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Exile beyond Return: Zionism and Diaspora in A.M. Klein's Journalism

EMILY BALLANTYNE

POET, LAWYER, AND JOURNALIST A.M. Klein (1902-72) has been well celebrated for his considerable contributions to Jewish Montreal and Canada more broadly. Thanks to the publication of his letters in 2011, edited by Elizabeth Popham, the fascinating and complex role played by his non-fiction writing must be reconsidered in light of what she so aptly describes in scare quotes as his “public relations work” (“Introduction” xiii), his dual role as editor of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* and speechwriter/fundraiser for the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC). The letters illuminate Klein’s relationship with his employer, Samuel Bronfman, owner of Joseph E. Seagram and Sons and president of the CJC (1938-62), clarifying Klein’s dual agenda during what was arguably the most significant experience of his life: his trip tracing displaced Jews of the European and African diasporas back to Israel in 1949, one year after creation of the new Jewish state.

Indeed, the significance of Klein’s journalism and of this event to his life has been prominently featured across the *Collected Works of A.M. Klein* project. His notebooks and editorials were collected in 1982 by M.W. Steinberg and Usher Caplan in *Beyond Sambatyon: Selected Essays and Editorials, 1928-1955* and feature, as one narrative, the serialized “Notebook of a Journey” that Klein published as an editorial-travelogue in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*. Steinberg suggests that the founding of Israel “was the happy culmination for Klein of years of dedicated labour on its behalf, an event made all the more solemn and exhilarating, momentous, almost Messianic in meaning, by the Holocaust in Europe that preceded it” (“Introduction” xv). Similarly, in her introduction to *The Second Scroll*, Klein’s only published novel, also based on these events, Popham describes the novel as “his own effort to come to terms with the historical redefinition of twentieth-century Jews, and specifically of his experience as a Canadian Jew who has witnessed the crises and triumphs of contemporary history only from a distance” (“Introduction” xii). In contradistinction, she describes “Notebook” as

the novel's "raw material," its base, "honed and elaborated in two years of speeches and editorials" (xv). Klein's journalism from this period is an earlier, rougher, and more immediate dialogue about the pleasure and pain of his identity as a Canadian Zionist. Thus, in this essay, building on the work of Klein scholars and editors, I argue that his journalism best epitomizes the central tension between his public persona as a Zionist and his private struggle with early Israeli nationalism's incompatibility with his diasporic Jewish Canadian identity.

Klein's great commitment to the Zionist cause, and his paid role as a spokesperson for the CJC, frame "Notebook" as a work committed to engaging intellectually and practically with the values and benefits of the new state. In exchange for funding his trip, the CJC requested that Klein campaign on its behalf for about two months, suggesting that, "If this were in the business world, I would put it in terms of being under exclusive contract to us" (*A.M. Klein: The Letters* 486).¹ Caplan, Klein's biographer, explains that "Klein's task was to survey Jewish refugee problems and, on returning, to deliver a series of speeches about his trip at fund-raising rallies across Canada" (167). "Notebook" was written in installments and published with short delays both during and immediately following Klein's trip from August to December 1949.²

At the same time, "Notebook" is characterized by an intense spiritual and ethical engagement with the plight of the Jewish diaspora and the question of Israel as a redemptive homeland. As a Zionist, Klein identifies Israel as a "home" or spiritual homeland, and as a result he considers his journey as a symbol of a larger spiritual return, one that spans millennia, of Jews scattered by diaspora returning to their historical place of origin. Although many works of travel writing construct the narrative in terms of a linear movement from journey to return, Klein's travel journalism accounts for the generations of exile that preceded his journey, suggesting a far more circuitous narrative movement. His work acknowledges the atrocities of colonial oppression of diasporic Jews that culminated in the Holocaust, but it also seeks spiritual solace in this exilic "return" journey or pilgrimage to Israel.

With the founding of Israel in 1948, Klein's internal loyalties and diasporic consciousness came to a head: entering a national Jewish community caused Klein to question and reflect on his Canadian diasporic identity. "Notebook" confronts his dual responsibilities to his country of adoption and his diasporic spiritual community. Lily Cho argues that

diaspora acts as an identity category and should be understood “first and foremost [as] a subjective condition marked by the contingencies of long histories of displacements and genealogies of dispossession” (“Turn to Diaspora” 14). Thus, Klein identifies in “Notebook” simultaneously with his ethnic and national identities. There is a marked internal divide: he identifies with a dispersed community of Jewish subjects defined by their shared expulsion and long history of exile from the Middle East, yet he has a strong investment in Canada as a central figure in the burgeoning Jewish community in 1940s Montreal. This community, for him, realizes and represents his understanding of the possibilities for Jewish community by bringing together a concrete group of Jews who appreciate Canadian institutions and values.

In some ways, travelling created for Klein a sense of exile that he did not previously fully understand; it made manifest his position as “unhomely” — a term that Cho suggests is at the core of diasporic identity (“Turn to Diaspora” 19). Although he was well aware of the reach and terror of anti-Semitism, not until his physical encounters with non-North American Jews was he able to distinguish more clearly his own plight and longing from these diverse groups’ individual and varied hardships. Through this process, his understanding of difference within the Jewish diaspora, particularly as it related to power and class, made it impossible to idealize a unified, singular community. While Klein continued to acknowledge a sense of shared identity and heritage, he understood that he was only so capable of celebrating Israeli nationalism because of the internal conflict that it created between Zionism and his sense of obligation to the diasporic communities that did not return to Israel.

By recovering Klein’s travel journalism and asserting its prominence of place in his oeuvre, I argue that his journey abroad marks a unique transnational consideration of what it means to balance intersecting identities — Montreal and Jew — when they are translated into conflicting national identities — Canadian versus Israeli. Klein’s journey inverted the past paradigm of immigration and settlement in Canada by attempting to negotiate a Canadian identity when presented with the possibility of emigration to a historical country of origin. However, instead of recovering this historical national identity, Klein’s journalism reveals its inherent risks and mourns the loss of diasporic identity to both his real and his imagined sense of Jewish community.

