Abstract

This thesis is an investigation into the ways that Black and Jewish writers — specifically drawing on the works of Martin Delany, Theodor Herzl, Dionne Brand, and Irena Klepfisz — engage with politics of diaspora. Grounded in literary analysis of novels and poetry, I bring in historical, political, and theoretical lenses to understand the imaginings of diaspora, nationalism, and home that these writers express. I examine both historical circumstances as well as how constructions of identities like race, religion, and gender shape Delany and Herzl's colonial visions in the nineteenth and very early twentieth century, then, I turn to how contemporary authors Brand and Klepfisz respond to this legacy and offer alternative conceptualizations of community, identity, and belonging. By examining two 'fathers' of nationalist movements and two contemporary feminist authors committed to diasporic belonging, I analyze how these current works can be understood more fully within the context of the 19th and early 20th century movements of Black Nationalism and Zionism that precede them. This project follows the logic of Brand and Klepfisz to recognize that the past is intrinsically tied to the present, but it does not have to determine the direction of the future. By comparatively analyzing these conceptualizations of community, identity, and belonging, I seek to present alternative methods of understanding the past and our current moment, and how we can think about possible futures beyond strict hierarchical and nation-state identifications.

Mount Holyoke College

Navigating the Past, Visioning the Future:

Constructions of Diaspora and Belonging in Black and Jewish Literatures

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Introduction

This thesis is an investigation into the ways that Black and Jewish writers — specifically drawing on the works of Martin Delany, Theodor Herzl, Dionne Brand, and Irena Klepfisz — engage with the politics of diaspora. Grounded in literary analysis of novels and poetry, I bring in historical, political, and theoretical lenses to understand the imaginings of diaspora, nationalism, and home that these writers express. I examine both historical circumstances as well as how constructions of identities like race, religion, and gender shape Delany and Herzl's colonial visions in the nineteenth and very early twentieth century. Then, I turn to how contemporary authors Brand and Klepfisz respond to this legacy and offer alternative conceptualizations of community, identity, and belonging. By examining two 'fathers' of nationalist movements and two contemporary feminist authors committed to diasporic belonging, I analyze how these current works can be understood more fully within the context of the 19th and early 20th century movements of Black Nationalism and Zionism that precede them. This project follows the logic of Brand and Klepfisz to recognize that the past is intrinsically tied to the present, but it does not have to determine the direction of the future. By comparatively analyzing these conceptualizations of community, identity, and belonging, I seek to present alternative methods of understanding the past and our current moment, and how we can think about possible futures beyond strict hierarchical and nation-state identifications.

This thesis engages deeply with the concept of diaspora. This term has been understood in a few ways. In his book where he grapples with Jewish identity in relation to religious and national affiliation, Daniel Boyarin argues that there have only been "two allegedly crucial factors for the identification of a 'diaspora'" in modern thought, both imagining diaspora as "a defective condition" (89). These factors both frame diaspora in opposition to homeland, where

people are, for various reasons, removed from some original location. These ideas necessitate the "conclusion that diaspora is a pathology whose only cure is a nation-state" (89). Since diaspora is the secondary state, it is seen as one that is wrong and should be impermanent. Gayatri Gopinath, a queer and diaspora studies scholar, explains in a keyword essay that diaspora generally "refers to the dispersal and movement of a population [...] from one national or geographic location to other disparate sites" ("Diaspora" 67). However, the etymological origins and the implications of them for the current use of the term lead feminist and queer studies scholars to rethink it. The word diaspora "derives from Greek, a combination of dia (across or through) and sperein (to sow or to scatter)" (67). The imagery of spreading of seed evokes the role of sperm in procreation. Furthermore, national affiliations have been linked to a particular understanding of masculinity in modern thought, as will be explored in the first two chapters. These masculine notions are central to the idea that people who live in diaspora are simply the offspring, of sorts, from some origin place. This leads to an understanding that diaspora is weak, that those living in diaspora are fundamentally missing something that those in the origin place are not, and that diaspora is a condition to avoid or resolve. Gopinath and other scholars are "Working against an essentialist notion of identity as static and unchanging rather than as shifting and unstable" to reconceptualize diaspora as "a critique of and alternative to both cultural and state nationalisms and their constitutive investment in the fixity of metaphorical and material borders of identity, culture, and community" (67). This understanding positions the fluidity of diaspora and identity as positive aspects of humanity to embrace. It also posits diaspora as the solution to the nation-state, instead of the nation-state as a solution to diaspora. Gopinath's parsing of diaspora and these queer and feminist rearticulations of it are foundational to the way I am analyzing nationalism and diaspora in this thesis. I aim to examine why people of the Black and Jewish

