Filling the Absence:
Metalepsis and Liminality
in Jewish-Canadian Poetry

MICHAEL GREENSTEIN

And the whiteness grows less vivid on the wall.
The man who is walking turns blankly on the sand.
He observes how the north is always enlarging the change.

<div align="right">WALLACE STEVENS, "Auroras of Autumn"</div>

It is the cry of leaves that do not transcend themselves,
In the absence of fantasia.

<div align="right">WALLACE STEVENS, "The Course of a Particular"</div>

Eyes, world-blind, in the fissure of dying . . .
In the passages, passages.

<div align="right">PAUL CELAN, "Snow-bed"</div>

Let the blank whiteness of this page be snow.

<div align="right">A. M. KLEIN, "Krieghoff: Calligrammes"</div>

IN THE FINAL SECTION of his kabbalistic *The Breaking of the Vessels*, Harold Bloom develops a theory of "transumption" or metalepsis by examining images of blanks, leaves, and cries in the history of English and American poetry. According to Bloom, later poets revise these images of absence—the cry and turning of leaves, silence, emptiness, black, white, blank—from earlier poets to reverse the order of precedence, to transume their predecessors in a struggle for originality.[1] These same images prevail among Jewish poets in Canada, where a sense of absence derives mainly from an historical awareness of the Holocaust but also from the example of A. M. Klein, whose last years were spent in silence. Klein's reclusiveness combined with silence after Auschwitz informs some of the poetry of Irving Layton, Leonard Cohen, Eli Mandel, Miriam Waddington, Phyllis Gotlieb, and

Seymour Mayne, who overcome their belatedness by transuming Klein in their own leaves of blanks and cries. And Klein himself, a rhetorician of multiple traditions, retropes earlier tropes in his metaleptic echoings. Variously defined as a trope of a trope, metonymy of metonymy, chiasmus, reversal of cause and effect, a figure of linkage that skips over unstated middle terms, or a return to lost origins, metalepsis is as elusive as the hidden central figure of Klein's *The Second Scroll*. After all, to "second a scroll already seconded" is to challenge and displace earlier testaments in a quest for origins in the first place.

While images of silence and absence are generally widespread in twentieth-century poetry, they are particularly acute among Jewish poets in Canada. If Klein was the first Canadian Jewish poet to incorporate modernist absence in his work and silence at the end of his life, several others who follow him share in his vision of a post-Holocaust void and the need for some form of redemption. While paying homage to Klein's tradition, each subsequent individual talent moves in his or her own direction filled with dominant images of postmodern blanks—at once universal and unique in their portraits of poets as Canadian-Jewish landscapes.

Even a brief glance at *The Second Scroll* reveals Klein's obsession with absence and the Holocaust. The central quest of the nameless narrator for his uncle Melech Davidson before, during, and after World War II focusses on the distance separating these next of kin on opposite sides of the Atlantic. That the nephew never meets his messianic uncle serves as the narrative thread for Klein's novel; its poetic counterpart recurs in images of absence. "Autobiographical" ends with adult recollection of childhood and, in a broader historical context, Jewish memory of millennia:

> It is a fabled city that I seek;
> It stands in Space's vapours and Time's haze;
> Thence comes my sadness in remembered joy
> Constrictive of the throat;
> Thence do I hear, as heard by a Jewboy,
> The Hebrew violins,
> Delighting in the sobbed Oriental note.
>
> (*Second Scroll* 97)

The Old-New Jerusalem is ambiguous: absent yet present, joyous yet sad, oxymoronic in sobbing delight, early yet apocalyptically belated. The cry of an Oriental note in Klein's poetry transcends geography and transumes history in its relentless march backward to an original scroll and Babylonian exile. The persecuted Jewboy is father to the man.

