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Dust and Fog, Fire and Salt: German Canadian Psychiatrist Karl Stern's (1906–1975) Émigré Experience

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Abstract

Karl Stern (1906–1975) was a German-Jewish psychiatrist, who studied and worked alongside the neuropathologists Kurt Goldstein (1878–1965), Walther Spielmeier (1879–1935), and Wilder Penfield (1891–1976). After fleeing Nazi Germany for London in 1935, he married and moved to Montreal in Canada in 1939, where he converted to Roman Catholicism in 1943. This article offers a close reading of pertinent passages and explores his memoir, *The Pillar of Fire* (1951), and his novel, *Through Dooms of Love* (1960), as well as *In and Out* (1989), a “confessional poem” by the Canadian classicist Daryl Hine (1936–2012), to demonstrate the feelings of powerlessness, isolation, and anonymity which Stern experienced after leaving Germany. These feelings had been complicated (on arrival in Canada) by ethnic antagonisms between Jews and Catholics at that time. It also explores and addresses Hine’s disparaging attitude toward Stern’s identification with his European heritage and his Catholic faith, offering an alternative interpretation of their presence.

Introduction¹

Although largely forgotten today, Karl Stern (1906–1975) was a well-known German Canadian, a psychiatrist and public intellectual, whose memoir, *The Pillar of Fire* (1951), chronicled his conversion to Catholicism and became an international bestseller, winning praise from well-known authors C.S. Lewis (1898–1963), Graham Greene (1904–1991), Hugh MacLennan (1907–1990), and Thomas Merton (1915–1968) (among others). My previous publications on Stern’s life and career focused primarily on his family history, his conversion to Roman Catholicism, his conflicted relationships with psychiatry and psychoanalysis and with Judaism and Christianity, and his friendships with other Catholic luminaries of that era.² In this article, the intent is to mine three pieces of literature produced by Karl Stern to demonstrate the feelings of powerlessness, isolation, and anonymity he experienced after leaving Germany. The article will focus specifically on Stern’s experience as a refugee and émigré, arguing that his flight from Nazi Germany to London in 1935 provoked these strong feelings and that his subsequent emigration to Montreal in Canada,

¹ I would like to extend my warm thanks to both blind reviewers for their careful, discerning, and supportive appraisals of this paper.

² Daniel Burston, “The Politics of Psychiatry and the Vicissitudes of Faith Circa 1950: Karl Stern’s Psychiatric Novel,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 51, 4 (2015): 351–65; Daniel Burston, *A Forgotten Freudian: The Passion of Karl Stern* (London: Karnac Books, 2016).

where anti-Semitism was also prevalent and strong, altered the quality and intensity of these feelings somewhat, but without eliminating them entirely. Finally, it is argued that Stern's gradual adaptation to life in Canada after the Second World War was marked by (1) serious misgivings about North American culture and a lingering identification with his European heritage. It further saw (2) a dual ambivalence toward his country of origin, on the one hand, and his adoptive home, on the other.

Background, Training, and Emigration to Canada (1906–1950)

Karl Stern was born in the small town of Cham, Bavaria, in 1906, the eldest son of assimilated Jewish shopkeepers, whose forbears had lived in the region for centuries. Most Bavarian Jews had left the countryside for urban centres in the late nineteenth century, and as a result, Stern grew up in a predominantly Catholic atmosphere, attending a Catholic kindergarten, celebrating Christmas with his neighbours and classmates, and so on. He also showed great promise as a musician, mastering the piano at an early age, although he eventually chose medicine as a career.³

Stern trained in medicine, neurology, and psychiatry in Munich, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, and London from 1927 to 1937. In 1930–1931, Stern worked as a resident in neuropsychiatry alongside the holistic neurologist Kurt Goldstein (1878–1965) at the Frankfurt Neurological Institute. Goldstein was a typical *Nervenarzt*, who had trained in both neurology and psychiatry. In 1932, Stern followed Goldstein to the department of neurology of the Moabiter Krankenhaus (Moabit Hospital) in Berlin, performing brain autopsies on deceased mental patients. In the summer of 1932, he went to Munich for post-doctoral work at the Kaiser Wilhelm Society's German Research Institute for Psychiatry, where the chief of the department of neuropathology, professor Walther Spielmeier (1879–1935), who had trained directly under clinical psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926), took Stern on as his assistant for several years.⁴

Although his career was unfolding splendidly, the 1930s were turbulent for Stern. On the one hand, Stern was alarmed at the galloping Nazification of Germany and the increasingly repressive and violent policies the Nazis directed toward Jews and conscientious Roman Catholics. On the other hand, he was plagued by increasing doubts and misgivings about the psychiatric profession, especially the practice of forced sterilization of mental patients. Stern was also profoundly dismayed by his superiors' anti-religious bias and their blunt dismissal of many patients' beliefs pertaining to the Messiah as mere "delusions."⁵ Taken together, then, these concurrent developments in the real "external" world and his troubled "inner" world provoked a deep spiritual crisis that prompted him to enter analysis for two and a half years with the Alsbach psychiatrist and neurologist Dr. Rudolph Laudenhimer (1869–1947), which he credited with transforming him completely. During this time, he also sought spiritual solace in the company of both Jewish and Christian believers, eventually favouring the latter.

After Spielmeier's death in 1935, Stern booked passage to London in England. Thanks to a grant from the American Rockefeller Foundation,⁶ he found a position at the neurological institute in Queen's Square. Between 1933 and 1945, the Rockefeller Foundation undertook to relocate some 295 European émigré scholars and scientists in the English-speaking world, most of whom were Jewish or openly anti-fascist,

³ Karl Stern, *The Pillar of Fire* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951), chapter 1.

⁴ Frank W. Stahnisch, "German-Speaking Émigré-Neuroscientists in North America after 1933: Critical Reflections on Emigration-Induced Scientific Change," *Oesterreichische Zeitschrift fuer Geschichtswissenschaften* 21, 3 (2010): 36–68.

⁵ See, for example, in Mary K. Birmingham, "Some Thoughts on the Fiftieth Anniversary," in *Building on a Proud Past: 50 Years of Psychiatry at McGill*, eds. Theodore L. Sourkes and Gilbert Pinard (Montreal: McGill University, 1995), 151–⁵ esp. 155.

⁶ Compare also the article by Aleksandra Loewenau in this special issue of *History of Intellectual Culture*, entitled, "Reason for Dismissal? — Jewish Faith: Analysis of Narratives in the SPSL Immigration Applications by German-Speaking Neurologists."

and therefore in danger of extermination.⁷ The vast majority of these fortunate souls eventually found positions in American or British universities, but a few — like Stern — found their way to Canada.