diasporas lean into a nationalist focused conception of diaspora as opposed to this queer and feminist one that Gopinath and others explicate.

I am choosing to draw on similar definitions to Gopinath's queer identification, including scholars like Boyarin and Paul Gilroy. To use the words of Gilroy, a scholar of trans-Atlantic black culture, "Diaspora identifies a relational network, characteristically produced by forced dispersal and reluctant scattering" ("Diaspora" 207). Diaspora is about relationality and shared identity that comes from particular shared experiences, history, and identity. Gilroy continues to explain that "Slavery, pogroms, indenture, genocide and other unnameable terrors have all figured in the constitution of diasporas and the reproduction of diaspora-con-sciousness, in which identity is focused less on common territory and more on memory, or, [...] the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration" (208). While the specific historical contexts of the Black and Jewish diasporas diverge, the violence and prejudice faced by these groups have influenced how diaspora is understood within these communities. The memories of culture, violences, and community responses lead to continued alignment with these particular diasporas.

Diasporic identity and the nation-state are often positioned at odds with one another. Gilroy and Boyarin engage explicitly with the interaction and interconnections between diasporic and national identity. For Gilroy, "The nation-state has regularly been presented as the institutional means to terminate diaspora-dispersal, at one end through assimilation and at the other through return" ("Diaspora" 208). Those who promote nation-states often explain them in opposition to diaspora, and as a solution to what they deem the woes of diasporic or exilic life. More openly considering the ways in which diasporic and nation-state identification interact, Boyarin argues that "Diaspora is [...] a form of cultural national life in which nations may continue to exist, robustly, but the existence of and insistence on a piece of land that ideally

incorporates only folks of that nation—and not only that, but all of them, or the vast majority of them—is simply not in play" (90).

To understand this tension, it is vital to consider the significance of nations. In his book about the origins and evolutions of nationalism, Benedict Anderson frames a nation as "an imagined political community" that is "imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" ("Imagined" 6). To break down this definition, he argues that: "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members"; it is "*limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations"; it is "*sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm"; and finally "it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (6-7). For Anderson, nations are political imaginaries. The people who belong to a particular nation feel a sense of belonging to one another, even if they have never met. This ideology is limiting because it operates under the assumption that this group affiliation is more important than direct ties to other human beings as whole. Nations necessitate people who are members of them, and people who are not. These are political and sovereign communities that are focused on secularism and a sort of reason that largely overtakes explicit religious logics, rooted in the ideas of Enlightenment. Finally, the nation is believed to unite the people who belong to it, regardless of the actual realities.

Essentially, the bonds of the nation are constructed through various means that go beyond territorial boundaries. Living within the same country does not necessitate camaraderie — thinking about citizenship and divisions of factors like race and religion — and living within

different countries does not necessitate a lack of camaraderie. The nation itself is often tied to physical space, however, the bonds extend beyond it. For people living in diaspora, they often feel a sense of national belonging to some origin nation, or at least to this conglomerate of people based on this shared identity, regardless of where they presently reside. This piece is particularly relevant to the literary works being examined in this thesis. It aids in making sense of Delany and Herzl's national ideologies and desires to take these groups bound by a sense of shared identity and create a physical nation for this group to belong to. Delany is fighting against the institution of slavery, particularly chattel slavery within the United States. He has no desire to find commonality with white enslavers, nor does he envision that the government will be able to make drastic improvements. For Herzl, he is fighting against institutionalized and interpersonal antisemitism, but the nature of this is vastly different from the institution of enslavement Delany is facing. This pushes Herzl to promote an emigrationist project, but one that will have more interdependence with the nation he is leaving. Within territorial nations, Anderson argues that "on the whole, racism and anti-semitism manifest themselves, not across national boundaries, but within them. In other words, they justify not so much foreign wars as domestic repression and domination" ("Imagined" 149-50). This prominence of oppression and discrimination within nations shapes the way marginalized people consider the nation. For Delany and Herzl, they aim to create their own nations, where they will be in charge instead of marginalized. For Brand and Klepfisz, they are hoping to disrupt this internal oppression across all borders, creating new or updated systems where they are instead of creating a brand new nation in another place.