Klein's Cultural Ideal: The "Wondrous Ascent" through Pilgrimage to Israel

Klein spent the majority of his life living in Montreal, and his investment in the Montreal Jewish community was at the centre of both his politics and his poetics. Although his religious practice has been debated,³ his sense of Jewishness as both a spiritual and a cultural identity was essential to his work. Klein viewed his Jewish heritage as bestowing on him a primary responsibility to think and act on behalf of a collective. In "A Psalm Touching on Genealogy," he clearly figures the individual self as embodying an entire community:

Not sole was I born, but entire genesis:
 For to the fathers that begat me, this
 Body is residence. Corpuscular,
 They dwell in my veins, they eavesdrop at my ear,
 They circle, as with the Torahs, round my skull,
 In exit and entrance all day pull
 The latches of my heart, descend, and rise —
 And there look generations through my eyes. (2.624)

Here the narrator does not separate himself from his genealogical past but sees himself as literally embodying those who came before him. These generations shape and control the individual's actions ("pull / The latches of my heart, descend, and rise —") and inform his vision and his sense of the world. Klein sees the individual as powerfully embodying the larger community, acting as a representative of his culture and heritage. Steinberg describes him as a "chronicler and champion" for his readers (29), and this is perhaps most starkly manifested in his life-long commitment to Zionism and the creation of a Jewish cultural and spiritual centre in Israel to bring together and unify the Jewish diaspora.

Klein's ardent Zionism was linked directly to his sense of a larger, cosmopolitan community of Jewish subjects as a kind of "imagined community."⁴ Although Klein supported the re-establishment of Israel as a homeland, he largely figured it as the physical manifestation of an already existent community and did not see it as a reversal of diaspora. Steinberg and Caplan have suggested that Klein was most influenced by early Zionist scholar Achad Ha'am. This is confirmed in an editorial that Klein published in November 1928 in the *Judean*:

[Ha'am] realized that there is in the Jew a talent all his own, a characteristic ability, an individual genius. This must be encouraged and fostered. This must be cultivated. It is obvious that for such a circle of activity we must find a centre, a cultural centre — out of Zion must come learning, and the word of God from Jerusalem. The Jew must cease to be a 'luftmensch'⁵ — he must anchor his culture in the soil. (*Beyond Sambation 4*)

This editorial emphasizes the importance of grounding culture in its historical geographic location to gain a renewed sense of Jewish talent and intellectual richness. Klein points to the ability of the Jewish diaspora to bring together diverse groups and share cultural knowledge, but he does not homogenize Jewish peoples into a single entity or deny the diaspora of the past. Richard Lemm summarizes several useful components that inform Klein's "Zionist vision": "Israel as spiritual homeland, creative centre and power-source, land of renewal, and geopolitical reality which redeems Jews from the nexus of historical oppression and Diaspora" (57). Klein not only sees himself as a representative of his people but also sees in the Zionist movement an opportunity to restore intellectual strength and prosperity to a dispersed community. For him, from the earliest stage of his thinking, his own genius, and that of his community, are linked to the possibility of the Jewish state long before it became a political reality in the State of Israel.

Prior to 1948, Klein's Zionism was not in conflict with his commitment to his life in Canada. However, after Israel was founded, dual loyalties became more uncertain though present. Wealthy and successful Canadians eagerly supported the development of Israel but were not necessarily inclined to emigrate there. Indeed, in his 2008 history of Canadian Zionism, past president of the Canadian Zionist Federation David Azrieli⁶ notes that "Canadian Jews' love for Canada has made Canadian Zionists ambivalent about the role of immigrating to Israel in building a Zionist identity" (135-36). Thus, in 1949, at this determining moment for Jewish Canadian Zionists, a commitment to Zionism did not necessitate emigration to Israel; instead, it could be illustrated by a literal or metaphoric pilgrimage to the state. Klein, operating in his capacity as a journalist, acted as a witness for the English-speaking Jewish public in Montreal. By narrating his travel experiences in Israel, he described and interpreted Israel as a nation and as a spiritual centre for his Canadian audience at home using the framework of spiritual

ascent. Although his Zionism before the trip was unflagging, the journalism reveals that, when Klein travelled to Israel, he began to find that aspects of his intersecting identities were irreconcilable.

Informing this essay is the complex impact that the founding of Israel had in shifting Zionist ideology for Canadians. As an ardent Zionist, Klein placed additional ideological weight on the idea of travelling to Israel as a kind of spiritual ascent or *aliyah*, the word used for those who “ascend” to the Holy Land. Although he never literally contemplated emigration there, he saw his trip to Israel as a kind of spiritual *aliyah*. Klein develops several references to *aliyah* in *The Second Scroll*. When the plane takes off for Israel, the narrator reflects that, “Warmed by the sun beating through the porthole, my mind was dreamily in communion with the murmur of the motors humming through aluminum. They made me whatever music my mind willed, ululative, messianic, annunciatory. It was as if I was part of an ascension” (45). Here the metaphor of travel, of ascent linked to flight, is combined with the spiritual ascendance of going to Israel. Further, in *Gloss Gimel*, the vision in the Sistine Chapel includes “ascensions, *aliyoth*,” which Zailig Pollock describes in “The Myth of Exile and Redemption in *Gloss Gimel*” as establishing that “the redemption of exile is complete.” In both cases, *The Second Scroll* develops the return to Israel as a symbolic *aliyah* or spiritual ascent.

