people [...] were not only rescued, though not without wounds, but achieved also a consummation they hitherto had not dared to entertain, except in their most flattering dreams – the establishment of the State of Israel.”<sup>64</sup>

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of Martin Buber’s influence on Klein, especially in *The Second Scroll*, see G. K. Fischer, *In Search of Jerusalem* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1975), 169–70.

<sup>60</sup> “German Reparations” in ByS, 412.

<sup>61</sup> “German Reparations” in ByS, 413.

<sup>62</sup> “German Reparations” in ByS, 413.

<sup>63</sup> “Israel and Germany” (6 June 1952) in ByS, 415–16, 416.

<sup>64</sup> “The Feast of Purim” (16 March 1951) in ByS, 394–95, 395.

## The Expression of the “Unspeakable” in A. M. Klein’s *The Hitleriad* and *The Second Scroll*

When in 1951, with *The Second Scroll*, Klein wrote his own “extension” of the Haggadah he had already in several works, poetic and narrative, remarked on German iniquity<sup>65</sup> and, in contrast to his novel, he was quite explicit in some of these works. Thus, in the mock epic of *The Hitleriad*, a sequence of poems he had been working on since 1942 and that was published in 1944, Klein did not only call Hitler and his henchmen by name but denounced them individually for their contributions to “deeds unspeakable”.<sup>66</sup>

As in his journalistic writings, in *The Hitleriad* Klein again utilises the metaphor of the Black Forest to refer to the darkness descended on Germany. Here it is, more particularly, used to evoke the paganism rekindled by Hitler – who “stamped on the Decalogue!”<sup>67</sup> and “Himself a god announced, and bade men bow / Down to his image, and its feet of clay!”<sup>68</sup>:

The creed of the Black Forest was revived,  
And ceased the ancient pities for men,  
Of manliness and godliness deprived,  
The pagan, named for beasts, was born again.<sup>69</sup>

The close correspondence of the human and the divine, pivoting on the gift and the acceptance of the Decalogue, is central to Klein’s thinking. Both he sees perverted in the bestiality and the paganism, explaining and causing each other and both manifestations of an earlier stage of human development, that are, in fact, the main characteristics he ascribes to Nazi Germany in *The Hitleriad*. Only with the overthrow of the idol, shattering its feet of clay,<sup>70</sup> and a true purging of mankind the emergence of a “world, clean, new!”<sup>71</sup> seems possible to Klein, and only given the intervention of “Implacable Justice”<sup>72</sup> does he envisage the longed-for return to

<sup>65</sup> Particularly in *Poems* (1944) and in his short story “Blood and Iron. A Satire on Modern German Ideology” (1936).

<sup>66</sup> Klein, *The Hitleriad*, in *Complete Poems*, II, 582, l. 31. Klein refers explicitly to Goebbels, Rosenberg, Goering, Ribbentrop, von Papen, Himmler, Streicher, Hoffman, Haushofer, Ley, Hess, Strasser, Roehm, Schleicher and Heines, see *ibid.*, II, 591–94, ll. 303–423.

<sup>67</sup> Klein, *The Hitleriad*, in *Complete Poems*, II, 599, l. 566.

<sup>68</sup> Klein, *The Hitleriad*, in *Complete Poems*, II, 602, ll. 661–62.

<sup>69</sup> Klein, *The Hitleriad*, in *Complete Poems*, II, 603, ll. 670–73.

<sup>70</sup> Cp. Dan 2,33.

<sup>71</sup> Klein, *The Hitleriad*, in *Complete Poems*, II, 605, l. 736.