The second poem, "Elegy," turns from Montreal's ghetto streets to thoroughfares throughout the Diaspora where the poet's family perishes in the Holocaust. The opening cry picks up the earlier notes of Hebrew violins: "Named for my father's father, cousin, whose cry / Might have been my cry lost in that dark land" (*Second Scroll* 98). Withholding a name creates a vacuum in a nameless narrator seeking an overdetermined Melech Davidson, while Klein's patriarchal names, Abraham and Moses, resonate throughout Jewish history. A silent cry gives birth to his lineage, his linkage; he walks among ghosts and ash, blank and white. David and Miriam join the nameless relicts torn out of time in an emptied world. Pleading with God, Klein chooses his examples from a long history of suffering and revenge. Former enemies are "dark against blank white / The bearded ikon-bearing royalties" (*Second Scroll* 101) to which he wants to add the Nazis "as on a screen," another blank opposed to the poet's "white liturgy" (*Second Scroll* 102).

"And in that Drowning Instant" rehearses a paradoxical downward transcendence: sinking in order to rise, regressing in order to march forward, disappearing to overcome absence. Like the photograph of Melech Davidson which is "a double, a multiple exposure," this poem of Jewish surfacing develops a blurred palimpsest of plural identities. Indeed, the image of the drowning poet resembles the process of photography when a print finally emerges from a negative:

> it suddenly did come to pass
> my preterite eternity
> the image of myself intent
> on several freedoms.
>
> (*Second Scroll* 141)

As a member of an historic Jewish community, Klein immerses himself in the past, identifying himself with Jewish precursors:

> fading to
> myself in yellowed basel-print
> vanishing
>   into the ghetto Jew
> a face among the faces of . . .
>   (*Second Scroll* 141)

Colours and scenes change in the backward march of history. Among the fading faces are yellowed basel-print (the printed page yellowed with age, the yellow badge of identity in a "neutral" European city) and Abraham in Cordova and Amsterdam. In Rome the face "is suddenly beneath the arch / whose Latin script the waves erase." By an act of retribution the historic poet effaces the Arch of Titus and replaces it with the earlier Jerusalem-gate and Temple-door. The poem concludes with the body rising to the "lasting shore" which, with its rhyming Temple-door, underscores Klein's liminality.

Liminal, marginal, or threshold figures "are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. . . . Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness . . . and to an eclipse of the sun or moon" (Turner 95). Towards the end of "Elegy," Klein prays to overcome "that funest eclipse, / Diaspora-dark." If transumption is one way of leaping over an historical impasse or crossing over thresholds, then liminality offers another route by side-stepping barriers and blanks. In *The Ritual Process*, Victor Turner has studied anthropological rites of passage in a number of tribes from preliminary to postliminary stages when an individual gains higher status within society. The most important phase, however, is the intermediate liminal, during which time the individual is freed from society's structures to enter "communitas," an anti-structural mode akin to Buber's I-Thou relationship. That Klein invokes Buber's communitas, and that *The Second Scroll* essentially traces a personal and communal rite of passage through an eclipse of the Diaspora, make Turner's theories all the more applicable to Klein's text. From the outset of *The Second Scroll*, Klein focusses on Jewish customs and ceremonies, and a sense of liminality pervades the novel and poems, but the closing scene of

Uncle Melech's funeral overlaps liminal and transumptive prac-
tices. Throughout the novel Uncle Melech has served as an
ambiguous, messianic, shadow figure, and his "passing" is re-
ferred to as "some high mythic rite" (92).

As liminal Melech challenges and transforms society, at his
funeral Klein concludes with a transumptive vision of earlier
times harking back to the first scroll. Harold Bloom associates
apophrades or Return of the Dead with transumption; Klein uses
apophrades or *t'chiyat hamaitim* in the tribal gathering from the
four corners of Israel: "each with its own exclamatory reaction to
these obsequies which transcended their immediate purpose, it
was as if the tribes of Israel had come to life again and were
travelling as in olden times, each with its devices and gems" (92).
By leaping over centuries and tropes, Klein transcends his own
immediate purpose to create halidoms, deaths invested in life,
and a new alphabet. The concluding sentence is a turning, a
passing, a metaleptic swerving from last to first: "I turned for the
last time from the city of Safed, holy city on whose hills once were
kindled, as now again, the beacons announcing new moons,
festivals, and set times" (93). On the threshold of Milton's *Areo-
pagitica* with its "marginal Keri" discourse, Klein transumptively
resets time, turns leaves, and faces blanks. (Against Klein's epi-
graph, Bloom quotes from *Areopagitica*: "That virtue therefore
which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows
not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it,
is but a blank virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excre-
mental whiteness" [79].) Klein's post-Diasporic discourse is at
once liminal and metaleptic in its attempt to regain whatever
paradise was lost. The poet's rising body that gains the lasting
shore epitomizes lateral and vertical displacements from periph-
ery and paradox to transumption and metalepsis.