Anthropologist Jacob Climo explains that, just as returning to Israel is linked to ascent, leaving Israel is linked to “descent” or *yerida*. *Yordim* is the word used for those who descend or make *yerida* by leaving Israel, and *olim* is the word used for those who have made *aliyah* by moving to Israel (114).⁷ *Yordim* is a disparaging term; *yordim* choose exile and distance themselves from the spiritual and cultural nation that Israel embodies. Climo describes the experience of *aliyah* for Americans as an “important spiritual paradox” because, “On the one hand, the return to Israel symbolizes reunification with the idealized lost community of biblical days, while on the other hand, in order to make *aliyah*, migrants must separate from their living relatives, leaving behind in America their parents, siblings, and grandparents” (121). The opposite, we can infer, also contains this paradox: though the *yordim* choose to return to their communities and nation-states, they do so in the position of the spiritual exile. This suggests a false “choice” to be separate from the natural and spiritual “home” of Israel or be separate from communal

and national affiliations. The connotation of the *yordim* is that they choose the descent, the secularized space, above the ascendant place where spirituality and nationality appear to emerge. The significance of making *aliyah* informs Klein's travel journalism, while his decision to return to Canada reflects some of the shame of making *yerida*. The weighted meanings of being *olim* and *yordim* are clarified by Klein's travel journalism and expounded in his writing upon his return.

Klein's travel journalism offers his initial impressions of his trip as a structured return narrative — and account of a spiritual *aliyah* — for the reading public of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*. Klein does not present his journey chronologically; rather, he begins with entries stating his initial excitement over the State of Israel, then describes the atrocities that he witnessed in Morocco and Europe, but at the end of his account he returns, somewhat disenchanted and doubtful, to a detailed consideration of Israeli politics and its implications for the diaspora. “Notebook” dramatically reframes his physical and emotional pilgrimage from Israel to Casablanca and Europe as a reflective circular structure: Israel, Casablanca, Europe, and Israel again. When Klein returns to a discussion of Israel at the end of the series, it is without the same joyous possibility that he expresses at the beginning, and instead he offers a far more cautious, restrained account of Israel's failure to acknowledge diasporic Jewish communities. By tracing this progression through “Notebook,” I will illustrate where his intersecting identities come into conflict and how tropes of travel and journey serve to articulate differences within Jewish ethnicities and question an idealized, spiritual unity across the Jewish diaspora.

The initial entry of 12 August 1949 sets the tone for the early entries by using a polyvocal approach to capture the spiritual meanings at the core of this trip for Klein individually and the larger Montreal Jewish community. He uses a variety of literary and religious voices to comment on his intended departure for Israel from both cultural and religious perspectives.⁸ He begins by briefly recording his travel itinerary in a reportage style, and then he immediately moves to a rhetorical revision in which he emphasizes the significance of this experience: “Who can describe, what master of language can communicate the emotions which most thrill the heart of a Jew, scion of sixty generations of exiles, when at last, after two millennia of tribal banishment, he turns again his face in expectation of a return, albeit temporary, to the

ancestral soil?” (“Notebook” 340). Klein establishes his pilgrimage as a triumphant return full of possibility. First he acknowledges his status as a reporter and social commentator, and then he builds anticipation by allowing his learned and religious commentary to give way to school-boyish glee. Israel here exists only in its ideal form: it is ancestral and linked to a patrimonial spiritual inheritance. The political and religious complexities that allowed the state to come into being are somewhat undercut by his excitement. On the eve of his journey, Klein plays the role of the pilgrim by combining spiritual fervour with uncontained excitement, acknowledging Israel exclusively as Zion and himself as an ardent disciple.

The initial entries suggest that Klein sought to rejoin a lost community; his pilgrimage was to witness a reconstructed community on the site of a historical one. The spiritual nature of the pilgrimage and the framing of an idealized Israel are prominent in his second article (19 August) as he didactically writes his journey into Jewish history. Klein references the wandering of Moses when he reflects that “There is also, as with me, the miracle of *kvitzas haderech* — the road condensed — the path to Jerusalem made a journey of two days instead of a forty years’ wandering” (“Notebook” 345). At times, Klein’s pilgrimage verges on prophecy fulfillment. The sense of urgency and responsibility accompanying his journey suggests that some kind of Messianic return is made possible through his journey to the new Jewish state. Adding to the spiritual significance of Klein’s pilgrimage is his realization that his arrival in Israel corresponds with the return to Israel of Zionist Theodor Herzl’s body. Klein describes Herzl: “You are yourself the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy — have not the bones come to life? [I]s not a new breath breathed into the body of this people?” (“Notebook” 356).⁹ Klein sees Herzl as a Jewish champion; his historic return to Israel has actualized and made material the idealized conditions of Zionism, acting as a symbol for unifying the disparate and downtrodden Jewish populations. He is represented as a Messiah figure, which Klein corroborates through his own holy act of witnessing. When Herzl’s body is exhumed and transferred to Israel, Klein treats it as a moment of miraculous return: “But to-day with my own eyes I was witness to his return. I saw him come, I saw him enter, I heard him welcomed” (“Notebook” 353). Using his knowledge of the Torah and its commentators, Klein thus suggests a coming of the Messiah associated with the return to Zion. Thus, his

journalism promotes the spiritual significance of return, dovetailing directly with the connotations already associated with *aliyah*.

The tone in the early entries corroborates the idea of Israel's cultural and spiritual transcendence and embraces *aliyah*. Klein celebrates "the imaginativeness with which commercial and industrial objects are named" and cheers for the Jewish history represented in the naming of streets: "[T]he directory of Tel Aviv is a dictionary of national biography. . . . [Y]ou can't cross an intersection but you traverse the memory of Jewish worthies, ancient and modern" ("Notebook" 349-50). Language and names restore historical roots in the city and cause celebration by connecting the modern with the ancient. Klein also looks for this connection across time in scenes of worship and study, often turning living people into transcendent figures or tropes. While visiting Safed, he witnesses a boy studying the Torah with a mentor: "They were not only not of Israel, they were not even of this globe, but transcendent with immortal longings" ("Notebook" 365). Here and elsewhere Klein imagines Israel as a scene of miracles and suggests that this feeling is widespread: "It manifests itself everywhere in Israel" ("Notebook" 366). There are many points where he is caught up in, and overwhelmed by, his trip as a moment of biblical fulfillment, particularly given the recent and omnipresent spectre of the Holocaust: "[T]he greatest wonder of the age . . . [is] the fact that precisely at the moment in history when European Jewry stood under threat of complete annihilation, at that moment it is that the State of Israel is established! . . . That prophecy is fulfilled. Out of the very darkness, illumination came forth" ("Notebook" 369). Instead of privileging this political gain for the Jewish state, Klein emphasizes spiritual and cultural renewal. The early entries all strive to establish the *aliyah* of being in Israel after generations of exile. This resolution is a source of wonder and spiritual engagement that Klein actively shares with his readers to establish the significance of his pilgrimage.

