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**The Eternal Cycle Continued: The Presence of Giambattista Vico in
A. M. Klein's *The Second Scroll***

In 1951, A. M. Klein, arguably Canada's greatest modernist poet, completed the only novel he was to publish in his lifetime, *The Second Scroll*. Loosely based on a fact-finding mission Klein had undertaken to the recently formed state of Israel, it depicts a similar journey on the part of a Canadian editor to collect and translate a volume of new Israeli poetry. Before his departure, the editor/narrator learns that his European uncle, Melech Davidson, has survived the Holocaust; he decides to use his travels through Italy, Morocco and Israel to search for this lost uncle. A number of critics¹ have associated Klein's allusions to a classical text, the epic journey motif and the father-son relationship in *The Second Scroll* with Klein's long-term obsession with James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. This obsession not only led to important stylistic alterations in Klein's poetry,² but also inspired Klein to complete and publish three essays studying individual chapters of *Ulysses* (which were intended as chapters of a book examining Joyce's entire novel, though the book was never completed).³ What most critics have not recognized, however, is that Klein's involvement in Joyce studies reveals yet another possible structural model for *The Second Scroll*, that of the Viconian cyclical pattern of history, first recognized and discussed by Klein in his critical study of the second episode of *Ulysses* in his essay "A Shout in the Street."

One critic to have noted the connection between Vico and *The Second Scroll* is Michael Greenstein. In his 1978 essay, "History in *The Second*

Scroll," Greenstein examines "two fundamental theories of history" in the novel, "the cyclic . . . and the progressively linear" (38). Greenstein argues that the cyclic "may have derived from Vico" (38). This recognition of the theories of Giambattista Vico's *New Science* in *The Second Scroll* allows Greenstein to perceive several correlations between Klein and Joyce. Ultimately, the purpose of Greenstein's essay is not fully to explore Vico or Joyce's presence in Klein's novel, but to find in both sources support for his argument on "the necessity of completion in Klein's aesthetic theory" (45). In attempting to discuss this point, however, Greenstein may have discovered an important clue in understanding Joyce's presence in *The Second Scroll*; the cyclical reading of history discussed in Vico's *New Science*, and argued by Klein to be omnipresent in the second episode of *Ulysses*, is possibly the most significant structural model for Klein's novel.⁴

In order to explore the possibility of Joyce having informed the structure of *The Second Scroll* through Vico (or vice versa), it is necessary briefly to examine Klein's third and final Joyce essay, "A Shout in the Street." Although the essay and *The Second Scroll* first appear to have little in common, on close examination several similarities begin to surface. The essay, in which Klein discusses Joyce's use of Vico in the second chapter of *Ulysses*, was first published in 1951, the same year in which *The Second Scroll* appeared. In other words, Klein was immersed in the writings of both Joyce and Vico in the early 1950s. The essay is arguably the last major critical piece Klein was to publish in his lifetime⁵ and the novel holds the same distinction among Klein's creative works. Where Klein's intent in finding Vico in Joyce's chapter is to recognize the workings of a cyclical pattern in Joyce's overall structure, *The Second Scroll* imposes onto Klein's narrative a cyclical structure which may indeed "have derived from Vico."

There are, moreover, numerous echoes in *The Second Scroll* of statements made by Klein in his essay which indicate that the currents of thought informing one are also present in the other. Klein begins "A Shout in the Street" with a brief synopsis of the main ideas of Vico's *New Science*, which he then applies to his examination of Joyce's chapter. In condensing Vico's 1,112 paragraphs to a few pages of explanation, Klein reveals which aspects of the *New Science* are most important to his understanding both of Vico and of Vico in Joyce. Klein's synopsis

focusses upon Vico's description of the three stages of civilization which follow the age of "prolonged bestiality" that resulted from the Flood (343); these are the age of gods, the age of heroes and the age of men. The age of gods is initiated by "the sound of thunder in the sky," from which is born fear and the establishment of "domesticity and legitimate union" (343). This age is characterized by a "Poetic" nature, "Religious" customs, "Theocratic" government, "Mute" language which finds "expression through religious act," and "Hieroglyphic" writing (344). One result of the age of gods is "social organization;" "'the impious-nomadic weak'" seek refuge, and the "'pious-strong kill the violent among them and take the weak under their protection'" (344). This leads to "'the appearance of two social classes, the protecting and the protected, the patricians and the plebeians'" (344), which marks the beginning of the age of heroes. The most important characteristics of the age of heroes are a "Heroic" nature, "Choleric, punctilious" customs, "Aristocratic" government, the "Law of Force," both "Mute and articulate" language, and "symbolic" writing or expression (344). Finally, when the plebeians demand equality in society, the age of men begins. This age is characterized by "Human" nature, customs "Enjoining duty," "Human" government, "Laws of Reason," "Articulate" language, "Vulgar writing [and] Demotic speech" (344). Klein notes that "every step forward in this cycle of progress has been the result of an exercise of vice or weakness!" (344). The progression between these ages becomes cyclical by virtue of the fact that "the Age of Man does not remain static," but instead leads to what "Vico enunciates as the law of recurrence (the *ricorso*), the crumbling of society back to a second age of barbarism, whence it rises once more according to the already-enunciated providential pattern, through the ages of gods, heroes, men" (345). Klein then proceeds to argue the presence of 36 Viconian *corsi* in the second chapter of *Ulysses*. In Klein's reading of the chapter, every word, allusion, number, and name corresponds in some way to characteristics of different stages of the cycle, even when, as at the conclusion of the third *corso*, the *ricorso* is absent, and its absence is announced by a reference to "'a disappointed bridge'" (348). Joyce's *corsi* are not regarded by Klein as proceeding slowly in Joyce's chapter, but rather as following in constant succession. This is significant, since in *The Second Scroll* the cycles constantly inform the progress of the novel and advance quickly as well.