After the Holocaust and Klein's subsequent lapse into silence,
other Jewish-Canadian poets pay homage to him and repeat
images of blanks, leaves, and cries. While Klein had no Jewish
precursors in Canada to speak of, his followers had to contend
with his example of silence in their writing. In "Requiem for A.
M. Klein," Irving Layton refers to Klein as a medieval troubadour
and tries belatedly to clear space for both of them:

Though the reverent adolescent
Like the Virgil which fee-less you taught him
Would have taken your hand and led you out
Muttering the learned hexameters like a charm.

(Pole-Vaulter 28)

Layton's Latin apprenticeship turns into a broader lesson about poetic belatedness, for he resolves to listen without irony to young poets who will presumably follow him and reverse Virgilian precedence. The younger poet leads his mentor out of a linguistic labyrinth of silence, and concludes by immortalizing poets of Montreal's island against those of the British Isles:

Yes, here where every island has its immortal bard
I think of you with grateful tears and affection
And give them your fresh imperishable name.

(Pole-Vaulter 28)

Layton combines his charming wit with Klein's to transcend (or in his metaphor "pole-vault" over) earthly boundaries of the Diaspora and history's earlier names back to the prophets.

Layton sheds tears also for victims of the Holocaust in "Rhine Boat Trip" with its images of ghostly children, blinded eyes, and "the low wailing of cattle-cars / moving invisibly across the land" (*Collected Poems* 389). The blanks and silent cries of history fill the German landscape where the poet is forced to rewrite his own version, to bear witness to what has been erased, to lend voice to a muted abyss. In "At the Belsen Memorial," Layton sees and hears nothing before being transformed into black stone: blank confronts blank, and the poet's inscription displaces the lapidary memorial. "Holocaust" is a parable written in the third person— "he" who plays the role of God determining the fate of insects in a sink. By domesticating the scene and absurdly extending its implications as a "daily ontological lesson," Layton applies Hannah Arendt's formula about the banality of evil. Like the marks on his page, the insects are "virile pencil dots merging and diverging." The "unanswering" marble top and the rim of the sink as an abyss prepare for the negatives of "Nothingness hell-bent for nowhere." In this parody of human existence, he wipes away the mass of insects and "restores to the marble top its cold ironical surface" (*Collected Poems* 531). Layton's liminal ob-

servation from Canada's sidelines, the rim of the abyss, result in a blank post-Holocaust surface.

Although Leonard Cohen does not refer to Klein directly, he participates in this chain through their mutual friend, Irving Layton. Thus, when he links arms with Layton in "Last Dance at the Four Penny," he dances a Chassidic *freilach* that incorporates all ancestors. Among the choreographic miracles performed are a series of reversals whereby last becomes first, low turns high, margins are pushed to centre stage, and lost is found.

> Layton, when we dance our freilach
> under the ghostly handkerchief,
> the miracle rabbis of Prague and Vilna
> resume their sawdust thrones,
> and angels and men, asleep so long
> in the cold palaces of disbelief,
> gather in sausage-hung kitchens
> to quarrel deliciously and debate
> the sounds of the Ineffable Name.   (69)

Echoes of Klein in ghostly figures, resurrection, fallen royalty, the tetragrammaton, dialectics, and spicy cellar link Cohen to Klein via Layton's intermediary figure. Accompanying Cohen's mild mockery is a delight in their dance, a bittersweet combination of *freilach* and *danse macabre* captured in the oxymoronic sawdust thrones. Just as rabbis resume their former high-low positions, so priestly Cohen transumes old-new Prague, first and last dance, and the dual identity of Irving Layton — Israel Lazarovitch. For if the first stanza ends with an invocation of the Ineffable Name (the outsiders moving IN), the second begins by mentioning Layton's other name:

> Layton, my friend Lazarovitch,
> no Jew was ever lost
> while we two dance joyously
> in this French province,
> cold and oceans west of the temple.   (69)

Emphatic repetition of "no Jew was ever lost" and the variations of the linking handkerchief as bright white flag or burning cloud with biblical and holocaustic overtones connect later to earlier poet of blank page and "battered fathers' cup of wine" (69). Cohen's Diasporic dance shifts transatlantic positions of occi-

dent and orient; his stitching thumbs help write the lines, and join with Layton, his Chassidic heritage, and his talmudic method of arguing. The poet condemns those cynical in their logical shroud, for in his chiastic ceremonial dance he reverses order to vault over historic chasms separating Montreal from Vilna.

"Lines from my Grandfather's Journal" includes permutations of blanks, leaves, and cries as Cohen engages the past of an extended family. The "lines" from the title and the "pages" in the opening paragraph perform the self-reflexive function of leaves. "I am one of those who could tell every word the pin went through. Page after page I could imagine the scar in a thousand crowned letters" (78). Scar, trace, palimpsest, and crowned letter form a blank "bereft of angels" at which the dumbfounded poet stares. His journal is filled with combinations of poems consumed by black night. His nocturnal poems cry loudly for eyes in darkness, and he juxtaposes black symbols and white tablecloths. To absence, blindness, and silence he adds metalepsis and liminality: "Driven back to Genesis. Doubting where every word began. What saint had shifted a meaning to illustrate a parable. Even beyond Genesis, until I stood outside my community" (82). Cohen's shift is both metaleptic in its backward motion beyond origins and liminal in its stepping outside tradition over borders that "were only stones in an empty road" (83). The liminal and metaleptic figure overcomes these stumbling blocks by entering a mystical state as opposed to a structural Jewish community. His journal displaces formal tradition; his rite of passage is a rich discipline of agony: "Prayer makes speech a ceremony. To observe this ritual in the absence of arks, altars, a listening sky" (83). The fleeing Jew crosses thresholds of a millennial Diaspora.

Though Klein is not overtly mentioned in Cohen's "To a Teacher," his presence may be inferred from the opening line, "Hurt once and for all into silence." The last stanza reverses any oedipal relationship with the prodigal son next to the father, leading his song rather than leaving him in a house with a white stone wall:

> Let me cry Help beside you, Teacher.
> I have entered under this dark roof

> as fearlessly as an honored son
> enters his father's house. (44)

Having learned from Klein's silent example, his honoured sons and daughters pay tribute to him through cries and words on blank walls.

Outside of Montreal, Eli Mandel continues Cohen's dance of exile in "Snake Charmers" in memory of A. M. Klein. In the marketplace of Djemma el Fna, the poet's childhood "rises in that charmer's eye, / silk, spices, glittering coins, candied cakes"—recalling the details of Klein's "Autobiographical." The visionary Canadian company appears to fuse exotic ghettoes of North Africa and Montreal:

> Abraham Klein, Irving, Leonard,
> you and I could once have sung our songs
> here before these same Jews from Paris or
> New York
>   Baghdad   Teheran   Jerusalem
> Fez
>   tales of the prophet and his magic horse.
>
>   (*Stony Plain* 32)

The poet's graceful song precedes the Arab's magic and renders a degree of respectability to the Jewish plight of facelessness and namelessness:

> while wretched   blind   crippled
> through eternal mellahs crawl
> Jew upon Jew
>   the world's
> great serpents
>   from that darkness
> dazzled
>   how
> by chance   or graceful song. (32)

Naming Klein, Layton, and Cohen, Mandel's serpentine syntax outcharms the charmer's frothing mouth, outshines the charmer's eye; his farflung voice and vision rescue his anonymous brethren of the mellah; his metatropes leap over metonymic juxtapositions. Like a liminal snake charmer, the poet moves in a quirky "sideways step" across thresholds of mellah and marketplace, while the repeated "before" points to Mandel's transumptive lunge at anteriority.