<sup>72</sup> Klein, *The Hitleriad*, in *Complete Poems*, II, 605, l. 736.

a world order that had been perverted by Nazism and that may be summed up with the final lines of *The Hitleriad* as:

Man loyal to his human brotherhood,  
To human brotherhood, and to the godly reign!<sup>73</sup>

Once the war was lost and won the self-announced god was no more and German paganism too, its idol destroyed, was a thing of the past.<sup>74</sup> But Klein's literary reflections on German iniquity, concerned with that all too easily forgotten pagan past, still follow the same pattern. Although, in *The Second Scroll*, he refuses to name the enemy – in contrast to his insistence on the answerability of the individual in his journalistic writings de-personalising German guilt in an attempt to “mythologise” the recent past – it is still German paganism, the negation of the Decalogue, which he sees at the root of all the evil of his time and to which he juxtaposes obedience to the commandments.

In the novel a Jewish-born journalist from Montreal, sent to Israel to cover the emergence of the literature of the new state, makes his journey a quest for his uncle Melech, a survivor of the Holocaust, whom he follows from Bari and Rome to Casablanca and, finally, to Israel. But the ever elusive Melech Davidson, whose name, meaning King, Son of David, is a messianic allusion<sup>75</sup> and who is meant to be taken as the embodiment of the paradigm

<sup>73</sup> Klein, *The Hitleriad*, in *Complete Poems*, II, 606, ll. 758–59.

<sup>74</sup> See, however, “The Feast of Purim”, *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (15 March 1946), [Editorial Comment], where Klein deplores that: “Unfortunately Hitlerless is not Hamanless. In the first place, the ten sons of this twentieth century Haman – his paladins and henchmen – still survive; and one is at a loss to know whether Nuerenberg was invented to provide them with a slow death or merely to prolong their existence. Moreover, the number of little Hamans, minor anti-Semites who still infect Europe is legion. Hamanism it would appear, can subsist without Haman.”

<sup>75</sup> The allusion is to the eschatological king, the Messiah (the Anointed), whose coming, in Rabbinic thought, is understood to be mainly of political import, entailing the defeat of Israel's enemies, the restoration of the people to the Land, and a reconciliation with God, introducing “a period of spiritual and physical bliss”, *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), XI, col. 1411. A secondary messianic figure is the Messiah ben Joseph, the son of Joseph, whose coming precedes that of the Messiah, son of David. Well aware of this distinction, Klein deliberately identified Melech – “anointed” by the gasoline that burns him to death – with the Davidic Messiah. Rejecting the messianic interpretation of Melech, Phyllis Gotlieb suggests that he rather is meant to signify God: see her “Hassidic Influences in the Work of A. M. Klein” in Seymour Mayne (ed.), *The A. M. Klein Symposium* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1975), 47–64, esp. 60–62; see also Spiro, *Tapestry for Designs*, 185–93. For conceptions of the Messiah, see *Encyclopedia Judaica*, XI, cols 1407–17.

of Jewish diaspora existence, dies in Israel before his nephew can meet him. However, witnessing Melech's funeral, he is reassured that Melech has now found his final rest in Israel as has, in another sense, the Jewish people.

Of the five glosses appended to the main narrative of *The Second Scroll* it is Gloss Beth, the second, associated with the book of Exodus, which refers most directly to the horrors of the Holocaust and its instigators. Already, in the main narrative, the book of Exodus had provided the reader with Uncle Melech's relation of his personal experience of the Holocaust. “The German invasion of Poland trapped him in Kamenets” (Scroll, 26), thus the narrator at the end of the book of Genesis with what is, incidentally, the only occurrence of the word “German” to refer to the non-Jewish “other”.<sup>76</sup> There, he continues, employing a metaphor which, while it evokes all the horrors of the Holocaust, nevertheless anticipates the consummation of the exodus, Melech “was enveloped by the great smoke that for the next six years kept billowing over the Jews of Europe – their cloud by day, their pillar of fire by night” (Scroll, 26).<sup>77</sup> In Melech's letter, describing the massacre visited on the Jewish population of the town of Kamenets in Poland, Klein dehumanises the Germans to whom he refers as “the enemy” and as “sons of Belial” (Scroll, 31), “the men with the eyes of ice” or, alluding to the insignia of the SS storm-troopers, “death's-heads who terrorized our streets” (Scroll, 32). The “unspeakable” (Scroll, 33) perversion of Jewish ritual they coerce the Jews of Kamenets into is evidence for their paganism as well as their perverted and dehumanised natures. When Melech, the single survivor of the Kamenets massacre apart from Itzka the town idiot, manages to escape to the woods, he is almost surprised by “the kindness of the wild beasts of the wood who did *not* seek [his] life”, (Scroll, 36) thereby emphasising by default the German bestiality, or *schrecklichkeit*, so often invoked in Klein's journalistic writings. German bestiality seems the more inhuman and unnatural as it is methodical, their very inhumanity tempting Melech to wish them crushed like vermin:

Almost I made my own the counsel of Rabbi Simon ben Yochai concerning those best of serpents who, too, ought to have their smooth skulls crushed. With stroke of the pen, a dart of the tongue, they had handed over to perdition, those two-faced masters of thesis and antithesis, three and a half million souls. (Scroll, 31–32)

<sup>76</sup> See n. 12.

<sup>77</sup> For a discussion of this passage, linking it to Spinozan philosophy, see G. K. Fischer, “Religious Philosophy in the Writings of A. M. Klein” in Mayne (ed.), *Klein Symposium*, 37–45, 38f. and her *In Search of Jerusalem*, 173–74.

Much more fervent than Melech's rather restrained expression of his distress is the narrator's anguished condemnation of things German in the "Elegy", within the context of the novel supposed to have been composed on the presumption of his uncle Melech's having perished in the Holocaust (Scroll, 29), but first published by Klein on its own in 1947.<sup>78</sup> Like so many of Klein's appeals to his contemporaries to remember German evil-doing, but addressed now to God, the narrator implores: "But do not overlook, oh pass not over / The hollow monoliths" (Scroll, 100, ll. 80–81). His plea is followed by a number of curses reminiscent of, but far exceeding the scope of, those of Psalm 137. The poetic depersonalisation of the German evildoers which had already informed the main narrative of the novel is taken further here. Understanding the Holocaust to be the climax of a process rather than a singular if devastating catastrophe, the narrator calls on God to give with His punishment an irrevocable sign putting an end to the persecution of His chosen people forever:

Not for the judgement sole, but for a sign  
Effect, O Lord, example and decree,  
A sign, the final shade and witness joined  
To the shadowy witnesses who once made free  
With that elected folk Thou didst call Thine. (Scroll, 101, ll. 110–114)

The perpetrators of this latest outrage he asks to be consigned to oblivion as those before them were, too. But, once more evoking the bestiality of *der Fuehrer* without actually naming him, sketching the image of a vainly barking dog, the memory of their deeds unspeakable is to persist so that, heeding the lesson, no-one will ever dare to lay hands on the chosen people that then may enjoy God's peace:

All who did waste us, insubstantial now,  
A motion of the mind. Oh, unto these  
Let there be added, soon, as on a screen,  
The shadowy houndface, barking, never heard,  
But for all time a lore and lesson, seen,  
And heeded; and thence, of Thy will our peace. (Scroll, 101, ll. 123–128)

More subtle is Gloss Gimel, attached to the novel's book of Leviticus. Here, it is again Uncle Melech whose voice we encounter in form of a

<sup>78</sup> The "Elegy" was first published in *New Palestine* (4 April 1947), 106–07; three weeks later it appeared in *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (25 April 1947), 8–9, and finally in *The Second Scroll*. See Usher Caplan, "A. M. Klein: A Bibliography and Index to Manuscripts" in Mayne (ed.), *Klein Symposium*, 87–122, 93.