Klein's application of the Viconian paradigm to Joyce occasionally appears contrived, and he treats the paradigm as a procrustean bed into which he can fit, through ingenious interpretation, every aspect of Joyce's episode. Though there is some validity to Klein's examination of Joyce's episode, the critical strategy of trying to find "The Key" (366) to the chapter is problematic, since in searching for this key, Klein does not explain the episode as much as he attempts to contain it. In addition, though Klein fits Joyce's episode into his Viconian paradigm, it is possible to question how strong an understanding of either Vico or Joyce is reflected in this exercise. Klein fails properly to account in his essay for the fact that Vico is not simply presenting a pattern. It is, rather, a pattern that Vico formulated from a thorough examination of history. While Klein illustrates that the pattern is present in Joyce, he does not consider the implications of the pattern in a broader historical or literary context. The pattern, in fact, is more logically suited to *The Second Scroll* than to Klein's discussion of Joyce, in that the providential historical patterns discussed in the *New Science* have a more obvious connection to the rebirth of Israel (which Klein considered nothing short of miraculous) described in Klein's novel. Regardless of the value of Klein's assessment of Vico in Joyce, it is evident that while writing *The Second Scroll*, he was immersed in the project of understanding how Vico's cycles could provide a structural model for an extended work of fiction.

There are several clear echoes in *The Second Scroll* of Klein's interpretation of Vico in "A Shout in the Street." Near the end of Klein's synopsis of Vico in the essay, he points out that Vico's cyclical pattern "applies only to the histories of gentile nations," since "the Hebrews . . . were vouchsafed direct and immediate revelation. 'For where the gentile nations,' says Vico, 'had only the ordinary help of providence, the Hebrews had extraordinary help from the true God'" (345). This idea of the role of God, as it relates to "the Hebrews" outside the history of "gentile nations," is central to *The Second Scroll*. The narrator's search for his messianic uncle through the rebirth of Israel following the Holocaust possesses many suggestions of divine intervention on the behalf of the Hebrews. "Judgements are for God," says one character encountered by the narrator near the conclusion of Klein's novel. "It is the Messiah's days because we see his signs and portents everywhere" (88). This general idea of the role of God in the novel may be related to

other sources (including, of course, the Pentateuch), and is therefore not wholly sufficient in establishing Vico's presence. There is, however, one character who serves as a mouthpiece for the role of God in the fate of the Hebrews. This character is an unnamed traveller who is seated next to the narrator on a flight to Israel. This traveller not only expresses Vico's theory on Gentile and Jewish relationships with Providence, but he also adopts many of the terms ("Hebrews," "barbarism," "idolatry") which are associated with Klein's use of Vico in his essay:

The miracle of miracles for Christians, he asserted, was the miracle of the Incarnation. We Jews, however, had refused to surrender our belief to it because, among other reasons, we ourselves had exemplified through the centuries an opposite miracle. The Judaic Idea, he explained, had come into the world concretized in the customs and thoughtways of the Hebrews, garbed, as it were, in the vesture of chosen Israel. In a world of barbarism and idolatry it had been the Jewish nation that had been the dwelling-place of the Immanence of Deity. (71)

Both Vico and the traveller draw connections not only between the Hebrews and God, but also between gentiles and the idolatry that places them outside this divine history.

In his outline of the argument of the *New Science* in "A Shout in the Street," Klein proves his awareness not only of the cyclical pattern of history asserted by Vico, but also of Vico's methodology. "Vico's doctrine," Klein writes, is paradoxical, in that "His method of arriving at it also deviates from the usual norms of research" (344). Vico avoids the study of chronology, where "all is dark and obscure" (344). His theories, instead, are developed "from philology, an analysis of the origins of basic words" (344-45). As a result, "Much attention . . . is paid throughout the *New Science* to the derivations of names prominent either in early history or mythology" (345). The philological dimension of Klein's understanding of Vico is significant in Klein's use of this methodology to fit Joyce into the Viconian paradigm. Joyce's use of the word "Thursday," for example, allows Klein to argue the arrival at the age of gods by reading the word as corresponding to "Thor's day. The day of the thunder-god" (352). Klein's assumption is that in integrating Viconian cycles into his chapter, Joyce provided the Viconian philological clues which reveal Vico as the key to his chapter.