Dreaming backwards in *Out of Place*, Mandel focusses on lim-
inality, metalepsis, blurred photographic process, and blank eyes
in the midst of open prairies. The "preface" as postmodern
frame serves to destabilize contrasts of in and out, domestic
dwelling and grassy landscape. The poet's "settling down" to
study blank pages turns into a parody of earlier, disappeared
Jewish settlements and the unsettling experience in historical
gaps. Images of black interior, blazing doorway as white rect-
angle, blindness, and layered white paper overlap with photo-
graphs in the text while the poet sitting cross-legged at the
doorway prepares for the prairie journey, a rite of passage in
reverse. Mandel's interest in doubles and doppelgängers stems
from a split in his Jewish and Canadian identities: the unliving
forest of Hebrew graves as opposed to mesas, hoodoos, and
petroglyphs. If these signs cut in rock represent semitic and
semiotic graffiti, then Mandel transumes his "indescribable bor-
ders" by vaulting out of place, by tracing strange metaleptic
loops, by admitting the alien swerves of aberrant writing and
borderblur. In the liminal "doors of perception," swoops of
highway turn to Huxley's version of time curving upon itself. The
double exposure of prairie superimposed on biblical history
marks Hebraic and Hellenic poles in Mandel's psyche: "the
jewish exodus from shtetl to the plains / leads to this egypt
abraham learned" (*Out of Place* 15)—an allusion also to a wheat
farmer's son, Abraham Hoffer, a psychiatrist who pioneered
research in schizophrenia. As an experiment in chiasmus, "bad-
lands" charts "crossings" that are "neither difficult nor easy"
because they are beyond definitions and metonymies.

Mandel's ritual process photographs time in motion, the meta-
morphosis of "darkness drifting on the earth / across the rim of
turn" (48). To exorcise his dybbuk, he crosses through a double
zone at the edge of a white leaf marked with black and secret cries
of Klein's "alien afraid."

Like Mandel, Miriam Waddington pays tribute to Klein and
struggles with the duality of Jewish life on the prairies. "By the
Sea: For A. M. Klein" harps on her precursor's "broken brain,"
"falling grief," and "silent song," just as Waddington's *The
Second Silence* echoes *The Second Scroll.* In another tributary poem,

"Breaking with Tradition," she carries her prophetic tone forward and backward:

> Old masters
>   walk forward
> the forest cannot
>   swallow you
> you will never disappear.
>   (*Collected Poems* 187)

Like Mandel's shifting lines, Waddington's dispersed free verse imitates the gait of these ambiguous shadowy walkers, artistic precursors of a painterly Dutch tradition or Chassidic past. Breaking with tradition is simultaneously a joining, for the poet's individual talent requires tradition as well as rupture, an elective crossing over:

> old masters
>   turn around your
> fur hats black greatcoats
>   shuttered backward
> glances speak to us
>   in conspirators'
> farewell.   (187)

Out of her Yiddish past, these blank-moustached masters bid her forward and backward towards the final "homecoming" in the poem. In Waddington's parade of particulars, images of old masters walk hand in hand with schoolchildren coming home through history, through reversals of metonymic details.

Even more than Klein, Layton, Cohen, and Mandel, Waddington develops patterns of metalepsis and liminality in her black and white chiaroscuro, in her turning leaves, and in her crossing over thresholds between exile and home on the prairies. Wallace Stevens is the meeting point for Harold Bloom and Miriam Waddington: while the American modernist is a key figure in Bloom's theory of transumption, he is a major influence on Waddington's *Say Yes*—the phrase taken from one of his poems that serves as epigraph to Waddington's volume. Images of silence, blindness, leaves, black, white, blanche, blanks, and edges recur throughout her poetry, but what is less obvious is the extent to which her tropes are diachronic in her relationship to earlier poets. The volume opens with the white sea and white tent

of "Understanding snow," where miracle bands of light curve and fold towards a perceptual interior. Soon we are "Flying with Milton" as Waddington quotes Keats ("he flew / With daring Milton through the fields of air") and transumes her Romantic precursor over prairies (her own fields of empty air). Attached to the sonnet string of Keats and Milton and to the apron string of a different domestic situation,