Although plagued with worry for friends and family he left behind, Stern flourished professionally in London, and several months after his arrival, married Liselotte von Baeyer (1907–1971), a Protestant beauty from Tuebingen, who had settled in London two years previously and made her living as a model. Thanks to a recommendation from Canadian neurologist Herbert Hyland (1900–1977), who was also employed at Queen’s Square, when his Rockefeller fellowship in London ended, Stern applied for a job working alongside the famous Canadian neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield (1891–1976), who had first heard of Stern’s skills as a researcher from Spielmeyer some years previously.⁸

Stern, Liselotte, and their young son, Antony (b. 1937), arrived in Montreal on 24 June 1939 — Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, the national holiday in the province of Quebec. (Later, during the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, Québécois sovereigntists would transform the day from a religious celebration into an explicitly nationalist *fête nationale* that would not have been particularly welcoming to an outsider like Stern.) The coincidence of his arrival on this day is interesting in light of the premise that Stern in some respects lived apart from the general population in their new home. Initially, Stern worked at the Hôpital de Notre Dame, and somewhat later, at the Protestant Insane Asylum, Douglas Hospital, Verdun. Soon after his arrival, he befriended another émigré neurologist and histologist, Miguel Prados (1899–1970), from Malaga by way of Madrid. Prados had already achieved a measure of fame, having collaborated with Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852–1934) on a famous study of the corpus callosum, published in 1922.⁹ He was also an ardent Republican who shared Stern’s anti-fascist sensibility and, like Stern, was deeply interested in psychoanalysis. As a result, the two became close friends and co-authored numerous papers on neurology and gerontology over the years.¹⁰

Another émigré neurologist and chemist whom Stern befriended at around this time was Heinz Lehmann (1911–1999), who later became the chief of the department of psychiatry at Douglas Hospital. Lehmann had arrived in Montreal in 1937, two years before Stern, but as Stern later would, had converted from Judaism to Christianity. Lehmann is chiefly remembered for introducing the use of chlorpromazine for the treatment of schizophrenia and for advocating the decriminalization of marijuana and homosexuality in the 1960s.¹¹

Meanwhile, after dithering for a decade or more on the doorstep of the Church, Stern finally converted to Roman Catholicism in 1943 — a decision which satisfied a deep inner longing but provoked intense condemnation from Montreal’s Jewish community.¹² Mercifully, 1943 was also the year that Wilder Penfield recommended Stern to the British-trained biological psychiatrist Donald Ewen Cameron (1901–1967), the new Chief of Psychiatry at McGill University, who placed Stern in charge of the gerontologic unit of the Allan Memorial Institute of Psychiatry. As described by Stern, the unit “was established as one of the research groups” of the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University rather than a clinical service; it was the first geriatric psychiatry unit in Canada, as has been emphasized in the history of medicine literature.¹³ And there again, Stern flourished professionally until 1952, by which time he had authored at

⁷ Tibor Frank, “Organized Operations in Europe and the USA 1933–1945,” in *In Defense of Learning: The Plight, Persecution and Placement of Academic Refugees 1933–1980s*, eds. Shula Marxs, Paul Weindling, and Laura Wintour (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), chapter 9.

⁸ See Stahnisch, “German-Speaking Émigré-Neuroscientists in North America after 1933,” 6–13.

⁹ Cf. J. Río-Hortega, “The Discoveries of Microglia and Oligodendroglia: Pío del Río-Hortega and His Relationships with Achúcarro and Cajal (1914–1934),” *Neurosciences and History* 1, 4 (2013): 176–90; esp. 187.

¹⁰ Burston, *A Forgotten Freudian*, chapter 3.

¹¹ Edward Shorter, *A Historical Dictionary of Psychiatry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 160–1.

¹² Burston, *A Forgotten Freudian*, chapters 4 and 6.

¹³ David Hogan, “History of Geriatrics in Canada,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 24, 1 (2007): 131–50.

least fifty-two articles on neuroanatomy, neuropathology, and several psychiatric disorders in prestigious medical journals.¹⁴ Unfortunately, his growing fame and increasingly outspoken religiosity also came at a cost, as it caused a breach between him and Cameron. Cameron was an anti-psychoanalytical psychiatrist, interested in electroshock therapy and psychopharmacology — and responsible for psychoactive drug testing in coercive experiments on human patients in Montreal.¹⁵ This situation meant that Stern felt personally prompted to leave the Allan, moving to the newly founded Catholic University of Ottawa that same year.¹⁶

Sources of Evidence: A Memoir, a Novel, and a Poem

Stern's journal articles were extremely well regarded within the medical profession, but his growing fame outside of psychiatric circles stemmed from a memoir entitled *The Pillar of Fire*, published in 1951. *The Pillar of Fire* became an international bestseller and was greeted by many Catholics as a worthy successor to other twentieth-century conversion narratives, like Dorothy Day's (1897–1980) book *From Union Square to Rome* (1937), and Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948). Stern's admirers also included author and philosopher C.S. Lewis as well as theologian and ethicist Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971), who both wrote to Stern in praise of his book, which they regarded as a literary masterpiece. Indeed, *The Pillar of Fire* was eventually translated into German, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Italian, and as a result, by the mid-1960s, Stern was a well-known figure and a public intellectual in Canada and the United States. He was a member of Poets, Essayists, and Novelists (PEN, now PEN International), and the Canadian representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Institute for Education. In 1965, he testified as an expert on racism and prejudice in the Canadian House of Commons, appearing frequently on Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) radio and television programs during the 1960s.¹⁷

Quite apart from its appeal to Catholics, *The Pillar of Fire* gives some vivid descriptions of Stern's experience as a forced migrant in his exile in London and Montreal, which will be discussed later in this article. Another source of information about his émigré experience is Stern's novel, *Through Dooms of Love* (1960), which he wrote with some assistance from his admirer and frequent house guest, the novelist Graham Greene.¹⁸ Greene had stumbled across *The Pillar of Fire* shortly after it was published and admired it exceedingly. He also offered glowing endorsements for three subsequent non-fiction books written by Stern: *The Third Revolution* (1954), *The Flight from Woman* (1967), and *Love and Success* (1975).¹⁹

Stern's (much-neglected) novel, set in Chicago in the United States in 1949, tracked the fortunes and vicissitudes of a formerly wealthy Czech artist-industrialist who had fled the Nazis with his daughter, but whose estranged wife and son had settled in London, England. Despite providing no exact parallels between the lives of the characters in the novel and those of Karl Stern's own family circle, the novel certainly contains some strong thematic convergences between "art" and "life" that are not coincidental and several characters whose experiences and attitudes are strikingly reminiscent of Stern's own, as is shown in more detail below.²⁰

¹⁴ James Shaw, "Meet the Karl Sterns," *The Catholic World* 174, 4 (1951): 424–30.