Klein's discussion of philology in Vico and his application of this discussion to Joyce relates to the quest in *The Second Scroll*. The initial purpose for the narrator's journey is to collect a volume of new Israeli poetry. Coincidentally, he receives a letter from his uncle before he departs, and he decides that in addition to his professional task, he will use the trip to try to find his uncle. Both quests have an immediate association with language; the narrator is employed to search for and collect distinctive writing and he will seek a relative that he knows only through written messages. During the narrator's trip, each language-related quest becomes increasingly focussed upon philological concerns. The narrator never meets his uncle, but his relationship with Melech continues to intensify through the written word. When the narrator reads a letter containing his uncle's interpretation of the Sistine Chapel, his first response is not to the contents of the letter, but to the origins of the words, and simultaneously to the relationship between this letter and his poetry-related quest:

He had not been quite precise, the Monsignor [who provides the narrator with the letter], in describing the language in which it was couched as Hebrew; Hebrew it largely was, but dominated by a polyphonous evocation of Aramaic—the parle of Pumbeditha, Sura's cryptic speech! It would be, I decided after my emotional gratification had given way to literary appraisal, the first of the translations of my anthology. (51)⁶

The narrator's ability to interpret language philologically is continually tested in the novel, for he must sift through many words and names in his search for poetry and his uncle. These philological mysteries are created by Klein's ability to integrate in his novel a similarly cryptic code to that which he detected in Joyce's second chapter. An example of the narrator's skills in interpreting the meanings of words being tested occurs in the chapter entitled "Deuteronomy," where, in seeking his uncle's name on a lists of refugees recently arrived in Israel, he is astute enough to remark that although "Uncle Melech was nowhere listed . . . each name somehow seemed his alias" (76). In order to make this claim, the narrator not only interprets his uncle's name to mean "King, Son of David," but also knows that each name on the list, through some form of linguistic interpretation, could mean roughly the same thing.

In his book *Tapestry for Design*, Solomon Spiro explains that each of these names possesses divine implications. The name "Shloime Evyan," for example, is "Hebrew for 'Solomon the Pauper.' The identification of the extravagant Solomon and the poor Messiah, both descendants of David, adds a measure of irony to the variety of Uncle Melech's symbolic roles" (146). In his introduction to Vico in "A Shout in the Street," Klein quotes Vico's theory that "'The names of the first family fathers . . . were given them because of the various properties which they had in the state of the families and of the first commonwealths, at the time when the nations were forming their languages'" (345). In the context of this statement, Melech's name can be any alias relating to his "various properties," because he has recently arrived in a nation in the process of "forming [its] language."

Although it would be possible to proceed through *The Second Scroll* page by page and chapter by chapter, identifying and discussing each recurrence of Vico's cycles (as Klein himself identified every recurrence of Joyce's in "A Shout in the Street"), the exercise would be beyond the scope of this study and potentially tedious. Instead, I will perform such a reading only to the beginning and ending of the novel, for the sake of providing the evidence that such a reading is possible and the methodology with which the reader may him/herself continue this investigation.

In "A Shout in the Street," Klein quotes Vico's argument that the cycles of history begin with the Flood, during which "the races of mankind 'were lost from one another by roving wild in the great forest . . .'" (342). *The Second Scroll* also begins in darkness, in that the narrator's parents in Canada and his European uncle have been "lost from one another" by another sort of Flood. The "Flood," we soon learn, was initiated by an act of violence (a pogrom) committed against Melech's village, which occasioned his loss of faith in God and his straying from his rabbinical calling. This memory of a period of darkness, however, quickly leads to a series of associations ("My uncle's name had not always been so unwelcome" [18]), and the narrator makes the transition further back to a time which corresponds to the first age of gods in the novel. It is significant that while Vico focusses on the "domesticity" of "shy, indocile women" as one key to the transition between the age of bestiality and the age of gods ("A Shout in the Street" 343), in *The Second Scroll* the narrator's shift in memory from Melech as apostate

(darkness) to Melech as rabbinical scholar (God) occurs immediately after he describes his "brooding" mother performing the domestic act of rising "to serve tea" (18). The destruction or abyss of the pogrom gestures forward to the age of piety and the first Viconian *corso* of the novel.

Once this first transition from the age of bestiality to the age of gods has occurred, it is the accounts of Melech's various activities that dictate the advancements between the stages of the Viconian cycles in "Genesis." Initially, Melech is remembered as "the *Ilui*—the prodigy of Ratno" (18) who had arisen as "a giant of the [Talmudic] law" (19), and is therefore part of the new age of gods. In providing the narrator's family with "a consoling contrast to the crass loutish life about us," Melech represents "Religious, pious . . . Customs." The narrator associates his own religious studies with his uncle's legendary Talmudic pursuits, and refers to Hebrew letters as "mystic blocks" (18). According to Spiro, Hebrew letters were considered "the building 'blocks' of creation" (124). The letters may be considered "Hieroglyphics." In *The Great Code*, Northrop Frye explains, with explicit and detailed reference to Vico, that Old Testament writing is "Hieroglyphic,"

not in the sense of sign-writing, but in the sense of using words as particular kinds of signs. In this period there is relatively little emphasis on a clear separation of subject and object: the emphasis falls rather on the feeling that subject and object are linked by a common power or energy. (6)