There are comprehensive bodies of scholarship about Black and Jewish literature, Black nationalism, Zionism, and diaspora politics, but not much that brings these components together. Both Black and Jewish communities have experienced injustices, but the specificities are unique.

These histories are not commensurable, even as individuals may draw on histories of the other group. There are overlaps and divergences in the people who make up these diasporas, their experiences, and their understandings of diaspora. Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* engages with the ways these histories can be studied together. Instead of arguing over the severity of the institution of slavery or the Holocaust, he argues that "The issues of tradition and memory provide a key to bringing [the histories of Black and Jewish people] together in ways that do not invite a pointless and utterly immoral wrangle over which communities have experienced the most ineffable forms of degradation" (212). Gilroy finds thematic similarities to consider together, instead of focusing on comparing the ways in which the traumas these communities have experienced are different or worse than one another. This thesis is a literary engagement with comparative conceptions of diaspora, examining Delany's novel *Blake; or The Huts of America*, Herzl's novel *Old New Land (AltNeuLand)*, Brand's poetic memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* and Klepfisz's poems "Bashert," "Fradel Schtok," and "Instructions of the dying elder…." I am invested in how these four authors parse through political ideologies surrounding diaspora politics and territorial origins in these literary works. It is an examination of incubating nationalist sentiments in the works of Delany and Herzl, and a particular critique that stems from them in the works of Brand and Klepfisz. Brand and Klepfisz are critical of nationalisms tied to nation-states, and they embrace diaspora in part to deemphasize national and imperial missions. They focus on a politics of solidarity rooted in the places in which they live, and promote a sort of non-exilic diasporic identity.

While Black Nationalism and Zionism are separate movements, there are shared sentiments within them. Beyond Delany's time, people, including Black Nationalists inspired by his works, sometimes refer to it as Black Zionism. In his article critiquing Black Nationalism,

William Anderson explains that "The anti-Black sentiment that helped shape voluntary deportation efforts to remove Black people shares some similarities with the antisemitism that helped push the creation of the Israeli settler-state" ("The Lingering" 13-14). There are similarities in the experience of not being treated as equals due to personal identity within the nations that people live in. Furthermore, some nationalists believe "that people who experience oppression are made exceptional enough to either build on top of existing sovereignties or take possession of lands for themselves" (16). This sentiment of exceptionalism emerges within *Blake* and *Old New Land*, while *A Map* and Klepfisz's poems push against this notion.

These four authors engage with politics of diaspora, nationalism, and belonging within their literary texts. Delany and Herzl are both masculine figures who represent the beginnings of the Black Nationalist and Zionist movements, while Brand and Klepfisz are feminist scholars who are working within the same contemporary moment, attuned to the role of racism, masculinism, and heteronormativity among other hierarchies within national movements. These writers are all influential in the fields of Black Studies, Jewish Studies, and Cultural Studies. Importantly, they all engage with both the Black and Jewish diasporas, at least briefly: Delany draws on the Exodus story of the Jewish people's escape from enslavement in Egypt; Herzl recognizes Black people as a fellow marginalized and oppressed group; Brand parallels Black experience and Jewish experience; and Klepfisz discusses her role in relation to Black people in Chicago and draws on Black feminist thought. I do not want to conflate the experiences and contexts of these authors, instead, examine them in conversation with one another to find the clear divergences and elements of similarity within their beliefs and works. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy articulates that while the experiences of Black people and Jewish people are different or unique, it is vital "not to use that invocation of uniqueness to close down the

possibility that a combined if not comparative discussion of its horrors and their patterns of legitimation might be fruitful in making sense of modern racisms" (214). This perspective on discussing these communities within the same works has greatly influenced this thesis.