¹⁵ Cf. Andrea Tone, *The Age of Anxiety — A History of America's Turbulent Affair with Tranquillizers* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 257.

¹⁶ Frank W. Stahnisch, "Karl Stern (1906–1975) — Pioneer in Neurology," *Journal of Neurology* 262, 1 (2015): 245–7.

¹⁷ Burston, *A Forgotten Freudian*, chapters 4 and 6.

¹⁸ Karl Stern, *Through Dooms of Love* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1960).

¹⁹ Karl Stern, *The Third Revolution: A Study of Psychiatry and Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1954); Karl Stern, *The Flight from Woman* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965); Karl Stern, *Love and Success* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1975).

²⁰ Stern, *Through Dooms of Love*, 34 and 223.

A third source of information about the challenges that Stern and his family experienced adapting to their new cultural surroundings in Canada is a book-length poem by the classicist and poet Daryl Hine (1936–2012), author of *In and Out: A Confessional Poem*. As a Canadian-born friend of Stern's eldest son, Antony, and his classmate at McGill University, Hine spent considerable time in the Stern family home in the Outremont neighbourhood in 1955 and 1956. Unlike in Stern's novel, in Hine's fictionalized memoir the characters of Karl, Liselotte, and Antony (all given pseudonyms) were intended to closely mirror the actions and utterances of the real Stern family.

Until recently, the author of this article was under the mistaken impression that Hine's book contributed appreciably to Stern's posthumous neglect,²¹ and is grateful to Canadian author, editor, and poet John Robert Colombo (b. 1936) for disabusing him of this idea. As it turns out, despite ringing endorsements from fellow poets Louis Dudek (1918–2001) and James Merrill (1926–1995), and Canada's preeminent literary critic, Northrop Frye (1912–1991), Hine's readership in Canada was actually quite small. And on balance, that is probably a good thing, because no member of the Stern family escapes Hine's rapier wit. According to Hine's description, Liselotte was a submissive, stay-at-home housewife, while Stern was a dour domestic tyrant who pontificated about religion around the dinner table, browbeat his wife and children and was largely responsible for all the domestic tragedies that befell the family in later years. Hine's depictions of events — including his brief affair with Antony Stern, which is the pivotal point of the book — should be taken with the proverbial grain of salt; indeed, perhaps a spoonful. Why? Because even before he met Karl Stern, Hine admits, he disliked *The Pillar of Fire*, a book which, as noted above, several celebrated authors and theologians of his time had greeted as a literary masterpiece. Despite these accolades, in Hine's opinion, *The Pillar of Fire* was not a moving testament of faith; it was merely trite and confused. He described Stern's work dismissively as a "dubious doctrine, a mixture of [theologian Martin] Buber [1878–1965] and [Catholic philosopher Jacques] Maritain [1882–1973] topped with a dollop of [psychoanalyst Sigmund] Freud [1856–1939]," implying that Stern was a dilettante who was trying to reconcile Judaism and Christianity, and both of these with psychoanalysis, yet in an implausible or injudicious manner.²² Hine obviously overlooked the fact that Stern's second book, *The Third Revolution* (1954), which was published a year before Hine met the Sterns, does not merely add a "dollop of Freud" on top of Stern's religious ideas. On the contrary, it was a thoughtful and eloquent effort to persuade Catholic readers that Freud's deepest insights into human nature, which Stern described with competence and lucidity, can (and should) be integrated into the body of Catholic teaching.

Significantly, Hine also neglected to mention Stern's friendship with and admiration for Dorothy Day, whose activism and advocacy on behalf of workers, immigrants, racial minorities, and the poorest, most destitute segments of society Stern supported through regular donations and frequent scholarly and journalistic contributions to *The Catholic Worker*, the newspaper she edited. Indeed, in her one cameo appearance, toward the end of *In and Out*, Day is depicted as a dour and dispirited old crone, not the vital and dedicated woman she was.²³

So, what was the source of Hine's derisive and dismissive attitude toward Stern, his family, and his friends? In all likelihood, Hine's antagonism arose mainly from the fact that when his clandestine affair with Antony Stern came to light, Karl Stern put an abrupt halt to it and urged his son to go into analysis. An important point to remember is that this happened in Canada during the mid-1950s, when the stigma associated with homosexuality was prevalent and intense, both in the Catholic Church and in

²¹ Burston, *A Forgotten Freudian*, chapter 6.

²² Daryl Hine, *In and Out: A Confessional Poem* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1989), 260.

²³ Cf. Sheila Webb, "Dorothy Day and the Early Years of the 'Catholic Worker': Social Action through the Pages of the Press," *US Catholic Historian* 21, 3 (2003): 71–88.

psychoanalytic circles.²⁴ And a year or so later, Antony pronounced himself “cured” and soon married, leaving his erstwhile lover fuming with jealousy.

That said, these events were not the only source of Hine’s hostility, nor the most important, from the point of view of this article. Notably, in addition, while Stern was a devout Roman Catholic throughout his adult life, Hine was barely twenty when he met Stern and was thinking about leaving the Church merely one year after his initial conversion.²⁵ In short, when Hine met Antony and Karl Stern, he was already becoming disenchanted with Catholicism, which he had embraced in a sudden (but relatively brief) fit of piety, only to reject it with equal vehemence a short time later. His time with Antony’s family marked the period between his conversion and subsequent departure from the Church. So even if Antony Stern had not been the love of his life, as Hine frequently claimed, his dislike of Karl and Liselotte was probably inevitable.