While Klein interprets his surroundings as a transcendent narrative, those celebratory moments are marred by later entries that more closely interrogate the people and politics of the new state and are more critical of *aliyah*. He recognizes his position as a visiting Canadian national by identifying some tensions between new Israeli citizens and Western visitors and tourists. This discussion breaks from the celebratory and transcendent narrative of return and serves as a harsh reminder of his

liminal position as a tourist and outsider in a foreign country. His entry of 2 September 1949 offers a list of “Ten Don’ts for Americans” (“Notebook” 351) to help police tourist behaviour in the new state. In this list, Klein admonishes “Americans” for overemphasizing their contributions to the founding of Israel, for directly comparing American ingenuity to Israeli limitations, and for expecting others to piously welcome and serve them. But, at the same time, he also vocalizes his concern about Israeli reciprocity in his “One Don’t for Israelis,” in which he looks for Israeli empathy: “Please remember that the American Jewish tourist is *also a Jew*. He is in the country only because he is interested in the future of Israel. It’s not his fault if he didn’t have to go through the ordeals you went through” (“Notebook” 352). In some ways, this acts as an apologia for his own status and for other potential tourists/pilgrims. Klein protects both himself and his Canadian readers by acknowledging these behaviours as “American” and “tourist,” neither of which completely encapsulates his identity as a Canadian pilgrim. The tensions at play in this list suggest that the spiritual splendour that Klein initially attributes to Israel must be tempered by the living occupants who might not have his high aspirations or sense of universal Jewish community. This is one of the first times that Klein acknowledges feelings of alienation and rejection by the Israeli population.

His initial experience of return is very much in line with *aliyah*. His intense focus on the spiritual and communal benefits for himself and those whom he considers “his people” illustrates his inability to fully acknowledge difference among Jews or understand his appropriation of others in shaping his central vision. His attempts at universal vision reveal his own biases but also help him to see his own privilege in his empathy for other Western Jewish travellers. However, Klein is not an emigrant but a pilgrim who chooses exile; although he does not call himself a tourist, his privilege positions him as such. He is witnessing Israel for Canada and thus is closer to the American tourists whom he shames than to the newly minted nationals. His sense of collective identity is always already informed by his country of adoption, and his experience of Israel is shaped by the Canadian cultural privilege that allows him to universalize his experience instead of critically engaging with it. This starts a slow process of incomplete reconciliation in which Klein attempts to make sense of these disparities while maintaining a central transcendent vision of *aliyah*.

Zionism, Nationalism, and Colonialism: Descent and Redemption in Morocco and Israel

For Klein, from the beginning, Zionism was linked to a spiritual and communal ideal: a reunion of and return for the oppressed and dispersed diaspora. However, whatever his intentions on embarking on his pilgrimage to Israel, when he was confronted with Jewish experiences outside Israel, “Notebook of a Journey” provides troubling evidence of how *aliyah* and the establishment of Israel were fraught with nationalism and colonialism. There was no pure Zion because the establishment of Israel was not just a holy return but also a political project in nation building inflected by postwar nationalism and settler colonialism. When Klein left Israel for Morocco, his spiritual pilgrimage had already been darkened by a sense of how the West and Israel gained agency through the oppression and subjugation of others. The diasporic experiences of North American and North African Jews failed to unify, and his journalism ultimately attests to Zionism’s complicity with nationalist and colonialist projects.

In contrast to his hope for the new Israel, his description of his time in Morocco is transformative and bleak, for Klein witnessed the despair and suffering of some of the remaining exiled Jews. He devotes considerable time and energy to describing the horrific conditions of Jewish populations in Morocco. Perhaps his most moving passages attempt to define a Casablanca *mellah* for his Canadian readers: “A mellah, then, is a ghetto — not a metaphorical ghetto: the neighbourhood which is the result of Jewish gregariousness, but a literal ghetto, a ghetto established, a ghetto by law ordained” (“Notebook” 357). His understanding of ghettoized Jews seems to stem from his experience in Montreal in terms of neighbourhood. The affable community of Montreal is sharply contrasted with the historically forced confinement of Jews of this slum in Casablanca. His understanding of Jewish oppression reaches a new level, which Klein attempts to pass on to his readers with a horrifying realization: “[F]or thousands this is no temporary ordeal, but their constant element!” (“Notebook” 360). His experience here is one of human rights violation instead of spiritual transcendence. His witnessing helps him to understand his privilege and to present more accurately the unique relations of power that govern diaspora around the globe.

“Notebook” attests to the hopeless descent in Morocco from the new hope of Israel. It was in Morocco that Klein distinguished between his

Canadian experience as a Jew and a North African Jewish experience. He realizes in "Notebook" that "my experience had been confined to western Jewries" and that "To speak of the concepts of democracy as one speaks of the Jews of Casablanca is, of course, to speak of concepts stranger to each other" ("Notebook" 361). His unified imagined community of Jews was undermined as he experienced for the first time the way that oppression can reduce agency to the point of *mellah*. His treatment of the *mellah* offers a harsh criticism of systematic anti-Semitism that emphasizes the role of external colonial forces in subjugating and degrading Moroccan Jews.