> I hung
> on the dangling world a single
> bead in a string of beads one
> frail point to sink into the centre
> where I could turn the spokes
> of Milton's eternal wheel to
> speaking radiation.   (*Say Yes* 4)

What is "speaking radiation" if not tradition, and the Jewish-Canadian ephebe decentres and transumes that great Keatsian and Miltonic tradition through liminal levitation, for in turning spokes she becomes an earlier spokesperson of "speaking radiation." Her dangling figure is certainly liminal yet capable of suspending time and turning the wheel counterclockwise.

As if to emphasize her liminality, Waddington follows with "The little fringes," where she adheres to frayed edges, fretted wires, and screendoor: "always loved the space / invented between them and / around them" (*Say Yes* 5). From a ritualistic, intermediate position she also swerves around in her emphasis on magic and miracles shared with Klein, Layton, Cohen, and Mandel. "The magician" opens with the Chagallian figure of a magician or a rabbi who sifts sand, plays with time, originates origins, and flies "over rooftops / a tall narrow Jew / levitating suspended" (*Say Yes* 16). This metaleptic magician continues to separate past from future and repeat the times for words to happen, and the ironic poet wishes to become his studious apprentice with a comic laurel wreath. This serio-comic initiation carries over to the companion poem, "About how hard it is to find new words in an outworn world when you are not a magician." Here the poet listens for new languages and new rhymes, and hears "miniature criss - / crossing," a "coming and going." The final image of sand in an hourglass picks up the sifting sand

of the earlier poem and suggests the chiasmus of criss-crossing, the shifting reversal of transumptive time. This hourglass in turn metamorphoses into Waddington's "dream telescope" which photographs images of journeys, distances, and histories until the final section, "And beyond":

> come
> through the barriers
> of ice
> to the pure
> pole   silence
> and the sun
> I am
> distanceless
> a prairie
> of far
> snow.   (27)

As much as Waddington adheres to thresholds of "between-ness," so she escapes to the beyond of metalepsis across blank prairie barriers.

"Looking for strawberries in June" combines the betwixt of liminality with the beyond of metalepsis in the interchange between poet and landscape. The opening "words for wind" and "leaf-language" unite nature to poetry, but the poet complains about the exhaustion of language, her present difficulty of expression:

> I have come to the
> end of some line or
> other like walking
> on railroad ties.   (28)

Lines on the prairie and lines on the page converge towards some vanishing point, but after the passage of childhood comes an impasse: "the ties end in the / middle of no-place" (28). After the "papery whitefolded" words, after the "swarthy eastern words / heavy with Hebrew," after the "wandering words," she arrives at the middle of no-where, *aporia*, utopia where liminality fails.

> just standing here
> on the threshold of
> a different country,
> everything is made

of plastic and silence;
. . . . . .
        I'm knocking at
the door but nobody
answers   I mutter *Lenin*
Karl Marx   Walt Whitman
Chaucer Hopkins even
Archibald Lampman.   (29)

Between old and new words, language and silence, childhood
innocence and adult experience, old and new countries, Wad-
dington sounds the names of several precursors but silence
echoes. After the exhaustion of words, she does not know the
"password," the liminal shibboleth for overcoming impasse and
the burden of the past, for passing beyond negation to say yes.

"A drawing by Ronald Bloore" relies on these same images in
her description of the painter's flowing lines:

                            and full of leafy
        sunspaces   thresholds of
        thin   lines   hanging
        above parlours of air.   (62)

She identifies her white page with Bloore's canvas, "your line
vibrating with / the mark of some history / or other." Wad-
dington's other history, her Jewish "ghostly self," may be found

        lying on the threshold
        of lines   rootless
        in the unanchored
                        homeless air.   (63)

Homeless, but always driving home; marginal, but always seeking
some inner centre; cosmopolitan, yet parochial; prairie open yet
domestically enclosed: Waddington clings to thresholds midway
between security and adventure.