Forward and Backward: Fire and Salt

That said, also important is that Hine’s abandonment of Roman Catholicism, and his often-repeated preference for pagan metaphors, imagery, and style, did not prevent him from trading in Biblical allusions many years after the fact. Indeed, Hine’s opinion of Stern is summed up well in the satirical title he gave to the book that had made Stern famous — “The Pillar of Salt.” This title was probably prompted by a passage from the book itself, which alludes to the story of Lot’s wife (Genesis 19:26), where Stern wrote:

Christianity never demands of you that you deny anything positive that you ever loved. You can find it all again in Christ, but you find more. He does not want you to be nostalgic for the past, because the past is in Him. He asks you not to look back at the burning city, lest you will turn into a pillar of salt.²⁶

Stern was saying, in effect, that converts to Christianity need not look backward and cling to their old identities; that everything positive that they ever loved is still present in (and consistent with) their newfound love of Christ. But according to Hine, that is precisely what Karl and Liselotte Stern were doing — looking backward. In describing the furniture in Stern’s home in Montreal, for example, he claimed that “everything bore . . . an invisible label, like in those museums, proclaiming its age, in reaction perhaps to the modern world that they found themselves in but not of.”²⁷ Hine was referring to the magnificent old furniture that Liselotte von Baeyer, later Liselotte Stern, had managed — against considerable odds — to save and transport from Nazi Germany to London and then to Montreal, in defiance of the predatory policies of the Nazi regime, which confiscated anything of value when it could get away with it. These handmade items from the eighteenth and nineteenth century exhibited a level of craftsmanship that stands in stark contrast to the more modern and mass-manufactured items that filled the homes of most Montreal residents. And here let us note that despite Hine’s disparaging portrait of her, Liselotte Stern was not simply a snob, an antiquarian, or a submissive stay-at-home mother.²⁸ She was an accomplished craftswoman — a book binder and book restoration expert who trained in Germany and England, and whose work was in great demand. Indeed, at the request of Canadian novelist Robertson Davies (1913–

²⁴ Donald W. McLeod, *Lesbian and Gay Liberation in Canada: A Selected Annotated Chronology* (Pittsburgh, PA: Homewood Books, 1996), 185–190.

²⁵ Margaret Kaufman, “Daryl Hine, 76, Poet, Editor and Translator,” *New York Times* (25 August 2012), B8.

²⁶ Hine, *In and Out*, 231.

²⁷ Daryl Hine, qtd. in John T. Saywell, *Canadian Annual Review* 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 316.

²⁸ Burston, *A Forgotten Freudian*, 117.

1995), she salvaged and restored many ancient tomes that now reside in collections in Massey College, University of Toronto, and McGill University's Osler Library in Montreal.²⁹

A reasonable supposition, therefore, is that Liselotte's attachment to her furniture was not merely symptomatic of nostalgia. It was a gesture of defiance against the Nazis and against prevailing tastes and cultural conventions in North America, which she and Karl found foreign and dispiriting.³⁰ Evidence for this can be found in a striking passage from *The Pillar of Fire*, where Stern recalled that their first Montreal residence, in an unnamed suburb, was quite demoralizing because of the

... monotonous infinity of houses. ... The houses were jerry-built, rows after rows, creeping along like fungi mass cultured by wealthy people who lived in cool stone buildings, far away from us. The houses were filled with settees; moonlit lake scenes with moose; mahogany radios; Jesus the Good Shepherd ... and so on. With insignificant variations, the same uniformity prevailed on all sides. Thoughts were channeled into all this by radio and newspapers, as if an ocean were artificially aerated. It was as though the mystery of human existence itself were replaced by a Prefabricated Life.³¹

Clearly, Stern and his wife found both the exterior and interior areas of the suburban community they lived in aesthetically rather ugly, and the omnipresent newspapers and chattering radio were an affront to their critical faculties. As if in response to this disparaging appraisal, Hine found the Sterns' attachment to European craftsmanship and music to be pathetic, if not hypocritical altogether. After all, the real title of Stern's memoir, *The Pillar of Fire*, is intended to convey the author's willingness to venture into an unknown wilderness, to risk uncertainty and possible hardship for the sake of his faith. But Hine's allusion to Lot's wife, who is fixated on the past and actually disobeys God's command, thus becoming immobilized and inert, suggests that the book's title is somewhat fraudulent. It may also be seen as a cover for the Stern family's cultural stagnation — their apparent inability to let go of their European heritage and acclimate to their new North American surroundings.³²

"No Sense of Belonging:" Stern in Montreal, 1939

While some evidence supports Hine's caustic appraisal, as shall be seen later, a more charitable and realistic assessment of the Sterns' attitude might be that they were always conscious and proud of their European heritage — at least in terms of culture, art, music, and design. Yet when it came to politics, language, ethnicity, and faith, Karl Stern could also be quite critical of Europe. This is reflected in, among other things, his probing reflections on the galloping Nazification of Germany from 1928 to 1938, and indirectly, in his reflections on the civic temper of Montreal. Why the latter? Because far from being the cosmopolitan city it is today, when Stern and his family arrived in 1939 — the year of the outbreak of the Second World War — Montreal was a social patchwork of ethnic enclaves that treated one another warily, at best. The Francophone population, said Stern, possessed a rural-village mentality not unlike that of early eighteenth-century France. They were unusually pious, traditional, and therefore wary (if not actually contemptuous) of finance and industrialization — and by implication, of the English, the Scots and, of course, the Jews.³³

²⁹ Ibid, chapter 5.

³⁰ See, for example, the general contextual account in John Russell Taylor, *Strangers in Paradise: The Hollywood Émigrés 1933–1950* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1983), 9.

³¹ Stern, *The Pillar of Fire*, 217–18.

³² Hine, *In and Out*, 6.

³³ Denyse Baillargeon, *Making Do: Women, Family and Home in Montreal during the Great Depression* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999), 108, 136–38, and 159.

Montreal's Anglophones, by contrast, were more modern and economically successful, but often smug, complacent, and disdainful of their French neighbours — and of the Irish, who had earlier settled in Montreal in large numbers. So, far from being a melting pot, Montreal — as Stern experienced it, anyway — merely reproduced and perpetuated all the old rivalries and antagonisms of Europe on a miniature scale “in the form of preciously preserved resentments of bygone times.”³⁴

Oddly enough, although Stern never mentions this specifically, historians have also noted that developments in Europe were exacerbating the tension across Montreal's ethnic divides at the time of Stern's arrival in Canada. Professor Robert Schwartzwald points out that the latent antipathies between the French-speaking Catholics and the mostly Yiddish-speaking Jewish community were intensified by the Spanish Civil War, and played out rather nastily in the popular press in the months immediately preceding the Stern family's arrival.³⁵ These worrisome exchanges also foreshadowed future trends, as many Québécois would soon greet the Vichy regime in France, which was fiercely anti-Semitic, with noticeable enthusiasm too.³⁶ Meanwhile, the Stern family was quite taken aback by the frank and frequent expressions of anti-Semitism among the city's residents. As Karl Stern himself put it:

Some Catholic people let us feel anti-Semitism for the first time since leaving Germany. In Germany we had been subject to the cruel precision of a huge, anonymous machine; here for the first time, we experienced anti-Semitism from person to person . . . the spirit of Catholicity we knew in Europe seemed lost. . . .³⁷

So consider Stern's predicament. On arrival in Montreal, on the eve of the Second World War, he was still nominally Jewish, but married to a German-speaking Protestant, rendering integration into either the Jewish or the Anglo-Scottish Protestant community of Montreal already quite difficult. He and his wife were also moving slowly but steadily toward conversion to Roman Catholicism, but unlike many Catholics in Quebec, were deeply opposed to the Spanish general and dictator Francisco “Franco” Bahamonde (1892–1975) and the German Nazi *fuehrer* Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), and were appalled by the visceral anti-Semitism of many Catholics in *la belle province*. Considering the mood of the city, Stern's reaction is not surprising: “We had no feeling of ‘belonging.’ We felt like rabbits who turn up accidentally in the middle of a fox hunt.”³⁸

Stern in London, 1935: Dust and Fog

By contrast with his experience in Montreal in 1939, Stern's experience of settling in London four years previously was less complicated and less coloured by ethnic and racial prejudices. Yet neither was it easy. On arrival from Germany, Stern found England to be a fairly homogenous but nonetheless tolerant society. Despite these initial observations, he suffered from acute feelings of isolation, anonymity, and powerlessness; feelings he believed gripped *all* the German-Jewish refugees who were forced to uproot themselves from their ancestral homes. For example, he wrote:

³⁴ Stern, *The Pillar of Fire*, 218.

³⁵ Robert Schwartzwald, “Les relations interculturelles en 1937 à travers la presse Juife montréalaise d'expression anglaise,” in *Un Tournant Culturel*, ed. Yvan Lamond and Denise Sainte-Jacques, (Quebec City: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2009), 89–104.

³⁶ See Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991); and Esther Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew: Anti-Semitism and Extremist Right-Wing Nationalism in Quebec from 1929–1939* (Montreal: Robert Davies Books, 1993).

³⁷ Stern, *The Pillar of Fire*, 219.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 219.

. . . we settled imperceptibly, like dust, in the huge cities of the Western world. Then there were corners where the dust tended to collect, and in which it was easily seen. There were streets full of us: Greencroft Gardens, London N.W.; Washington Heights, New York City. Many, however, settled like dispersed particles in Paddington, Ealing or Hendon. Each of us carried an invisible wall of strangeness around him because those summer evenings of our childhood in Koenigstein or in Starnberg were incommunicable.³⁹

If Jewish refugees felt like dust particles, blown willy-nilly by the prevailing winds, their neighbours experienced them, not as individuals, yet rather as “. . . part of that penetrating anonymity of the city, like the fog.” Dust and fog — these are Karl Stern’s apt metaphors for émigré populations. After all, dust and fog both consist of tiny, insubstantial particles, which have no permanent residence and do not travel of their own volition at a time or to a destination of their own choosing. They are also nuisances, even potential hazards — not the sort of thing one welcomes into one’s home or on the neighbourhood streets.⁴⁰

Moreover, regardless of what levels of prosperity they had enjoyed formerly, Stern and his contemporaries now found themselves entirely dependent on the beneficence of a new host country, and in circumstances like these, said Stern “. . . Generosity was no mother. It was a nurse with the odor of antiseptis.”⁴¹ In such circumstances, the joy of freedom, such as it was, was often blighted by the émigrés’ frequent inability to help friends and loved ones to safety because of bureaucratic indifference or the greedy machinations of the Nazis.

In an effort to overcome their alienation from their surroundings, Stern recalled, many German-Jewish émigrés tried to master the English language as quickly as possible, and to “fit in” by dressing like the English and adopting their accents and mannerisms. As Stern further observed, this effort to culturally assimilate also engendered a new form of self-estrangement, a kind of blanket repudiation of an émigré’s past.⁴² After all, for better and for worse, Jewish Enlightenment philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) had persuaded several generations of Jews living in Germany and Austria that German had been the language of Jewish emancipation, urging them to embrace the language of theologian and anthropologist Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), writer and dramatist Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), linguist and philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), novelist and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), and, above all, the leading Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). They did so with considerable enthusiasm, contributing mightily to German thought and letters until they were purged from German universities in the 1930s.⁴³ But now their native language, once a source of considerable pride, became the “language of the Enemy” which was associated — even in their own minds, as often as not — with “that thing behind us, that monstrous Anti-Mother, that dark and demonic crater from which we had come.”⁴⁴

A long, lonely journey from the arms of a monstrous anti-Mother to those of an antiseptic nurse (whose sympathies and resources only extend so far) does not sound terribly appealing. Yet on balance, it was not all bad, either. Although plagued by worry about the friends and family he had left behind, Stern still admired that mixture “of sobriety and pragmatism, dryness and brilliant lucidity . . . so characteristic of

³⁹ Ibid, 190–1.

⁴⁰ See also in Vincent Brook, *Driven to Darkness: Jewish Émigré Directors and the Rise of Film Noir* (New Brunswick, NJ, New York: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 18.

⁴¹ Stern, *The Pillar of Fire*, 191.

⁴² See also in Edith Kurzweil, “Psychoanalytic Science: From Oedipus to Culture,” in *Forced Migration and Scientific Change: Émigré German-Speaking Scientists and Scholars after 1933*, ed. Mitchell Ash and Alfons Soellner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 139–55.

⁴³ Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All* (New York: Henry Holt, 2003).

⁴⁴ Stern, *The Pillar of Fire*, 193.

Anglo-Saxon science.”⁴⁵ He delighted in the English fondness for eccentricity, for unusual and self-taught men. While acknowledging that “invisible walls” surrounded members of different social classes, he was also deeply impressed by the sense of solidarity among them, especially in the face of adversity.⁴⁶ Even in the absence of a common faith or political ideology, Stern recalled, communal rituals like tea and choral singing pervaded his workplace, imparting a sense of civility and belonging quite unlike the rigid hierarchies he had frequently experienced previously in the Kaiser Wilhelm Society at the German Research Institute for Psychiatry in Munich and earlier at the universities of Frankfurt am Main and Berlin in Germany.

Similarly, in Montreal, Stern had splendid opportunities for career advancement, and found many new friends and colleagues, both French and English speaking, who offered him their friendship and personal support. Having already learned and then perfected his English in London, Stern became soon fluent in French as well, and gradually learned to negotiate the city’s ethnic divides. Meanwhile, his wealthy uncle Felix Stern (1877–1949), who lived and worked as an engineer in Chicago, helped Stern to bring his father and stepmother — penniless, but alive — to Montreal, where they became doting grandparents to his growing brood of children: a stroke of good fortune that few of his fellow émigrés could hope to match. Only his exclusion from Montreal’s Jewish community, on account of his conversion to Catholicism, seemed permanent and quite irrevocable.