Colonialism's link to Jewish decline is further substantiated by Klein's acknowledgement of the West's role in this oppression: Casablanca is under French colonial rule. This jarring realization, of his partial complicity in Jewish oppression abroad and the incongruence between democracy at home and abjection in Casablanca, is not explicitly stated but significantly informs "Notebook." Casablanca nuances his understanding of colonial power, and Klein articulates the role that the state plays in creating and denying agency among its potential subjects. His own biases allow him to largely attribute this injustice to Muslim rule, though he is aware that Casablanca is a French colony: "One is set to wondering whether all this, even under the enlightened French Government, is not the result of design rather than of helplessness, — the desire to establish, so that the exploited may be content, a helotry even more exploited than they, — the desire to maintain the triple hierarchy; the bureaucracy of the colonial metropole, the illusory sub-élite of the Arab medina; the untouchables of the mellah!" ("Notebook" 360). Klein primarily sees the Arabic contribution of "Moslem masters" to Jewish social injustice. He suggests that the discrimination is "part and parcel of the fabric of Moslem thought" ("Notebook" 360). But this Islamic bias does not erase or limit the power of France as a colonizing agent. The systems mutually reinforce one another, with Muslim prejudices reinforcing the colonial "design" that keeps Muslim masters complacent by giving them limited power over the further subjugated Jewish population.

As his discussion turns to Europe, his attention remains fixed on colonialism from the point of view of Jewish refugees. Klein distinguishes between the asymmetrical relations of power that oppress the Moroccan Jews and the comparable relations of power that shape Israel's

formation. The Zionist movement has frequently been criticized as a form of settler-colonialism akin to the invasive settlement of Canada by British and French colonies.¹⁰ It is not a natural but an imperial process that displaces one population in favour of another. Palestinian displacement to create a nation for diasporic Jews is largely excluded from “Notebook.” The narrative of restitution after the long history of anti-Semitism distorts the settlement of Israel by effectively erasing the more sinister aspects of nationalism and colonialism: displacing one set of people to settle another. “Notebook” primarily questions the privilege and power structures of nationalism and colonialism, yet peripherally they reinforce these systems by failing to acknowledge the way that Israel recreates and reinforces aspects of colonialism from both his home country and sites of empire in Africa.

Klein does not identify with the negative aspects of Israel’s colonial project. Instead, he reads settlement in Israel only as an opportunity for those oppressed under colonial regimes elsewhere. His article of 30 September 1949 describes Yemenite refugees waiting in Marseilles for transportation to Israel. Hope re-enters his discussion as Klein imagines that “the world will learn of one of the most exciting and elevating chapters in a tale of the ingathering of Israel” (“Notebook” 363). While in Marseilles, he talked to refugees whose flights to Israel were funded by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), a humanitarian organization working to rescue this community as a part of Operation Magic Carpet. During this operation, undertaken between December 1948 and September 1950, the JDC airlifted approximately 48,000 Yemenites on almost 450 flights from Aden to Israel, after the Yemenites had trekked across 200 miles of desert (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee).

Klein dramatically describes quotidian Yemenite immigration experience thus: “[T]hey issue, the dark little men, from the magic carpet which was their transport (in more than one sense) and fall to the ground, and kiss it. This is for them a great fulfillment — answer to prayers, inauguration of a great new age. They rise from their embrace of the dust of their languishing, and turn to their guide, and ask: Where lives here the Messiah?” (“Notebook” 363). Klein can delight in the redemption of the Yemenites because he sees their return to Israel as one way to re-establish broken continuity.¹¹ The Yemenites’ proud acceptance of their ancestral heritage upon return suggests the possibility of

overcoming the past by seeing it as a radical break from the natural course of history. There is the celebration of one cycle of oppression being broken but not the same level of engagement with the new cycles being recreated in this process.

After Marseilles, Klein's time in Europe is only briefly accounted for in the "Notebook" entries, which instead foreground Israeli regions and politics. His decision to avoid following up his images of Yemenites and Moroccans with European representations of Jewish oppression seems to self-reflexively acknowledge the problem of celebration in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Instead, Klein returns to a discussion of regions of Israel beyond Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv and then focuses on the politics of the new state. Most important in these later entries is the more obvious tension between the spiritual, often figured in terms of continuity with the past, and the actual, which often seems to be disconnected from this ideal past. It is in these sections that he most directly confronts Israeli nationalism's disconnection from his interpretation of Zionism.

In particular, Klein is hesitant to support an ultranationalistic Zionism that denies the value of diaspora and looks forward to its disappearance. By his entry of 21 October 1949, he attempts to come to terms with how widespread this ideology appears to be. He states that "They call it *shlilath ha-galuth*, the negation of the diaspora. The protagonists of this philosophy . . . maintain that now, the State of Israel being established, Jewry in the diaspora is doomed" ("Notebook" 369). While Klein states that he initially viewed this position as being held only by "diehard Chauvinists" and "bitter disillusioned Jews," he explains that "this kind of thinking was popular even with people who did not pose as philosophers. The native-born youth, for example, is in some measure already infected with it" ("Notebook" 369). Throughout this article, he suggests that exclusionary Israeli nationalism is popular among the young who "scorn the sophistication of the Diaspora" ("Notebook" 370). Although the position is widely held, Klein trivializes it and suggests that it might be treated as a "transitional manifestation" ("Notebook" 370). Nonetheless, this entry establishes his sense that colonial sentiment within Israel, instead of enabling a full embrace of diverse diasporic Jewish cultures, will lead to the radical exclusion of Jews who have not chosen permanent settlement there. Klein ultimately believes that this is not representative of his sense of Jewish culture: "It does not spring from the natural thought ways of our folk, but surges

up only as [an] answer to contemporary history” (“Notebook” 370). By framing colonizing nationalist sentiment as unnatural and short-lived, Klein attempts to avoid attributing these attitudes to Zionism itself, but he can do so only rhetorically. Although he can trivialize and limit the force of these ideologies, they persist throughout his final entries on Israel. With his more nuanced appreciation for the diversity of Jewish experience, as well as his new attention to the links between colonialism and nationalism, the separation of ascent and descent becomes muddled.

Klein’s fear of negation of the diaspora is linked to his desire for Israel to remain as a symbol of all Jewish culture and spiritual life and not as a discrete political entity that defines itself through exclusion, geographic boundaries, and a political nationalism based on citizenship. Israel is not an imagined diasporic community given a physical and spiritual homeland; it is a distinct and discrete nation with the same governing principles and political agenda as his own country. Klein’s sense of community was distinct from his sense of nationality; his entries in “Notebook” reveal that these distinctions were not shared among the newly adopted Israeli nationals. Klein saw Israel, in all its cultural diversity, as moving toward a homogeneity, a unified political identity, distinct from his desire for a universal but disparate affiliative connection among Jewish peoples.