All four of these authors engage with political ideas and write in various forms, using various forms of publications to share their texts. While some of their other works are touched on, this thesis primarily focuses on some of their literary texts. Anderson argues that while nationalism often focuses on "fear and hatred of the Other [...] nations inspire love" ("Imagined" 141). This love and dedication to the nation is as central as the focus on the other, and this is most evident in "cultural products of nationalism" including poetry and novels (141). These two coexisting sentiments, of love for the nation and hatred or fear for anyone outside of it, are most clearly felt within cultural productions and literary works. These works examined in this thesis present feelings in a different way than journalistic articles or political pamphlets, and uplift the underlying desires for belonging that dictate the projects of nationalism and diaspora. Dmitry Shumsky, a scholar of Zionism and Jewish history, writes about Herzl's novel that "in their enthusiasm to point out *Altneuland's* [*Old New Land's*] aesthetic shortcomings as a literary work, researchers routinely ignore the novel's instrumental advantages, advantages that are illustrated by the undeniable efficiency with which the novel clearly and accurately delivers the key cultural and ideological messages of Herzlian Zionism" ("Theodor" 63). While similar critiques can be made of Delany and Herzl's novels in terms of a lack of rich character development, or literary style, the fictionalized aspect of the texts allow for the main "cultural and ideological messages" and spirit of these movements. Furthermore, grounding this thesis in literary texts allows me to delve into the ways in which these specific authors imagine these topics, and will get into the heart of the fears and stakes of their visions.

Politics of diaspora, nationalism, and exile are central in these texts; even if Delany and Herzl do not necessarily use these exact terms. For Delany and Herzl, the only conceivable way to free their people from oppression is to create a territorial nation state. They believe the pervasive Western arguments about the power and strength that can only arise from belonging to a nation-state. Part of these beliefs lie in a masculinist understanding of power, that appeals to the circumstances that Delany and Herzl find themselves and their communities subjected to. In both of their novels they create or propose the creation of a new state, one that they and their community are able to lead and be welcomed in. Contrarily, Brand and Klepfisz are not drawn to the ideals of the nation state and work to actively deconstruct these ideals. They argue for a sense of belonging that is not dictated by nation-state boundaries.

I am interested in examining how the present responds to the past, by examining contemporary and more historical texts. This project is an engagement of the origin and evolution of diaspora within these two communities with traumatic histories. To note, this is not a broad overview of Black-Jewish relations, Black nationalism, Zionism, or diaspora, but instead an investigation into the beliefs of these specific writers and thinkers and their ideas. I am looking at history for what it can tell us about today and where we are now. In *Black Reconstruction in America*, W.E.B. Du Bois asserts "We have spoiled and misconceived the position of the historian. If we are going, in the future, not simply with regard to this one question, but with regard to all social problems, to be able to use human experience for the guidance of mankind, we have got clearly to distinguish between fact and desire" (722). For Brand and Klepfisz, their texts specifically engage with prior histories and texts, considering how they can understand these moments with hindsight, and how they can learn from this and make different choices in the present for the future.

My primary sources reach across decades, from the mid 1800s to the early 2000s. Reading *Blake* and *Old New Land* emphasizes the start of these nationalist projects that have, in part, shaped the realities of Brand and Klepfisz's perspectives and writings and provides guideposts for the stakes of their contemporary projects. Engagement with Brand and Klepfisz's specific politics of diaspora require an understanding of the nationalist politics that came before, i.e. exemplified by Delany and Herzl.