Hebrew letters, to the narrator, are therefore hieroglyphic by virtue of their physical appearance, which possesses associations with creation itself. The fact that Melech "knew not to identify the countenances on coins" (18) is consistent with the idea of his "Government [as being] Theocratic" in that he cannot recognize the aristocratic leaders represented on the coins. Melech's "Natural Law" is "Divine," as recognized in the narrator's awareness that he "sedulously observed. . . . The six hundred and thirteen injunctions of the Holy Writ" (19). We learn that Melech's "Language" is "Mute . . . [or] expression through religious act" through letters written of, not by, him from Europe, which report "that he had completely weathered the ocean of Talmud" (18). Melech's "poetic, creative" nature is seen in his praying, which is described as "a flame tonguing its way to the full fire of God" (19). Melech may be positioned

in the age of gods, since his language is the language of religious gesture, or, in Vico's terms, he speaks through "a divine mental language by mute religious acts or divine ceremonies" (*New Science* 306).

In the first transition from the age of gods to the age of heroes, the narrator's focus shifts from his uncle in Europe to his father in Canada. Significantly, the transition occurs when the father is in synagogue celebrating Simchas Torah, "the Feast of Rejoicing in the Law," which is characterized by its relationship with natural and religious cyclical patterns:

A year of the reading of the Law had been concluded, a year was beginning anew, the last verse of Deuteronomy joined the first of Genesis, the eternal cycle continued. Circular, too, was the dance, a scriptural gaiety, with wine rejoicing the heart, and Torah exalting it to heights that strong wine could not reach. (20)

This passage not only parallels Vico in its general reflection of cyclical patterns of history, but, more specifically, it corresponds to Vico's discussion of religion and law as interrelated, and this connection survives through all stages of the cycle. According to Vico, "the observance of divine law is called religion" (Vico, *New Science* 335). This law "was perpetuated through all subsequent governments" (335). As in the first representation of the age of gods in *The Second Scroll*, each characteristic which Klein lists as belonging to the Viconian age of heroes in "A Shout in the Street" is represented in this stage of the cycle. The transition to the age of heroes is brought about by the narrator's memory of a letter from Melech reporting a pogrom, which corresponds to Klein's idea "that every step forward in this cycle of progress has been the result of an exercise of vice or weakness" ("A Shout in the Street" 344). (Although all the major transitions in the chapter result from shifts in the narrator's memory, they are all related in some way to this pogrom, as almost all shifts in subsequent chapters are related in some way to the Holocaust.) The first indication that the arrival of Melech's letter corresponds to the beginning of the age of heroes is that "a number of the words on the sheets were carefully, though not illegibly, blocked out, as if laid out in little coffins" (21). These blocked out words, the narrator soon learns, "were the names of those who were no longer among the living" (21). The blocked out words are associated with the age of heroes on two

levels: firstly, all nations that have entered this age have learned to "bury their dead" ("A Shout in the Street" 343); and secondly, the "Written characters" of this stage are "symbols."

During this age, Melech exhibits his heroic nature by having "the *chutza* to intercede on the behalf of the old rabbi, Rabbi Hershel" (23). The "Choleric, punctilious" customs of this age are seen in Melech's response to the pogrom; his "tone of bitterness" enables him at once to quote "passages from the bible enjoining resignation" while at the same time venting his anger through the quoting of "Jeremiah: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal treacherously?" (22). The fact that this age is characterized by the "Law of Force" is obvious, in that the villagers are defenceless against "the Balachovtzes" who "had robbed and pillaged and murdered" (21). The "Mute and articulate" language of the age is evident in the knowledge that Melech continues to write, but when he is invited to emigrate to Canada, the letter receives "no reply" (22). Finally, the "Aristocratic" government of the age is established when the reader is informed that the pogrom was committed with the excuse that the Balachovtzes were searching for enemies of the czar. In addition, the narrator's father's argument, in synagogue, of the freedom enjoyed in Canada not only supports the aristocratic dimension of the age, but also contrasts with Melech's earlier response to coins:

Whenever one of his Ratno compatriots took it in his mind to run down Canada and its capitalism, my father would withdraw a coin from his pocket and point to the image thereon engraved: "See this man, this is King George V. He looks like Czar Nicholas II. They are cousins. They wear the same beard. They have similar faces. But one is to the other like day is to night. Nikolai might be a *kapora* for this one. After Nikolaichek you shouldn't so much as whisper a complaint against this country!" (24)

The narrator's father's descriptions of the features of aristocrats on coins corresponds to the age of heroes in its association with "heroic blazonings, with which arms [of patricians] are made to speak; this kind of speech . . . survived in military discipline" (Vico, *New Science* 306). The father is participating in the idea that heroic crests identify the features of aristocrats. Furthermore, since the word *kapora* "refers to the ritual

circling of a rooster" (Spiro 129), the notions of circularity and religious law are again repeated.