Before his journey, national affiliation was of secondary importance to Klein. He was Jewish first and Canadian second. His cosmopolitan Jewish identity developed through diaspora transcended nationality and focused on aesthetic and cultural values that he thought were universal within the Jewish community. Klein saw Jewishness as transcending other markers of identity — especially nationality — that were the products of exterior forces that denied Jews full creative potential. What he discovered in Israel was that nationality was integral to his worldview and that his Canadian identity shaped his values and worldview. Klein did not transcend Canadian identity but offered a particular representation of the difficulty of negotiating diasporic subjectivity in the context of the resurgence of nationalism at mid-century. Furthermore, his concern with the erasure of his identity as a Canadian, linked to his sense of himself as a diasporic Jew in Montreal by the nationalist agenda of Israel, revealed that his national identity was just as integral to his sense of self as his Jewish identity, though they no longer seemed to cohere.

“Notebook” explores important tensions between the possibility of

an Israel that supports a universal community of Jewish subjects and the limitation of an Israel to fully align with his vision of the state as a unification and celebration of a diasporic cultural community. Although in “Notebook” Klein reads Israel’s establishment along prophetic lines, and infuses its actions with great spiritual significance, he also seeks to limit the aspects of Israeli identity that alienate and disrupt his sense of community outside the country. He supports the re-establishment of the Holy Land as an ardent Zionist, but he is wary of how this translates into the nationalism and colonialism of the new State of Israel. When his pilgrimage ended and he returned to Montreal, he did so with a reaffirmed sense of the conflict between national and diasporic identities.

Klein and *Yerida*: Diasporic Identity after Israel

“Notebook of a Journey” extenuates the gap between the potential power of diasporic community and the more hegemonic power of the nation-state; Klein’s late journalism upon returning to Montreal acknowledges the submission of diaspora to nation. The desire for community, for a sense of wholeness that is attainable, is frustrated by the search. Klein’s last written documents before his withdrawal articulate his growing sense of failure and loss upon his return to Canada. Return is linked to *yerida*, and Klein engages with the connotation of the Canadian Jewish diaspora after Israel. He confronts the derogatory assumptions of *yordim*, even though his trip does not make him an *oleh*. Berl Frymer describes *yordim* as “citizens of a new galut [exile], temporary immigrants, permanent tourists in transit. Their legal status is not important. They are there to stay” (104). The experience of *yordim*, particularly so shortly after the founding of the Jewish state, is fraught with a sense of failure: theirs is a chosen self-expulsion from the Promised Land that isolates them from the diasporic communities that have not attempted to make *aliyah*. *Yordim* have lost the power of a strong communal identity (whether Israeli or diasporic) and are further victimized; *yerida* is a personal choice and thus cannot draw strength from the communal experience of diaspora, the shared experience of loss.

Building on Pollock’s articulation of Klein’s desire to create “a vision of the One in the Many” (*A.M. Klein* 3), Lucas Tromly suggests that, “Instead of Klein’s ideal of a metaphysical unity which rises out of diversity (the One in the Many), the enemies of the Diaspora are divisive

in their efforts for political totalization (the One or the Many)” (38). Klein’s understanding of this polarizing trend away from his central vision is perhaps made most clear in his public speeches and journalism directly following his trip. There the Israeli nationalism that attempts to separate *yordim* from *olim* goes against his vision of diaspora as a unifying force that acknowledges difference while celebrating the universality of Jewish experience. His hopeful Zionism before his trip eventually gives way to a harsh realization that the broad sense of diasporic community is in danger of being undone by Israel.

Klein’s first speech on his return from Israel was tailored as an appeal for North American donations to the larger Zionist cause (Caplan 171) and thus framed using propagandistic language. Klein delivered the speech on 24 October 1949 as a part of the CJC convention in Toronto. Keeping this in mind, it is unsurprising that he chose to structure his appeal using keenly honed pathos with an eye for the strengths of Canadian Jewish cultural identity. He once again restructured the events of his trip to emphasize a progression out of Europe and toward Israel.

Klein describes in this speech European refugee camps, a familiar subject, and uses this emotional appeal to introduce his audience to the inhabitants of Casablanca’s *mellah*, who in contrast are “unobserved and unnoticed, unpitied and unwept” (“Transcription” 206). The rest of the speech pulses between miraculous possibility and difficulty. Klein identifies many limitations of Israel, difficulties linked to the large number of refugees and the relatively small economy, but he continues to use the frame of miracles to emphasize the power of refugees returning home and in particular the impact of Operation Magic Carpet for Yemenite Jews. To conclude, he attempts to connect the Canadians in attendance to these experiences abroad.

Klein makes his first attempt to reconcile his status as a Canadian Jew upon his return by comparing North American Jews to Moses. Klein explains that this community is “The Moses of our era — and I do not want to carry the comparison too far — the Moses of our era is Canadian and American Jewry — in this respect: we do not enter the Promised Land, but we make possible the Promised Land” (“Transcription” 212). Here Klein acknowledges the alienated, exiled position of this group from Israel but still attempts to create a strong spiritual and representative link between the communities abroad and

the Zionist mission. Although Moses functions as a central prophet in Jewish thought, he is linked to exile and not to return. He is linked to the wilderness and to the wandering, leading the people toward Israel but ultimately being denied entry. Because Klein in this speech is fundraising among North Americans, this choice of appeal is significant because of its acknowledgement of the sense of distance and alienation that Moses experiences. Moses leads the people to the Promised Land but remains outside it. Unlike other Jewish groups across the globe, North American Jews are somewhat removed from the mass return to Israel, in part because they have increased agency and (partial) protection from the horrors of Europe and North Africa. Although they can contribute to rebuilding the Jewish state, they must reconcile their desires to support the cause with their reasons for remaining in exile.