fragmentary letter. Describing his visit to the Sistine Chapel in Rome, in the excerpt is elaborated Melech's highly original interpretation of Michelangelo's frescoes in which he sees wrought "the parable of [his] days" (Scroll, 106). In a theoretical reflection on the interpretation of art that in some aspects anticipates reception theory Melech presupposes a "coeval timelessness"<sup>79</sup> in such art he qualifies as eternal because it "proliferates with significances [...] not conceived nor imagined" by its author. Thus, to his eyes and mind, "on that ceiling appeared the narrative of things to come, which came indeed" (Scroll, 106). It is the Holocaust Melech sees prefigured in this ceiling. Scenes of the confusion and horror of the flood remind him of the camps. The very carnality of the depiction, its celebration of the flesh (and this is not meant in any sexual sense), makes Melech see in it "but a tremendous pæan to the human form divine, a great psalter psalmodizing the beauty and vigour and worth of the races of mankind" (Scroll, 105). Evoking the notion of a common humanity and implicitly confuting the basic tenets of Nazi ideology, this interpretation at the same time underlines the main narrative's assertion that Melech "had become a kind of mirror [...] of the events of our time" (Scroll, 92), for he continues: "nowhere can I scan that ceiling but I must encounter my semblable and like" (Scroll, 105)

In his plea to remember Lidice, Klein had dissected German psychology, identifying as its main constituents paganism, disregard of life, wantonness and *schrecklichkeit*. In *The Second Scroll*, Uncle Melech, without overtly referring to Germans, or their psychology, further deconstructs the psychology of those capable of deeds unspeakable, ascribing motives and, at the same time, depersonalising the perpetration of the unspeakable, explaining it to be a recurring pattern of the human condition.

Melech understands the murderous urge of the "sons of Belial" – note Klein's familiar expression for the Germans<sup>80</sup> – to be the result of mere

<sup>79</sup> Klein seems to have derived this notion from Talmudic thinking to which refers also one of the novel's two epigraphs which is taken from Milton's *Aeropagitica* (1644); according to Leon Edel, Klein explained this to mean "that the *Chetiv* – that is the written – is not often identical with the *Keri* – that which is read", Leon Edel, "Marginal *Keri* and Textual *Chetiv*: The Mystic Novel of A. M. Klein" in Mayne (ed.), *Klein Symposium*, 15–29, 15f.; for other explanations of the epigraph see Gotlieb, "Hassidic Influences", 62 or Fischer, *In Search of Jerusalem*, 166–68.

<sup>80</sup> See e. g. "The Son of Belial" in ByS, 98–99 and in *The Second Scroll*, 31, 109. The aptness of the attribution in Klein's eschatological scheme is attested to by Belial's significance in Jewish religious writings where his will is said to oppose God's; he is thought to wield a sword which causes bloodshed, havoc, tribulation, exile, death, panic, and destruction. But ultimately he will be chained by God's holy spirit or cast into the all-

vanity: "For even as wine lifts man up a little higher than his stature, so too was the shedding of life for the sons of Belial vanity's temptation" (Scroll, 107). It is their paganism that is to blame for their hubris, for their disregard of life, and for their wantonness:

They would be like gods; but since the godlike touch of creation was not theirs, like gods would they be in destructions. To kill wantonly, arrogantly to determine that another's term is fulfilled – with impunity to do these things and be deemed therefore gods – such were their vain imaginings. (Scroll, 107)

The common humanity and the mystery of the "human form divine" invoked by Melech's reading of the paintings they denied, for they "denied the godliness of all flesh but their own" (Scroll, 107). But in effect, doing so, they denied also their own humanity and thus their own godliness, both being closely interconnected as Klein had already intimated in *The Hitleriad*. Reverting with their paganism to a state before the Decalogue they themselves regress to the state of the beast. Thus Melech reads into the depiction of Noah's sacrifice its very reversal, intended, but ultimately shunned, by Michelangelo in its "barbaric literalness": "before those latter fires [of the Holocaust] it was the human form that lay prostrate and bound, bleating; while the cornute heads readied the blade and the faggot" (Scroll, 108). The specific mention of blade and faggot, evoking an image of the *fasces*, may be intended to hint at the fascist identities of the sacrificing beasts. But the slaughter is no sacrifice, it is murder – and it is murder that has no finality but perpetuates itself in all eternity:

Alas, alas for their victims, and alas for them, that their crime did not end with this slaughter but is forever repeated and multiplied: as the constellations move in their courses and the years and decades pass and the generations that should have been born are not born, the hand that slew is seen again to be slaying, and again, and again; frustrate generation after frustrate generation, to all time, eternal murder, murder immortal! (Scroll, 109–110)

This murder immortal of the human form divine is, in Melech's words, "the unspeakable nefas – deicide" (Scroll, 109–110). Or, as Melech's nephew, commenting on the letter, puts it very concisely in the main narrative of the novel: "Since Adam is created in the image of God, the killing of man is deicide! Since Eve is a reproductive creature, the murder of the mortal is a murder of the immortal!" (Scroll, 51)

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engulfing fire and his attendant spirits will be routed and discomfited by the Messiah. There will be a final war in which Belial and his partisans will be defeated by God and God's partisans, aided by heavenly cohorts. See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, IV, col. 429.

But deicide is "only possible in its attempt, not in its perpetration" for it is counterpoised by the eternal covenant: "not ever shall He utterly forsake!" (Scroll, 110, 112) In Melech's interpretation the fulfilment of redemption, of Jewish redemption, is also predicted in the paintings, promising that "the remnant would be whole again" (Scroll, 111).<sup>81</sup> In fact, having himself been on the brink of apostasy, he sees in them and in their actuality in contemporary history an illustration and proof of God's acting in history and renews his own faith in view of God's faithfulness, or, as the narrator puts it quite succinctly:

In a circular sentence, without beginning or end, he described God coming to the rescue of His chosen. It was a sentence in which I distinguished, between commas, in parentheses, and in outspoken statement, all of the thirteen credos of Maimonides. (Scroll, 52)<sup>82</sup>

The "salvation scenes" (Scroll, 112) in the four corners of the ceiling, depicting instances of Israel prevailing against its enemies, among them also the punishment of Haman from the *megillah*, the Book of Esther, confirm this belief.

Melech's letter ends with a last repetition of its theme, the (re-)interpretation of Michelangelo's frescoes as a parable of the Holocaust and Jewish redemption in its aftermath. The last thing Melech notes before he leaves the Chapel are the rams' skulls painted into the points of the spandrels. For him they are not symbols of mortality but evoke the shofar, whose ritual sounding is understood to signify, among other things, the hope for the coming of the Messiah and the proclamation of freedom<sup>83</sup>: "they were rams' horns" he concludes, "sounding liberation" (Scroll, 113).

Although in the main narrative Uncle Melech, himself a "mirror [...] of the events of [his] time" (Scroll, 92), after his wanderings in Europe, through the mellah of Casablanca and, finally, in Israel, finds his death at the hands of Arab terrorists and is buried in the hills of Galilee near Safed, one of the four holy cities of Jewry and in the past a centre of Jewish mysticism, his death does not negate the assurance which Melech's nephew is given by an elder in the synagogue of Rabbi Isaac Luria that "We live in Messiah's days" (Scroll, 89). Once more invoking the same old Hebrew

<sup>81</sup> For a perceptive discussion of the theme of exile and redemption in Gloss Gimel see Zelig Pollock, "The Myth of Exile and Redemption in 'Gloss Gimel'", *Studies in Canadian Literature* 4 (1979), 26–42.

<sup>82</sup> For the sentence referred to, see Scroll, 111–12. For Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith and a discussion of Klein's reference, see Hyman, *Aught from Naught*, 156 n. 5 and Spiro, *Tapestry for Designs*, 171.