A Double Ambivalence: The Making of an Outsider

So, from several vantage points, Stern was exceedingly lucky. And he knew it, too. However, his sense of good fortune — which he attributed to divine providence — never erased the lingering sense of alienation that resulted from his forced emigration process. Stern’s experience, at least as it has been rendered in *The Pillar of Fire*, suggests that he acquired a trait common among immigrants and refugees, a kind of double ambivalence — one extending inward and backward, so to speak, to their country of origin, and another forward and outward to their adoptive home, where their present and future reside.⁴⁷ So, on the one hand, said Stern, “those summer evenings of our childhood in Koenigstein or in Starnberg were incommunicable.” On the other hand, the beloved Koenigstein and Starnberg of their childhood had vanished forever in the maw of the monstrous “anti-Mother,” never to return. Similarly, the New World offered immigrants like Stern the chance to escape religious and racial persecution, to grow and to prosper socially and economically. At the same time, it required an enormous effort and ingenuity to succeed, posed many new problems and prejudices, and had wilfully abandoned many of the artistic, aesthetic, and spiritual riches of the European heritage that once had made its inhabitants so proud.

So for Stern, and many other refugee scientists and scholars like him, both his country of origin and his adoptive homeland were regarded ambivalently. Why was this so? The answer is that the new home did not provide or replicate the distinctively good cultural features of their old country, and vice versa. As a result, *both* countries evoked feelings of love, longing, and likewise a sense of loss. They *both* disappointed in cultural and political ways that refugees were powerless to change or to address successfully. And on reflection, this puts Hine’s satirical title, “The Pillar of Salt,” in a slightly different light. Stern called his memoir *The Pillar of Fire*, suggesting that he was moving forward, into the as yet unknown future. Yet adult émigré physicians and scientists like Stern, whose childhood memories and cultural roots run deep,

⁴⁵ Ibid, 192.

⁴⁶ Cf. Daniel Burston, “The Politics of Psychiatry and the Vicissitudes of Faith Circa 1950: Karl Stern’s Psychiatric Novel,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 51, 4 (2015): 351–65.

⁴⁷ Marco Gemignani, “‘The Past if Past’: The Use of Memories and Self-Healing Narratives in Refugees from the Former Yugoslavia,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, 1 (2011): 132–56.

inevitably look backward as well, as they negotiate the challenges of living in a new and initially foreign environment.

Another source of insight into Stern's émigré experience may be his novel, *Through Dooms of Love*, which was published ten years after *The Pillar of Fire*.⁴⁸ Among other things the novel dramatizes the ultimately unsuccessful efforts of two displaced Europeans, Leonard Radbert and Joseph Birnstamm, to adapt and thrive in the New World; another, younger émigré, Marianne Radbert, does adapt eventually, but only after overcoming some serious obstacles. Set in Chicago in 1949, the novel initially pivots around the relationship between the elderly émigré Leonard Radbert and his daughter Marianne, who had emigrated to the United States from Czechoslovakia (via London) a decade previously. Like Liselotte von Baeyer's father, the novel's eldest character, Leonard Radbert, sprang from the lesser nobility, but opposed the Nazis and was stripped of his fortune before he and his family fled to safety. As the plot unfolds, it transpires that Leonard survives in Chicago only thanks to Marianne, who works as a well-paid fashion model. Thanks to Marianne's modelling salary, Leonard, a former millionaire who is now down on his luck, is never destitute. Yet for all practical intents and purposes, he is a perpetual outsider. And so when he is hospitalized after a stroke, he is much more isolated and disoriented than the average stroke patient.

At the occupational level, at least, Marianne has adapted much better to her new North American surroundings. However, her inner world is still European to the core. The day her father is admitted to Holy Jordan, a local psychiatric hospital, she strolls the hospital grounds, and sees:

A few people . . . sitting on . . . ornamental cast iron benches; men and women of all ages, some hunched, others leaning back and baring their faces to the invisible sun. On the lawn . . . stood a man with a long grey beard, a wide-brimmed soft hat, a shirt-blouse with a piece of string for a belt. He could have been a nineteenth century leader, [like the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe] Garibaldi [1807–1882] or [the writer and politician] Count Lev Nikolayevich] Tolstoy [1828–1910], mysteriously arrested in the motion of pronouncing his message. . . . From the galleries . . . one could hear human voices, wailing, shouting and chatter, but (it struck her when she later thought about it) no conversation. Some of the old men and women . . . looked as if their faces had been arrested in a grimace. Others had noble and rare features, the kind of faces one rarely saw in town, free of the accidental. She saw a[n] [Italian Renaissance artist and scientist] Michelangelo [di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, 1475–1564], a [Spanish romantic painter] Goya [1746–1828] and a [Dutch painter Hieronymus] Bosch [1450–1516], and they all looked strangely polite and genteel. They wore hand-me-down old clothes, strange combinations of business suits, overalls and street clothes.⁴⁹

Garibaldi, Tolstoy, Michelangelo, Goya, Bosch — seeing so many vivid characters like these walking about in broad daylight on American soil in the space of a few minutes is extraordinary, even on the grounds of a mental hospital. Moreover, and more to the point, their names evoke images, ideas, and associations that hearken back from the nineteenth century all the way to the late Middle Ages, referencing Marianne's European heritage. This passage further conveys the distinct impression that Marianne is outwardly adapted to her surroundings while her heart and soul are still planted on the other side of the Atlantic. Like her father, then, she cannot help but see her world and the people in it through European lenses. No wonder then, that as the novel unfolds, Leonard Radbert's slow but inexorable decline prompts Marianne to seek psychotherapy from Doctor Joseph Birnstamm, a Holocaust survivor with deep interests

⁴⁸ Stern, *Through Dooms of Love*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 101.

in philosophy and literature — like Stern himself — who is able to speak to Leonard in his own tongue and inspire some hope and to comfort him in the midst of his personal challenges and final decline.