The spiritual power of Moses is an alternative to the more derogatory *yerida*, the exile who chooses to remain in exile. Although Klein's speeches substitute this more positive figure to explain Jewish Canadians' relationship to Israel, his journalism continues to confront the experience of return as negative, as one of descent. The ideals at the heart of Zionism — Israeli nationalism and its inherent spiritual transcendence — are hostile to his identification as a diasporic Jew. Instead of the State of Israel being an answer to perpetual Jewish oppression and victimization, for Klein it continues to denigrate diasporic Jews by denying their value. In one of his last major published series, "In Praise of the Diaspora," he mourns this identity and the inevitable dissolution of his Montreal community that he foresees as resulting from Israeli nationalism. Diaspora is treated elegiacally in these articles as Klein mourns the death of his spiritual and cultural identity as a diasporic Jew.

"In Praise of the Diaspora" appeared in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* in seven installments in January and February 1953.¹² Written ostensibly as a memorial address, it reflects on and comes to terms with what Klein saw as one of the inevitable consequences of Zionism: the destruction of diasporic Jewish communities. He wrote the speech as a formal eulogy from the point of view of deep personal loss and mourning. Heike Härting describes this condition as "diasporic melancholia," which "does not abandon the idea of diaspora but designates an affect of the traumatic ways in which the nation-state seeks to regulate and instrumentalize diasporic life" (189-90).¹³ Here Klein's sense of community, which Härting describes as an "unacknowledged racialized dis-

course of belonging” (190), is confronted by a state that delegitimizes his sense of imagined community and connection across the diaspora. This series of articles directly confronts this mourning and suggests ways in which grief itself has been undermined by the establishment of Israel.

Once more Klein returns to a central persona to personalize the conceptual and spiritual impacts of the historical changes to diaspora caused by formation of the new state. He asks his readers to mourn the loss of diaspora as they might a close family relation. When he initially describes diasporic death, he personifies diaspora, calling it Uncle Galuth: “From an idea, from a mere concept of time, a vague cold image of space, the Diaspora changed, it subsumed bone, it took on flesh, it became — a person! *Galuth!* Uncle Galuth! One who had been real and warm and human, and was no more” (“In Praise” 467).¹⁴ Klein cleverly collapses diaspora and exile in Galuth, evoking the complex ways in which the two concepts come together and ultimately die as one. The ideal of diasporic community is linked to an exile that no longer exists in the same manner when a nation has been re-established. For the North American, and predominantly Canadian, Jews who make up his readership, there is no diaspora without exile, nor is there exile without diaspora. The way that the community understands itself in relation to its spiritual centre has fundamentally shifted, and this shift brings with it tangible losses. Galuth is described as “the family’s most colourful son, eager and adventuresome, — a kinsman widely travelled, easy of manner,” with an “irresistible” personality (“In Praise” 469-70). These traits, not readily associated with exile, express the best aspects of diasporic cultures and communities, the results of surviving and travelling after initial banishment. Klein personalizes the impact of this loss by characterizing Galuth using only desirable traits to celebrate the richness and value that come from dispersal across the globe.

Celebrating diaspora through characterization attempts to reconcile guilt over and mourning for the dissolution of diasporic communities with the establishment of Israel. The article explains the pressure to “keep silent, and while inwardly pondering the Diaspora’s merits, stifle its speech, standing mute as to those merits for decorum’s sake” (“In Praise” 466). Klein understands first-hand the public relations campaign at the heart of Israel’s continued success as a country and thus avoids pointed criticism in his reflection on the real losses associated with this centralization. Yet he directly positions the creation of Israel

with the loss of diaspora: “There it rises, the State of Israel, the fulfillment of a millennial dream, a present help, the vindication of the past, the future’s promise, the very antonym and negation of the Diaspora!” (467). Given that his entire motive for travelling and his funding were to research Israel to better fundraise to support it, this is an intensely fraught personal conflict. By representing Israel as the negation of the diaspora, Klein, and all Jews who choose not to return to Israel, are placed antagonistically in opposition to this process. So, to overcome this opposition, he uses death to pay homage to the diaspora without jeopardizing or standing against Zionism. Diaspora is not *yerida* — it is not an abandonment of Israel — yet, by mourning the death of the diaspora, Klein can express the sense of loss that he experiences as a result of the creation of Israel. Death replaces exile, and mourning signifies a kind of descent, if only into sadness and despair.

Klein chronicles the many contributions of the diaspora to diverse fields of Jewish spiritual and cultural life. He lists important events that have allowed a celebration of the diaspora. As he lists accomplishments, he explains that ultimately the message of the diaspora is “recreation,” “a message which issues out of every item of the inventory, each the memento of some lesson, each now entered into the apparatus of our culture” (“In Praise” 472). The diaspora created the conditions for growth, development, and sustainability. These challenges to reimagine and innovate are at the core of Jewishness. Klein suggests that the diaspora created a vibrant culture because of its refusal to stagnate. For Klein, the experience of the diaspora becomes one of growth and development as a communal culture, with the individual parts contributing to overall well-being.

Ultimately, Klein couches the experience of the diaspora as one of development through travel. He reflects on the dispersion and cosmopolitan nature of Jews as a result, suggesting that this diversity has strengthened and heartened his people and will continue to do so: “[H]e is vindicated; at the hour of his death he is seen in the true light, exemplar, model, inspiration” (“In Praise” 477). The experience of the diaspora is motivating, positive, and aspirational. In perhaps his most powerful statement, Klein suggests that the diaspora offers a sense of wholeness: “It was a fulfillment, then, this Dispersion, and not a crude scattering, the Grand Tour designed to teach abroad what could not be learned at home, the arc penultimate to the completed circle”

(473). Here his personal journey seems to mirror the narrative that he constructs for the diaspora: through travel, Klein can better comprehend and understand his Jewish Canadian identity in its distinctiveness and better articulate the national and transnational communities with which he affiliates himself. Although his travels do not leave him with a sense of fulfillment, they do complete his quest to understand how to come to terms with his own experience and vision.