When the narrator's memory shifts forward again to recall Melech's career as a Bolshevik, the chapter enters the Viconian age of men.⁷ The transition is again marked by "vice or weakness," both because it is a response to the pogrom and because, in the narrator's father's opinion, Bolshevism "was tantamount to apostasy" (24). This age also becomes associated with a circular object, in that when the narrator's father is confronted with a communist argument, he exclaims "*Hegel-baigal!*" (24). Vico's description of the government of the age of men parallels the idealized version of Bolshevism imagined by the narrator in his youth:

The third [form of governments] are human governments, in which, in virtue of the equality of the intelligent nature which is the proper nature of man, all are accounted equal under the laws, inasmuch as all are born free in their cities It is also the case in monarchies, in which the monarchs make all their subjects equal under their laws, and, having all the force of arms in their own hands, are themselves the only bearers of any distinction in civil nature. (*New Science* 305)

The principles of Bolshevism, in theory, correspond to Vico's description of a society where "all are equal under the law." Melech's activities as a Bolshevik, in organizing a strike "among the employees of the Warsaw Bourse," as well as his "strange metamorphosis" from "Talmudic scholar . . . into Moscow student" (26), establish him, at this point, as existing in the age of men. The narrator's father's earlier descriptions of Czar Nicholas II and King George V are also significant in the context of the age of men; George, as a monarch who "make[s] all . . . subjects equal," may be identified as a monarch of the age of men, whereas Nicholas belongs to the age of heroes, since under his rule "all civil rights were confined to the ruling orders of the heroes themselves" (*New Science* 305).

The narrator's perception of Melech as a Bolshevik itself contains a full Viconian cycle. Although Melech had entered his own age of men, in the narrator's youthful imagination this transition initiates a second age of gods, in that "the reports of Uncle Melech's progress in the Communist Party not only failed to disturb [him] but indeed filled [him] with a secret pride" (25). At this point, the narrator creates for himself a new

divine "image of the uncle who together with angels had stood invisible and auspicious over my Hebrew lessons" (26). Thus, Melech as a communist leader fulfils the same role for the narrator as he did when the narrator was a child. Characteristics of the age of heroes soon follow. In "A Shout in the Street," Klein writes that "The Age of Heroes . . . is characterized by the appearance of two classes" (343); in *The Second Scroll* the narrator is aware that even within the communist system there is a hierarchy, and he knows that "Uncle Melech never did rise to a high office in the Communist bureaucracy [because] his clerical antecedents stood against him" (26). The entry into the age of men in this cycle occurs not simply as the narrator describes Melech's activities as a socialist, but also, on a more personal level, when he realizes that he and Melech are, for the first time, made equal in status by virtue of the realization that they are both, simultaneously, university students. The second cycle of "Genesis" occurs entirely within the age of men of the major cycle of the chapter, and both cycles end at the same instant, when it is reported that Melech "was enveloped by the great smoke that for the next six years kept billowing over the Jews of Europe" (26). In other words, the Holocaust represents the "crumbling of society back into a second age of barbarism," and gestures at the *ricorso* that will begin in the next chapter, "Exodus," which opens with the details of the narrator's childhood fantasy of "a renewed Zion" (27).

While these cycles repeat themselves continuously through the subsequent four chapters of *The Second Scroll*, it is at the conclusion of the novel that the relevance of the cycles to the providential subject matter most evidently manifests itself. "Deuteronomy," the fifth and final chapter of *The Second Scroll*, opens with the narrator arriving in Israel. As the narrator becomes immersed in Israeli culture, and his journey draws to a close, there is a sense that God exists everywhere, and is present to people at all levels of society. This infolding of Israeli society corresponds to the conclusion of *The New Science*, where Vico describes a society in which the divisions between the ages have collapsed into one:

But Providence, through the order of civil things discussed in this work, makes itself clearly felt by us in these three feelings: the first, marvel; the second, veneration . . . and the third, the ardent desire with which they burned to seek and attain it. . . . Their true meaning is that all the learned

should admire, venerate and desire to unite themselves to the infinite wisdom of God. (383)

Klein's reading of Vico's cycles in *Ulysses* may also have provided a model for the providential destiny of *The Second Scroll*. Klein argues that "A Shout in the Street" concludes with Mr. Deasy standing "in the midst of a providential flux and reflux of history" (366), which he understood to be an appropriate conclusion to the Viconian pattern. In *The Second Scroll*, as Israeli society progresses toward this providential moment, the three ages of the *corsi* remain evident, though there are suggestions of divinity in each. It appears that the society is moving toward a Viconian perpetual age of gods.

The next cycle begins, therefore, with the narrator evoking God by suspecting the messianic Melech "everywhere and finding him nowhere" (76). Spiro identifies this line as signifying the presence of God; much as the narrator's uncle is simultaneously familiar and elusive, "so is Israel's G-d as His people seek Him" (187). In the subsequent paragraph, the search for Melech reveals several heroic characteristics of Israeli society. For instance, the narrator decides to "cross the Mograbi, the central square in Tel Aviv," which is the "peripatesis and boardwalk of all its philosophies" (76). From this "vantage point," he is able to watch "the policeman on his cement elevation directing traffic with gestures reminiscent of the blessing to the Sabbath candles" (76). In addition, the narrator finds that "those many men in Israel . . . looked like [the heroic Israeli leader] Ben-Gurion" (77). As in several earlier cycles in the novel, it is the epistolary which signifies the transition to the age of men. The narrator examines the anonymous "solitary letter-writers" and the "Jew lost in his epistolary dilemma" in the Tel Aviv cafés for signs of his uncle (77). Recognizing the futility of his search in an age where all are equal and anonymous, the narrator asks, "Was I Israel's census-taker?" (77). The perpetual age of gods is momentarily disappointed when an imposter, who may have been "one of those Germans stranded in the Middle East who deemed Israel the best of hiding places" (78), presents himself as Melech. The false hope and disappointment offered by this figure leaves the narrator to begin his search anew.