"In small towns" once again combines liminality and
metalepsis:

        Unreal as the
        shifting fields
        of winter
        was your crossing
        my threshold.

        (*Driving Home* 38)

Who or what is this figure crossing thresholds? Perhaps it is some aspect of the imagination in a child's dream in a landscape of ink and flat paper, "leading to the very edge / of maps dwindling / into distant archives." Apparitions of sixteen-year-olds in small towns of Manitoba undergoing initiation through epiphanies find themselves surfacing "from a haze of / lost times." This phrase recalls Klein's "Time's haze" in "Autobiographical," where he also describes his coming of age around doors. One of the historical explanations for this Jewish focus on thresholds is the mark or *mezuzah* on doorposts that distinguishes a Jewish household. At the entrance to homes and rooms, it reminds the passerby of Egyptian bondage, when the doors to Jewish households were painted so that the angel of death would pass over them in his destruction of Egyptian first-born — hence the Passover holiday ritual. The threshold thus marks a liminal position as well as a metaleptic locus for passing over or beyond, a point for crossing over, a chiasmus, X — the "ex" of exodus, exile, and Klein's repeated "out of." This emergence signifies both a ritual process or apprenticeship and a metaleptic return to lost origins.

"Exchange" further exemplifies Bloom's anxiety of influence and revisionary ratios in see-saw rhyme and rhythm: "when Byron dark and Shelley fair / their appointed places keep" (*Driving Home* 125). The transumptive latter-day poet dis-appoints her Romantic precursors from her wintry Canadian limb:

> then will the core of this exchange
> fall and grow into a tree
> with leaves embroidered rare and strange
> with gloss of you and text of me.   (125)

This cold chiasmus reappears in the midlife crisis and limbo of "Getting older" (87), where poet, language, and nature interfuse (see Stein). She sheds the faded winterberry to become a passionate dictionary "full of scattered words and wider meanings." The first stanza ends with "leanings / and unassembled limbs"; the second stanza moves from that liminal state to open with metaleptic "old times" that invade an interior place marked "private no trespassing here." Waddington's is a poetry of dialogic exchange, of trespassing between different times and

places, between inner and outer where the word is the threshold
and language the *limen.*

Like Miriam Waddington, Phyllis Gotlieb employs colourful
imagery of childhood rites, magicians' words, and Chagallian
rabbis transcending thresholds; and, like Waddington, she has
studied Klein's work closely. But where the prairie poet is more
attached to fence-posts, white levels, endless defeats of snow, and
open gates, the Toronto poet writes graffiti on walls. Waddington
drives home on a world throughway or biblical expressway, a
metaleptic shortcut that curtails Klein's routes; Gotlieb cites her
transumptive roots on the Trans-Siberian to Vladivostok:

> my ghost directories are
> yellowpage clear through, the
> crossroads of the past
> are one-way thoroughfares.   (12)

Waddington's Messiah will not come, so she must spin the world
round; Gotlieb summons her Messiah in a decentring ritual.

Ordinary, Moving invokes the magic town of Chelm and the
Festival of the coming of the Messiah — two opportunities for
antistructural celebration. In her extraordinary procession,
Gotlieb employs Bloom's transumptive images: Rabbi Levi
Yitzhok binds black and white phylacteries; angels cry; there are
green leaves, leaves of prayers, and black letters. "A Commen-
tary" mixes colours kaleidoscopically to create an historical blur
that incorporates the Holocaust. A Chassid walks heavily and
clasps his bookbag, "books in black letters blacker / than the
ovens of Auschwitz" (6), and we are suddenly jolted out of time.
Black caftans and white stockings step from pane to pane "be-
tweengreen / aisles of glass" and leaves of grass. This grim
liminal procession moves between windows but the children
succumb to Cyclon B instead of gaining a full education:

> : ghostmarch in the noon of night
> from pane to pane black brown pink white
>   betweengreen
>   aisles of glass.   (7)

Gotlieb turns leaves and pictures crackle in her yoking of hetero-
geneous elements. In "Prescience," she imagines Bunyan at her
Passover table, and her absurd pilgrim's progress between past
and future leads to a chiastic ritual:

perhaps a hundred years from now some
questive quoting X with an unfinished
thesis and an index yet to be collated will
miss my presence at a
live ungrieving ritual.   (15)

Gotlieb's absence returns to the "X" of Klein's "Portrait of the
Poet as Landscape" in the history of anonymous quests.