Conclusion

In 1955, Klein resigned from his role as editor of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*. He stopped writing and withdrew from the Montreal community in which he was so invested. Although his personal journey was tragic, his sense of community and celebration of his heritage were helpfully nuanced by travel abroad. Klein understood that diasporic communities, though disparate, have a lot to teach us about strengths that extend beyond the bounds of a geographic location or nation. His experience of travel as recorded in “Notebook of a Journey” contributed to his renegotiation of his identity as both a Jew and a Canadian while ultimately undermining his initial hope for the possibility of a cultural Zionism that bolstered and celebrated his diasporic identity.

The hopeful possibility of pilgrimage, tinged with the spiritual reality of thousands making *aliyah* to the new state, initially created a sense of celebratory ascent for Klein as a life-long Zionist. However, instead of a straightforward affirmation of the new state, his travel journalism ultimately led to great mourning over the loss of diasporic communities, a mourning that became more pronounced following his return to Canada from Israel. At the same time, Klein also learned to celebrate and communicate the benefits of the diaspora, in spite of the powerful force of Israeli nationalism. For him, the experience of exile was magnified by his return to Israel, and this journey fundamentally changed how he understood community both nationally and transnationally as a Jewish subject. His journalism was haunted by exile and the loss of affiliation that he identified in the movement from heterogeneous dispersal to homogeneous nation.

Klein’s careful negotiation of the spiritual quest or pilgrimage for a creative universal Jewish culture was undone by travel. Klein illustrated how spiritual journey narratives perform the ideologically oppressive work of nationalism. His travel writing offered an important critique

of nationalism that anticipated the criticisms of Canadian nationalism in the decades to follow. His journalism was written on the verge of Canada's own nationalism; however, his warning cry was not heeded in the decade that followed his withdrawal from public life. In some ways, Klein's writing was a forewarning about the ways in which cultural nationalism homogenizes and excludes and deliberately uses other powerful narratives, including the spiritual, to control and limit affinities and connections across disparate populations that better represent the transnational and migratory subject. It was not until Canadian literature began to question and refine its own sense of multicultural identity that Klein's critical work at mid-century began to resonate anew.

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NOTES

¹ Popham also notes that a secondary goal of Klein's trip was to "scout new liquor markets" for Samuel Bronfman ("Introduction," *Second Scroll* xv).

² Klein departed on 31 July 1949, travelling first to New York. He spent two weeks in Israel and five days in Paris. He then travelled to Casablanca for three days via Marseilles and then spent three days in Rome. While in Rome, he went to Bari to a Jewish refugee camp whose inhabitants were waiting to depart for Israel. He spent three more days in Paris, then left France on 1 September, spent four days in Ireland, and returned to New York on 5 September (Caplan 170).

³ See Brenner; Spiro; and Waddington. The distinction that I am making here is between the religion Judaism and the cultural subjectivity embodied in the term "Jewish."

⁴ This term comes from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. His argument is usefully employed in the study of Jewish diasporic culture because of the extra reliance on imagination to conceive of a universal Jewish identity (part national, part religious).

⁵ In their explanatory notes to *Beyond Sambation*, Steinberg and Caplan define *luftmensch* as "a person 'up in the air' without a definite occupation" ("Notes" 488). Klein uses the term metaphorically to suggest that European Jewish culture is unrooted and potentially overoptimistic about its goals and ideals. He tries to convince Jews to take tangible action in order to construct a new, grounded culture that can only be made possible by a homeland or Jewish nation.

⁶ Azrieli and his work have several fascinating parallels with Samuel Bronfman's work in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s as president of the Canadian Jewish Congress and Klein's employer. *Rekindling the Torch: The Story of Canadian Zionism*, written in collaboration with writer-broadcaster Joe King, is a coffee table book used to support Canadian Zionist fundraising efforts in much the same way as Bronfman relied on Klein to ghostwrite his speeches and publications related to fundraising for Israel.

⁷ Climo suggests that *aliyah* became a part of Zionism after Prime Minister David Ben Gurion declared that all diasporic Jews should return to Israel after the state was founded. Thank you to Zailig Pollock for drawing my attention to this distinction.

⁸ Klein uses twelve different voices. The first half are literary and secular, and the second half are religious, building upon one another as layers of commentary moving from the biblical style of verse to the Mishnaic (Jewish law), followed by an interpretation of the law in the Talmudic style. This religious commentary is then cut off by the concluding "[p]lain, unvarnished fact" ("Notebook" 341).

⁹ This reference seems to be to Ezekiel 37: 1-12, especially 12: "Therefore, prophesy to them and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel.'"

¹⁰ See Golan for a historical overview of these debates.

¹¹ However, Klein dehumanizes the Yemenites, representing them as archetypal figures. We see here an instance of Orientalist ideology, in which the exotic is emphasized without agency. He describes Yemenites and Moroccans together: "If the Moroccans are handsome, the Yemenites are beautiful. . . . They all look like paintings of the east; as they walk down the streets, the Bible comes alive" ("Notebook" 363). His inability to come to terms with the hardship and oppression that he has witnessed prompts a turn toward the literary: Klein renders refugees as aesthetic objects, once more disconnecting the lived experiences that he witnessed from the broader spiritual and literary narratives within which he places them.

¹² My reading text comes from *Beyond Sambation* and not the original *CJC* files (463-77).

¹³ Härting is interested in how vulnerability shapes postcolonial and diasporic subjects as melancholic citizens. I see her reading as somewhat distinct from Cho's definition of the term "diasporic melancholia" ("Affecting Citizenship"), which links affect, particularly feelings of fear and experiences of violence, to the process of citizenship. Härting refers to Klein's specific grief and mourning of the diaspora at the hands of Israel, while Cho is interested in the way that affect allows the tensions between diaspora and citizenship to manifest themselves.

¹⁴ According to the glossary provided in *Beyond Sambation*, the word *galuth* can be translated as "exile" or "diaspora" (Steinberg and Caplan 527). Härting usefully expands on the short note provided in *Beyond Sambation* in her article when she suggests that "Klein's 'favourite uncle,' uncle Galuth, named after the Hebrew word for exile, metaphorically embodies the Jewish diaspora" (189).

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