Strategies of Adaptation to the New World

But despite the sensitive care he gave to Marianne's father, and later, to Marianne, Birnstamm is a tragic, vulnerable figure who, at the end of day, is hardly any better suited to his American surroundings than Marianne's father is. Among other things, it transpires that Birnstamm is locked in a bitter struggle with another, much more powerful émigré, Doctor Wayne, who is the closest thing to a villain in *Through Dooms of Love*. Birnstamm and Wayne hate each other, and about two-thirds of the way into the novel, Wayne succeeds in having Birnstamm dismissed from his job at Holy Jordan. Shortly after he has lost his hospital job, Birnstamm learns that his days as Marianne's therapist are numbered in any case; he has terminal cancer and only a few months to live.

Significantly, unlike Birnstamm, Wayne arrived in the United States before the war, Americanized his name, married a wealthy American wife, and after rising rapidly through the ranks, controls the hospital's spanking new clinical research wing. And again, unlike Birnstamm, who is unmistakably Viennese, Wayne's accent is barely discernible, and he remains unusually tight-lipped about his place of birth. Far from being proud of his European origins, he does his utmost to conceal them, and reaps substantial benefits as a result. So Birnstamm and Wayne, both émigrés, represent diametrically opposed attitudes, strategies, and outcomes; the low-status psychiatric "loser" who is unable to conceal, much less negate, his European roots, and the high-status "winner" who is reluctant or unwilling to acknowledge them.

Arguably, Stern could be reproached for drawing too stark a contrast between these different modes of adaptation to the New World. And yet, one would dearly like to know — was this state of affairs an accident, just an idea that occurred to Stern, or was it a plot device that Stern deliberately wove into the plot, perhaps with Graham Greene's approval? And if so, did Stern create Wayne consciously to register his distaste for émigrés who adapt too easily, for opportunistic reasons? Sadly, the answer will never be known. But this is without doubt a scenario where "the bad guys" win, and that even readers unfamiliar with *The Pillar of Fire* would have no difficulty in discerning where Stern's own sympathies lay.

Finally, it should be noted that Birnstamm's defeat at Holy Jordan echoes some of Stern's fears about his own professional standing. In his correspondence with Dorothy Day and with American writer and conservative politician Clare Boothe Luce (1903–1987), he joked more than once that the publication of his novel might elicit widespread condemnation and prompt him to lose his medical licence — that psychiatrists would excommunicate him for his candid, albeit fictionalized, critique of the psychiatric profession. He need not have worried. His novel — although competent on the whole, and quite fascinating in places — was largely ignored by the psychiatric establishment. That being so, his fears on this score were probably grounded in his growing misgivings about the blinkered materialism and militant atheism of the overwhelming majority of his psychiatric colleagues: misgivings that first nagged at his conscience in Munich, but which intensified in Montreal during the 1940s and no doubt contributed to his rift with Dr. D. Ewen Cameron and biological psychiatry associates at McGill University in September 1952.⁵⁰ So even in his chosen profession, psychiatry, Stern felt like an outsider, and identified strongly with those who dwell precariously on the border of respectability — religious patients, geriatric cases, and patients asking for psychoanalytical therapy in Montreal at the time.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Daniel Burston, *A Forgotten Freudian*, chapters 5 and 6.

⁵¹ Karl Stern, "Observations in an Old Age Counselling Center — Preliminary Report on the First 100 Clients," *Journal of Gerontology* 3, 1 (1948): 48–60.

So, given the novel's plot, and the temper of its main protagonists, a grain of truth lies in Hine's description of Karl and Liselotte Stern as backward looking — although likening their exquisite furniture to museum pieces and calling Stern's first book "The Pillar of Salt" were undeniably mean-spirited. And then again, one wonders — was Hine perhaps trying to conjure some oblique parallel between Stern's book and Albert Memmi's autobiographical novel, *The Pillar of Salt*, which was published in 1953,⁵² two years after *The Pillar of Fire*? Again, we will never know for certain. But, interestingly, the hero of Memmi's book, Alexandre Mordekhai Bennilouche, is an Algerian Jew who, like Stern, came from humble beginnings, endured anti-Semitic taunts and discrimination (from Christians *and* Muslims), struggled (as did Stern) with his Jewish identity, and was ultimately forced to flee his native land.⁵³

Despite this odd coincidence, however, one suspects that no such parallels were intended here. Hine would have found Memmi's quasi-fictional character much more sympathetic than the flesh-and-blood Karl Stern. After all, despite his own brief conversion to Roman Catholicism, Hine took an exceedingly dim view of Stern's conversion, regarding it as a base betrayal of Stern's own people, rather than a deep or authentic spiritual commitment. And unlike Stern, Memmi's hero did not abandon his ancestral faith, despite the harsh mistreatment his Jewish identity elicited and the internal struggles that beset him at various points in the book.

Fighting Anti-Semitism?

Stern approached things differently, however. Having converted to Catholicism, he resolved to fight anti-Semitism in the Church — a task for which he was now extremely well equipped, or so he evidently hoped. For roughly two decades on the Catholic lecture circuit, he gave literally hundreds of talks, mostly in the province of Quebec, on the evils of racial and religious prejudice, and of anti-Semitism in particular.⁵⁴ No doubt, they did some good. The tone of his talks to Quebecers can be partially inferred from a passage toward the end of *The Pillar of Fire*, where he recalled a conversation

. . . with a very learned, profoundly religious French-Canadian priest. This man shared the nationalist fervor which one finds among so many groups of racial minority anywhere in the world. In spite of his spirituality he was not free from that resentment which always seems to diminish the stature of a man. In the course of our conversation I pointed out to him how deep the traces of persecution and of anti-Semitism are in every one of us, and that I could not believe that Christ would demand of me to join the ranks of those who, on the material plane, are our persecutors. Everything in me, I said, revolted against the idea. He looked long and pensively at me, and finally he said: "Yes, if following God would require me to become British, I must say this would a terrible demand." . . . He continued to be silent for a while and this remark, and I knew that he understood.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, in a manner of speaking, Stern *did* join the ranks of his persecutors, although he rationalized his decision to convert by claiming that the racist and fascist elements that were present in the Church represented only the "visible Church," which is mired in worldliness, contradiction, and sin. Fortunately, he claimed, the "invisible Church" is pure and free of such disfiguring influences. That may be, but as pointed out in this author's previous book *A Forgotten Freudian: The Passion of Karl Stern* (2016),

⁵² Albert Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt* (Chicago: Criterion Books, 1953).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 257–67.

⁵⁴ Jacqueline Duffin, *History of Medicine: A Scandalously Short Introduction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 152.

⁵⁵ Stern, *The Pillar of Fire*, 259–60.