<sup>83</sup> See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, XIV, cols 1442–47.

legend he referred to in his editorial on the German elections of 1932 and insisting on the eschatological significance of contemporary history, Klein suggests in his novel now in earnest the fulfilment of the old prophecy, for it is no longer the spiritually dead who crawl towards Israel. Now it is those gone through the ordeal of the Holocaust who find redemption in the Promised Land: “the risen from the dungeons, the pursued through the undergrounds of Europe [...] have taken their stand here in Israel” (Scroll, 89); it is they who stand resurrected “on the heights of Carmel, on the hillocks of the Negev, on the mountains of Galilee” (Scroll, 89).<sup>84</sup> Melech’s death, the death of a survivor of the Holocaust in Israel, is, like the rams’ heads in the Sistine, not a symbol of mortality but a symbol of life and liberation, for his is a death “invested in life” (Scroll, 92).

### Zionist Xenophobia and the Negation of the Diaspora

Uncle Melech being, in a manner of speaking, the embodiment of the diaspora paradigm, his funeral seems to symbolise also the laying to rest of Jewish existence in the diaspora. Indeed, early in 1953, two years after the publication of *The Second Scroll*, Klein was to pick up this metaphor again in a series of contributions to the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* headed “In Praise of the Diaspora (An Undelivered Memorial Address)”.<sup>85</sup> But in his eulogy he now emphatically opposes the final negation of the diaspora put forward by the “new” Israeli Jews, and their claims to the authenticity of their “Jewish” identity,<sup>86</sup> which he had addressed already in some of his earlier articles<sup>87</sup> and which he had condemned as “Xenophobia directed against one’s own”, as “the very golden calf of abominations”.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>84</sup> G. K. Fischer suggests that for Klein the transportation of Theodor Herzl’s body from Vienna to be interred in Jerusalem in 1949, to which he was a witness, “appeared to symbolize the homecoming of all, of those who had died in exile and those who continued among the living. Herzl becomes the embodiment of the Jewish spirit and a representative of the Jewish people as a whole. In this sense, Klein found in him the prototype for the hero of his allegory”, *In Search of Jerusalem*, 165.

<sup>85</sup> “In Praise of the Diaspora (An Undelivered Memorial Address)” (9 January to 27 February 1953) in ByS, 463–77.

<sup>86</sup> “The Dangers of Success” (19 March 1949) in ByS, 333–35, 333.

<sup>87</sup> See e. g. “The Dangers of Success” in ByS, 333, and “Of Hebrew Names” (22 April 1949) in ByS, 337–39, “Of Jewish Culture” (13 May 1949) in ByS, 339, “Notebook of a Journey” (12 August to 23 December 1949) in ByS, 340–83, esp. 369.

<sup>88</sup> “The Dangers of Success” in ByS, 334.

The confrontation with this Zionist xenophobia and the arrogance he perceived in the “negationist” stance made Klein uneasily reconsider his own position. “It is true”, he wrote as early as 1949,

that the “negators” can adduce many texts – including some from my own writings – to prove how superior *aretz* [i. e. the land] is to *chutz l’aretz* [i. e. outside the land] – but such texts are essential to the culture of a people in exile. It is through such texts that it lives until the day of the reintegration. But once reintegrated – such texts are but literature.<sup>89</sup>

Melech’s death in *The Second Scroll*, published two years after this indictment, is an affirmation of the redemption achieved with the creation of the State of Israel. It is not, however, an affirmation of its absolute claim to an “authentic” Jewish identity, as is suggested by the narrator’s rejection of the “insularity” and the “reactionary nature” (Scroll, 80) of that Israeli poetry inspired by the *shlilath hagaluth*, the negation of the diaspora, which he considers to be no more than a transient reaction to the experiences of exile: “It would vanish”, he asserts. “It did not belong to the essential thoughtways of our people [...]; it surged up only as an answer to contemporary history.” “It was”, as he continues in terms evocative of those of post-colonial theory, “Israel’s retort to Europe, couched in Europe’s language” (Scroll, 80).