After the narrator introduces the ensuing age of gods with the statement that "it was [Melech], I felt, who was now pursuing me" (78),

he recalls that he was originally sent to Israel because his "publisher had wanted a book" (78). The search for the new Israeli poetry, like the search for Melech, leads him through a sequence of cycles. During his search, he first encounters a number of Israeli artists and innovators who remind him of Melech's pious and creative qualities, which identify these figures as belonging in the age of gods. Included among these artists are a painter whose work is reminiscent of Melech's "dark, angelesque meditations" (78), a farmer whose cure for arthritis "is somehow evocative of Uncle Melech," and the Lake Kinereth fishermen who sing the biblical, poetic "Rahel's song" (78). Again, Melech, like God, is known only through his omnipresence and invisibility, as in the statement that "I have him and I have him not!" (79). The narrator realizes that "Since the death of Bialik there had risen no one in Israel to occupy his place of eminence" (79). Instead of the divinely inspired Bialik, the narrator finds "the poet Uri Zvi [who] had captured, during the days of trouble, the imagination of the young and the daring" (79). This "out-roared lion" had once "stirred the hero's courage [and] reddened the compromiser's shame" (79), and is therefore, clearly, the poetic representative of the age of heroes. "Behind" Uri Zvi are the poets whom the narrator identifies as "the lesser bardlings" (79), and who represent, poetically, the age of men. Despite the fact that they place themselves in opposition to the "paralysing self-pity" of the diaspora's "ghetto mentality" (79), "they invariably refer . . . to themselves as *Anachnu* (Us)" (79), refusing to allow one heroic individual to be distinguished from the group. In addition, the group's writing is regarded as "vulgar," in that "its reactionary mottoes stood as a wall against [the narrator's] enjoyment of its rich overhanging fruit," and because "Uncle Melech . . . would read this literature but once" (80). In contrast to these poets are the vulgar tourists against whom these "bardlings" are reacting. The tourists also belong to the age of men in that they are "filling Israel's hotels" and "did much to keep alive the resentments on which this poetry fed" (80). The narrator reaches the end of this cycle when he realizes that in his search for "the one melodic ascendancy," he has found only "the harsh scrapings, the dissonant attunements" (80).

As the narrator continues his search for new Israeli poetry, another age of gods is introduced in the discovery of "The poets of the settlements [who] were milder, kinder men" (80). Despite the fact that these poets

manage only "a playing of minor chords," they did renew "the pastoral note these many long centuries unheard in Hebrew poesy" (81). Moreover, these poets possess the Viconian ideal of "adamic intimacy" which enables them to call each animal "by their names—and the marabou, amorphous, mystical, *circling* ever in a round" (81; emphasis added). For these poets, expression is achieved through religious act. Ironically, it is the same quality of their poetry that positions them in the age of gods and which renders their chords "minor." The awareness that the expression of these poets reflects backward to the Hebrew Bible and not forward toward prophecy forces the narrator to reject them. He is, instead, searching for a circular "tone that might yet again re-echo, not the faint echo of the long since sounded sound" (81).

The narrator then turns from these pious poets to "the young and very wise Nathan . . . who moulded the ancient speech to modern use" (81). This poet is representative of the age of heroes by corresponding to Vico's paradigm in the sense that he writes poems "whose wit had but one target: the iniquity of gentiles" (81). The age of men, as before, follows quickly from the narrator's observations; he is "not downcast" to find that "the creative fiat still remained hidden" (82). Rather, seeing that this is, in fact, a society where people have arrived "to dig ditches and build roads and plant trees and found cities" (82) (in other words, it is a society "Enjoining duty"), the narrator is surprised to find that any writing at all, vulgar or otherwise, is being produced. The search for publishable Israeli poetry, which has thus far been disappointed by derivativeness or mediocrity, ultimately becomes cyclical itself when he experiences the third, final and conclusive cycle related to this sub-plot. The narrator first imagines the ideal poet who would satisfy all the requirements and highest expectations for his anthology. This poet, clearly, exists in the age of gods, both in terms of his possessing "the unique, the autochthonous, the primal seed," and in terms of his expression of the spiritual quality of "the very felicity of the world's first dawn!" (82). As with all divine entities in *The Second Scroll*, the narrator realizes that, however well the poet may be envisioned, he is "still seeking him" (82). He does find "in Tiberias . . . a sort of consolation prize, a poet of an austere economy of words" (82). Although Spiro identifies this poet as "an imaginary character whom Klein conveniently places in Israel to express his critical views on Ezra Pound and the Imagists" (220), within the Viconian