In "For A. M. Klein (1909-1972)," Seymour Mayne, the young-
est in this line of Canadian Jewish poets, eulogizes his prede-
cessor. Mayne begins with references to New York and
Yerushalayim—two poles for Montreal's Jewish identity—and
contrasts his northern city with Safed. Repeated emphasis on
"firstness" ("'upon which your Adam first tripped" and "Unlike
the first Patriarch") calls attention to Klein's and Mayne's belat-
edness. Those two poets further merge when Mayne describes
skating in his youth near Klein's home: "a second troll haunted /
his princely self," an echo of The Second Scroll. While these firsts
and seconds lead to "double voices" of equivocal identity be-
tween poet and poet, Mayne also suggests a symbiosis between
Canadian emptiness and Klein's silence:

> And in the blankness
> of our north you finally stared
> as if blind—the motes were cold
> . . . and silencing
> you with deepest suffering—
> the gagged tongue
> limp and mute
> unable to call itself back.   (45)

By moving forward in his chiastic "knot of poems," Mayne is able
to call Klein back to the gates of Jerusalem and "aureate arcs" of
the Diaspora.

Bloom's transumption and Turner's liminality offer directions
for canonizing writing that has hitherto been partially mar-
ginalized. Klein, Layton, Cohen, Mandel, Waddington, Gotlieb,
and Mayne write a poetry of absence, and, by facing that void,
contend with or transcend it. Reversing historical patterns and
celebrating rituals, they remember their suffering and pass
through its crucible. Among themselves they form a literary
community that challenges and transforms the Canadian estab-

lishment. Starting at the margins, they edge towards the centre but never settle at a still point, for the threshold shifts in their errant writing, and borderblur is full of exchanges and double exposures, cries of silence, blanks and whites, uncanny screen memory. In the poems of our Canadian Jewish climate, the north always enlarges the change.

NOTE

1 Bloom 73-107. Also on metalepsis see Genette, who examines this rhetorical device as a shifting of narrative levels. On metonymy, see Matus. On the overlapping between metalepsis and liminality, see Fletcher. For other discussions of "thresholds," see Bakhtin (248), Brown, and Stein. On Klein's dialectic between self and community see Pollock (xi-xxx).

WORKS CITED

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination.* Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.

Bloom, Harold. *The Breaking of the Vessels.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982.

Brown, Marshall. "'Errours Endlesse Traine': On Turning Points and the Dialectical Imagination." *PMLA* 99 (1984): 9-25.

Cohen, Leonard. *Selected Poems 1956-1968.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968.

Fletcher, Angus. *The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1971.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method.* Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980.

Gotlieb, Phyllis. *Ordinary, Moving.* Toronto: Oxford UP, 1969.

Klein, A. M. *Complete Poems: Part I.* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1990.

———. *The Second Scroll.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961.

Layton, Irving. *The Collected Poems of Irving Layton.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971.

———. *The Pole-Vaulter.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974.

Mandel, Eli. *Out of Place.* Erin: Porcépic, 1977.

———. *Stony Plain.* Erin: Porcépic, 1973.

Matus, Jill. "Proxy and Proximity: Metonymic Signing." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 58 (1988): 305-26.

Mayne, Seymour. "For A. M. Klein (1909-1972)." *The Spice Box: An Anthology of Jewish Canadian Writing.* Ed Gerri Sinclair and Morris Wolfe. Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1981.

Pollock, Zailig. Introduction. *Complete Poems: Part I.* By A. M. Klein. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1990. xi-xxx.

Stein, Murray. *In MidLife: A Jungian Approach.* Dallas: Spring, 1983.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977.

Waddington, Miriam. *Collected Poems.* Toronto: Oxford UP, 1986.

———. *Driving Home.* Toronto: Oxford UP, 1972.

———. *Say Yes.* Toronto: Oxford UP, 1969.