Stern's fervent praise of the "invisible Church" sometimes led him to idealize some of its more visible members. For example, consider his enthusiastic response to Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber's (1869–1952) Advent sermon of 17 December 1933 in the central Frauenkirche Cathedral in Munich. Faulhaber had resolved to repudiate the Nazis' repeated assertions that the New Testament had nothing to do with the Old Testament, that Jesus was Aryan, not Jewish. Of course, this made total nonsense of traditional and received Catholic and Protestant theology, so Faulhaber vigorously re-asserted the continuity between the two faiths. At the same time, wrote Church historian Gunther Loewy,

. . . Faulhaber went out of his way to make clear that he was not concerned with defending his Jewish contemporaries. "We must distinguish," he told the faithful, "between the people of Israel before the death of Christ, who were vehicles of divine revelation, and the Jews after the death of Christ, who have become restless wanderers over the earth. But even the Jewish people of ancient times could not justly claim credit for the wisdom of the Old Testament. So unique were these laws that one was bound to say: 'People of Israel, this did not grow in your own garden of your own planting. This condemnation of usurious land-grabbing, this war against the oppression of the farmer by debt, this prohibition of usury, is not the product of your spirit.'"⁵⁶

So, on reflection, Karl Stern greeted Faulhaber's sermon with enthusiasm, while the vast majority of the members in the Jewish community experienced it as a vehement rejection, a body blow. In fairness to Faulhaber, the highbrow, low intensity anti-Semitism that he expressed was simply an outgrowth of old-fashioned Catholic supersessionism, which was finally repudiated at the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Unlike Adolf Hitler — a high-intensity, lowbrow anti-Semite — Faulhaber never incited Catholics to commit violence against Jews. The problem was that his sermon provided Catholics with the perfect justification for passivity and indifference to the fate of the Jews in the years leading up to the Holocaust, thereby helping to seal their fate at the hands of Hitler's minions. The fact that Stern was "tone-deaf" to Faulhaber's thinly veiled hostility toward the Jewish community may help explain the Montreal Jewish community's lingering mistrust of Stern. And yet, despite his apparent obliviousness to the latent implications of Faulhaber's sermon — which declared that the wisdom of the Old Testament and the Prophets was somehow foreign to "the Jewish spirit" — Stern frequently extended olive branches to Montreal's Jews, and many Catholic visitors to his home remarked that the atmosphere in the Stern household was somehow decidedly "Jewish"⁵⁷ — further evidence of the complexities and unfinished business he brought with him from Europe.

So, to summarize, three published sources give information about Karl Stern's experience as an émigré. The first is his memoir *The Pillar of Fire*, which is undoubtedly the richest and most reliable. However, much can also be inferred from a careful reading of Stern's novel, *Through Dooms of Love*, published ten years later. Daryl Hine's "confessional poem" *In and Out* also gives an interesting perspective on the Stern family's modus vivendi in Montreal, although he was clearly biased against Stern and evidently preferred the pagan sensibilities of the Roman poets to Stern's pious Christian world view. Reading these sources together, so to speak, yields the following conclusions.

⁵⁶ Guenther Loewy, qtd. in Eric Vogelin, *Hitler and the Germans* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 190.

⁵⁷ Psychiatrist Dr. Noel Walsh (d. 2015), who was Stern's right-hand man at St. Mary's Hospital in Montreal, in a personal communication (May 2012).

Conclusion

Karl Stern's departure from Germany in 1935 was a flight from almost certain death. Upon arrival in London, England, he experienced acute feelings of isolation, anonymity, and powerlessness ("dust" and "fog"). His sense of powerlessness was intensified by his extreme difficulties in trying to extricate beloved friends and relatives from his country of origin, efforts that sometimes ended in abject failure. His feelings of alienation from his current surroundings were exacerbated by the necessity of learning of foreign language, and more importantly, by the ambivalence he and his fellow émigrés now experienced toward their native tongue, which England, his first host nation, and later Canada, his adoptive home, plainly regarded as the "language of the Enemy."

While living in London, Stern observed that some émigrés sought to "blend in" completely, to be or to seem as English as possible, whether in the hopes of gaining positions and status or mitigating possible suspicion and hostility toward themselves — whether as Germans, as Jews, or both. Although Stern admired many features of British culture, he rejected that approach to adaptation, remaining quite conscious — and indeed, quite proud — of his European heritage for the remainder of his life. Even so, he could not avoid feeling ambivalent toward his country of origin — ("a monstrous anti-Mother") — and his English refuge — ("a nurse with the odor of antisepsis"); feelings that persisted (or were transferred), in due course, to Montreal, his adoptive home. Although we have no direct proof, in the form of documents or straightforward declarations, plenty of circumstantial and anecdotal evidence suggests that Stern's feelings about emigration fit a pattern of double ambivalence found frequently in refugees, who experience feelings of love, longing, and loss with respect to both their country of origin and their adoptive homes. Indeed, on reflection, he probably felt a very similar ambivalence toward his ancestral faith, which he abandoned, and his adopted faith, which he embraced only after years of internal struggle after his arrival in the New World. Both the ancestral faith and the new one were beloved, and yet both were disappointing in their own ways. Both somehow laid claim to his loyalty and affection. And so one is left wondering how much and how often his double ambivalence toward his country of origin and his adoptive home in North America was complicated by his spiritual migration from Judaism to Roman Catholicism, and by perhaps even by his ambivalence toward his profession, psychiatry, which he seldom addressed publicly and only confided to his closest friends.

One thing is certain. Upon his arrival in Montreal, Stern was daunted by the ethnic, religious, and linguistic antagonisms that divided the city. And because of his lingering loyalty to Judaism, his hatred of fascism, and his deep but as yet unconsummated yearning to embrace the Catholic faith, Stern was doubly, perhaps triply dismayed by the frequent and frank expressions of anti-Semitic sentiments he encountered among Catholics in the province of Quebec. And although his career in Canada flourished, he obviously felt great sympathy and a sense of solidarity with those émigré academics and scholars who, for one reason or another, remained rooted psychologically in European soil and were less successful in thriving in the New World. Fortunately for Stern, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Catholic Church welcomed converts — especially Jewish converts — enthusiastically. So despite his lingering inner conflicts, which estranged him from Montreal's urban Jewish community, the city's Francophone community embraced him with open arms. This fact is evidenced, among other things, in the honorary doctorate bestowed upon him in 1968 by the Université de Laval in Quebec City.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Cf. James L. Roberts, "Le Docteur Karl Stern: La mort du docteur Karl Stern entraîne dans le domaine psychiatrique la disparition . . .," *L'Union médicale du Canada* 105, 1–6 (1976), 172.