paradigm it is evident that this poet is a representative of the age of heroes. The Tiberias poet is, as a theorist, an instructor figure to the narrator, and he also embodies several of the most important characteristics of Klein's understanding of this historic age. Klein, in his Joyce essay, records Vico's theory that during the age of heroes, customs are "punctilious." The description of this poet inspires comparisons with this characteristic because Tiberias is discussed as "sacred home of the punctators," and the narrator refers to the poet as a "kind of punctator, a pointer" (82). Finally, in a moment of epiphany, the narrator recognizes that the poetry he has been seeking is present everywhere in the language of the "daily activity" of "merchants, tradesmen, day labourers" (84). The fact that this poetry of daily speech is human, articulate and demotic, establishes this linguistic phenomenon within the age of men. The commonality and general participation involved in this literary effort is witnessed in the fact that "Nameless authorship flourished in the streets" (84). The description of this phenomenon as "the great efflorescent impersonality" (85) may be interpreted as a euphemism for the linguistic principles of the age of men. The rebirth of the age of men that the narrator discovers in the poetry of the streets does not so much initiate the next Viconian cycle as it contains the narrator's progress through the three subsequent historical stages. As a result of his recognition of the rejuvenated language, his "hope of finding Uncle Melech revive[s]" (85), and he begins to sense a divine presence in the fact that "this discovered poetry . . . had its one obsessive theme. It was obsessed by the miraculous" (85). Again, the "miraculous" results from the transformation of the biblical language of the age of gods into the corrupted expression of the "efflorescent impersonality." The "ingenuities" of the people's poetry is divine by virtue of its being the incarnation of the "the gestures, and abracadabra of the performed miracle" (85). In this miraculous moment, the narrator recognizes heroic resonances, and this recognition enables him to negotiate some anti-heroic or negative ages of heroes of the past. Heroic acts become manifested in the rejuvenated language; "Little David had slain Goliath?" and "Deborah here had sung a victory the captors could not understand?" (85). The significance of the return of these heroic archetypes is that they enable the narrator to counter or respond to bitter heroic symbols of past "humiliations of [his] forefathers" (86). The heroic altars which represent this humiliation include "the temple of Caesar, the

Temple of Castor and Pollux, the Temple of Vesta" and, most importantly, "the unspeakable arch, the Arch of Titus" (85-86). In response to the Arch of Titus, which celebrates the heroism directed against the Jews, the narrator realizes that recent events "really taunted Titus!" and that, finally, "The arch was not there! The stone had crumbled. I did not see the arch!" (87). This cycle, which, as already observed, occurs entirely within the previous age of men, returns again to this historical stage in the utterance that the people's "poetry of the recaptured time, was now evident" (87). When the narrator ends this cycle with the climactic statement that "I had found the key image" (87), it is difficult not to hear echoes of the conclusion of "A Shout in the Street," in which Klein writes that "Vico, Dalkey, is indeed Vico—The Key" (366).

The narrator's search for his messianic uncle is ultimately concluded when, shortly before they are to meet, Melech is murdered in an ambush and doused with gasoline. Following the tribal slaughter of Melech, the funeral is described in terms that suggest entry into an age of men that possesses divine qualities. "Representatives from all parts of the country," the narrator writes, "and all classes of the population would be present [at the funeral]" (91). Spiro recognizes a "relationship between the death and heraldry" of Melech's funeral (153), and Vico's description of funeral rites. At Melech's funeral, "the banners and slogans were raised aloft, announcing the names and settlements in the Negev, in the Emek, in the Galil, each with its own exclamatory reaction to these obsequies which transcended their immediate purpose" (92). Though the immediate significance of this scene is of a group of common humanity (age of men) gathering together to partake of a holy ceremony, there are also some similarities between the "banners and slogans" raised in this scene and the heraldic blazons raised at "the lower ends of the fields where the dead were buried" (Vico, *New Science* 180).

After describing the funeral, the narrator suddenly shifts his focus to his personal response, and the final age of men is introduced. He realizes that although the "vast congregation" is "gathered as for some high mythic rite," it is in fact this religious and heroic rite which conceals the "most personal experience and its most deeply cherished verities" (92). Melech's death, in his nephew's understanding, comes to exist on a common, human level in his martyrdom, and thus is rendered "a kind of mirror . . . of the events of our time" (92). As a reflection of general

humanity, then, his burial becomes an "antechamber to new life, the *mise-en-scène* for an awakening" (92). The fact that this burial occurs at the birth of this nation is significant in the context of "A Shout in the Street," where Klein quotes Vico's theory to the effect that "By long residence and burial of their dead, [men] come to found and divide the first dominions of the earth" (343). Thus, in this age of men the following age of gods, though not developed, is at least acknowledged.