Klein’s “Undelivered Memorial Address” supports this reading. There the diaspora, to negate which were to question Klein’s own existence in Canada, is understood to have been, and to continue to be, a formative experience and inspiration of Jewish life. Acknowledging its vulnerability, of which the cataclysm of the Holocaust had been horrible proof, Klein at first concedes: “Diaspora it was that brought Death into our world and all our woe! From it our humiliation; through it our agony; in it, the long emptiness of our days.”<sup>90</sup> But more important is to him, that

the Ingathering enters the land [...] with continuing knowledge and memory undimmed, its experiences augmented, its recollection unbroken [...]; this is a global people that now resumes its home! [...] To Israel, microcosm, cosmos is brought, the knowledge of the world! Thus at that place where other peoples end, this one again begins!<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> “The Dangers of Success” in ByS, 334.

<sup>90</sup> “In Praise of the Diaspora” in ByS, 465.

<sup>91</sup> “In Praise of the Diaspora” in ByS, 473.

Diaspora, he maintains, "at the hour of his death [...], is seen in the true light, exemplar, model, inspiration",<sup>92</sup> and the same, we may assume, applies to Melech in *The Second Scroll* who "through the sheer force of his existence again in our life naturalized the miracle. The company of men now he had left and was one with the soil of Israel, but here in Israel these were not really tombs but antechambers to new life" (Scroll, 92).

### Conclusion

Almost for the whole duration of his creative years Germany intruded forcibly into A. M. Klein's works. Clashing violently with, and refracted by, that other primary concern of his which was his Jewishness and, derived from this, his Judaism and his Zionism, the intrusion resulted in many references to things German.

In *The Second Scroll* these references are, although obvious enough, veiled by their aesthetic articulation, in addition to which Klein deliberately effaced the name of the "enemy". The depersonalisation of the persecutor is a logical consequence of Klein's attempt to read eschatological significance into contemporary Jewish history. For in the recent history of the Holocaust and its aftermath he sees the repetition, and the conclusion, of the old pattern of exile and redemption. Redemption is achieved with the creation of the Jewish State in Palestine, and it is achieved against the antagonism of the forces of darkness, an image evoked time and again in Klein's writings by the metaphor of the Black Forest.

In Klein's eschatological scheme of things, promoted early on in his journalistic writings and, particularly, in his novel, the Germans, not, of course, without reason, were cast as the ungodly other, the cataclysm provoked by them necessary to the fulfilment of Jewish deliverance. But to overcome German paganism and bestiality, German *schrecklichkeit*, which threatened the whole world and which, with the efficiently organised murder of six million, attempted the unspeakable nefas, decide, signified for Klein not only the defeat of "Hamanism", it betokened also the survival of that essential "humanism" jeopardised by the negation of the Decalogue.

<sup>92</sup> "In Praise of the Diaspora" in ByS, 477.

That a "Hamanless"<sup>93</sup> world was not to be, nor the execution of "Implacable Justice", Klein realised soon after the war, and his continued abhorrence of post-Nazi Germany may well relate to this. That a "xenophobic" Zionism, in Klein's words, sought "to achieve with a theoretical dictum what all the tyrants of all the ages failed to achieve with fire and sword, namely, the nullification of Diaspora Jewry",<sup>94</sup> Klein realised soon after the foundation of the State of Israel. But in spite of this observation Klein still believed in Jewish redemption willed by God. Writing contemporary Jewish history as an extension to, or continuation of, Holy Writ, as another Haggadah or a *Second Scroll*, meant therefore no less for Klein, than an affirmation of the Decalogue and an affirmation not only of the covenant but also of the God who acts in history to redeem His chosen people and who resurrects them "on the heights of Carmel, on the hills of the Negev, on the mountains of Galilee".

<sup>93</sup> "The Feast of Purim", *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (15 March 1946), [Editorial Comment].

<sup>94</sup> "The Dangers of Success" in ByS, 333.