As *The Second Scroll* closes, it becomes evident that Melech, in his nephew's perceptions of him, is divine, heroic and human at once. Thus the narrator can see him as representative of redemption. The cyclical patterns contained in the novel's conclusion both reflect and collapse the tripartite structure of the novel as a whole. As the narrator recites the prayer of mourning for his uncle, he feels himself to be "As at the centre of a whirlwind, amidst a great silence" (92). The fact that many of the events at the conclusion of the novel reflect or invert incidents of the novel's opening creates a cyclical or centripetal structure. For instance, the narrator writes that "The name that had once rung for me with angel pennies was resounding now to the conning of a new alphabet" (93). In this sentence, a renewal of the pious language learnt in the opening chapter, a renewal of Melech as an angel figure, and a return of the coins brings the novel to a cyclical close. Melech's influence, which initially aided in the narrator's Hebrew lessons, now enables him to recite Hebrew prayers and to recognize a more profound (or original) meaning in both words and prayers. The novel's closing utterance that "the beacons [are] announcing new moons, festivals, and set times" (93), gestures at the continued cycles of religious ceremony which dictate the cycles of prayer. There is also a cyclical closing of the Simchas Torah (which celebrates the fact that "A year of reading of the Law had been concluded, a year was beginning anew" [20]), which, in "Genesis" had been interrupted by Melech's letter announcing the first of his cycles of trials. Banishment has become reinstatement. The narrator's brooding mother, whose glasses of tea "each [contained] its floating moon of sliced lemon" (18), is also alluded to in the novel's final utterance, "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" (87), and the source of her brooding (her brother's banishment) is finally resolved in a return to piety. The moon, which represents eternally

cyclical patterns of renewal in death and rebirth, is an appropriate image to open and close the novel.

The Viconian cycles of *The Second Scroll*, as they relate to Holocaust and post-Holocaust events, appear, in retrospect, to have been predestined to arrive at a redemptive conclusion. In his reading of Vico and the Canadian writer Howard O'Hagan, D. M. R. Bentley suggests that the Viconian cycles "seem to reflect and invite the idea that somehow, somewhere in the twentieth century . . . one huge historical cycle is drawing to a close and another is beginning to manifest itself" (26-27). *The Second Scroll* ends at a moment which gestures at once towards a cyclical past of exile and suffering and at a future of redemption through eternal and miraculous manifestation of religious cycles. Klein's interpretation of history in *The Second Scroll*, like his interpretation of Vico in Joyce, concludes "in the midst of a providential flux and reflux of history." In "A Shout in the Street" Klein suspected Joyce of providing Viconian clues in the etymologies of words and names. Similarly, in *The Second Scroll*, the narrator recognizes the providential moment he is experiencing only when words "regained their original significance."

NOTES

1. Some examples of these critical discussions include reviews of the novel by Allan Mandelbaum, Maurice Samuel, and Malcolm Ross, as well as Leon Edel's "Marginal Keri and Textual Chetiv," Tom Middlebro's "Yet Another Gloss on A. M. Klein's *The Second Scroll*," Miriam Waddington's *A. M. Klein* and Rosmarin Heidenreich's *The Postmodern Novel in Canada: Narrative Patterns and Reader Response*.
2. A full discussion of Joyce's presence in the creative development of A. M. Klein may be found in the author's unpublished doctoral dissertation, entitled *The Presence of James Joyce in the Poetry and Prose of A. M. Klein*, (London, ON: U of Western Ontario, 1994).
3. I have provided a detailed interpretation of Klein's obsessive relationship with the works of Joyce in an article entitled "Some Apocalyptic Discoveries: A History of A. M. Klein's Troubled Involvement in James Joyce Studies," which will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Essays on Canadian Writing* in 1997.
4. It should be noted here that although this essay will examine Vico's cyclical reading of history as potentially the most significant structural model for *The Second Scroll*,

it is by no means the only model with which Klein was working when he wrote the novel. Klein invites his reader to examine the novel in the context of the most obvious structural model, the books of the Torah and the Judaic myth of exile and redemption. In addition, the reader may wish to explore numerous other possible structural sources, including *The Odyssey* of Homer, *The Aeneid* of Virgil and the works of Isaac Luria.

5. This claim may be disputed, since Klein did publish shorter works of literary criticism, as well as editorials containing social commentary, after 1951. In terms of his criticism, however, Klein was never again to publish anything as sustained or ambitious as "A Shout in the Street," and this essay marks the end of Klein's published (and possibly unpublished) Joyce criticism.
6. Klein's narrator's recognition of Melech's Hebrew being "dominated by a polyphonous evocation of Aramaic" and thus relating to "cryptic speech" has Viconian significances. In *The Great Code*, Northrop Frye discusses the three types of expression in Vico's three ages as "extremely suggestive as providing a starting point for thinking about the place of the Bible in the history of language as *langage*" (5). "*Langage*," according to Frye's definition, is the "sense" of words that "makes it possible to express similar things in [different] languages" (4-5). The narrator's recognition of a "polyphonous," "cryptic" quality in Melech's writing suggests his use of a language that transcends the confines of meaning in a single language and possesses religious insight and significance.
7. It should be noted that there is some overlap between the age of heroes and the age of men in this cycle. One of the reasons for this is that the narrator, confronted with his uncle's communism, remembers again the scene of his father in synagogue where the age of heroes initially occurred. In addition, although it is the age of heroes that is aristocratically governed, Klein notes in "A Shout in the Street" that "The Age of Man frequently owes . . . its stability to a monarch" (345). This aristocratic overlap, therefore, is consistent with Klein's understanding of Vico's theory on the relationship between these two stages of the cycle.

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