Overview of Chapters

The first chapters will delve into Delany and Herzl's novels. Though writing in different contexts, Martin Delany and Theodor Herzl have a lot in common when it comes to their perspectives on the futures of their respective communities. They are influenced by historical oppression to create a future with more dignity. While the utility of comparison is debated, there are clear similarities in inspiration and ideology that warrants examination in their politics and in the movements they are seen as fathers of: Zionism and Black Nationalism. Both Delany and Herzl are pushing for some form of state to be created, led by their people. They see territorial possession and leadership as vital in their struggles for Black and Jewish liberation respectively. Both of them created various types of texts, this chapter examines their novel projects of *Blake* and *Old New Land* to analyze how this form allows them to share political messaging and act as a call to action. Their characters are largely symbolic, and pawns to profess particular political ideology. *Blake* is more of a delve into the present condition of Black people with a vision of how to move forward, while *Old New Land* gives a glimpse into the past, and then dives into an imagined, improved future.

European and Euro-American perspectives of gender and evolution of modern masculinity and nationalism influence Delany and Herzl, and this is seen in their focuses on

ideals of intelligence, rational thought, and liberty. Both *Blake* and *Old New Land* focus primarily on male characters and have a masculine-influenced outlook. While there are some conflicting ideas about women, ranging from equality between men and women, to strict roles that women need to fit into, both novels purport a male/female divide, and other genders or ways of being are not delved into at all. It is a strict herosexual-patriarchal assumed society and outlook, for both the representations of the past and present, as well as for visions of the future.

Brand and Klepfisz understand these influences, and aim to come to different conclusions. They look to the past and feel anger and pain over racism and antisemitism, but they do not allow this to overtake their presence in the current world. These writers see concerns with only accepting a sort of victim-mentality, without any understanding of the oppression that other peoples have been subjected to, or the ways in which people's experiences are different based on gender, race, place of birth, and more. They address the nuances of living in a globalized world and acknowledge the ways in which the interconnections of people must shift how we view one another. As William Anderson warns, if we do not turn away from organizing our quest for liberation through the tools of our oppression, we will see and feel it happen, yet again" ("The Lingering" 38-9). Brand and Klepfisz agree with this profession. They have witnessed the harm of the nation state and nationalist ideologies, and are aiming to promote new ideas for the future instead of falling into these traps of strict nationalism as the only solution to oppression.

Chapter one focuses on how Delany constructs an emigrationist vision and rationale in *Blake*. Beginning with Delany's understanding of diaspora as represented in *Blake* due to the historical context of the trafficking and enslavement of Black people in the United States. The chapter continues to consider portrayals of masculinity, religion as a tool of national belonging and violence, and finally of the role of emigration in resolving the oppression. Chapter two

moves to *Old New Land*, emphasizing how the urgency and goals of emigration are tied to the context of the moment. Like the previous chapter, it begins with Herzl's understanding of diaspora as represented in *Old New Land* due to the historical context of antisemitism in Europe. The chapter continues to consider portrayals of relationships between men, religion and secularism as means of national belonging, coexistence, and violence, and finally a focus on the representation of emigration and visions for a nation state. The final chapter investigates how contemporary feminist writers take up this legacy of anti-diasporic nationalism within their writing. In contrast to the previous chapters, this chapter examines Brand and Klepfisz's understandings of diaspora and belonging beyond nation states and territory. The subsections examine the question of origins, relationships to place, and alternative conceptions of belonging beyond national identification. The conclusion will reassert key connections and arguments, and then highlight gaps in this project that provide possibilities for future research.

Chapter 1

Fighting for Homeland in Martin Delany's *Blake*

Introduction

This chapter examines Martin R. Delany's critique of the institution of slavery and his vision for ending it through his novel *Blake; or, The Huts of America*. He determines that there are two necessary steps: revolting against enslavers and then leaving the United States. Emigration emerges as the only possible solution to chattel slavery and anti-Blackness, because Delany deems it impossible for the United States to ever change drastically enough that Black people would be respected and have access to equal human rights.

Delany was a Black activist, writer, and physician. He was born as a free man to an enslaved father and free mother in Charles Town, Virginia, now West Virginia, in 1812 (McGann x). Despite antiliteracy laws, Delany's mother taught her children to read and write. She faced legal repercussions for this, and the family subsequently moved to Pennsylvania. Delany became a physician, but he spent the majority of his life as an activist and writer. In 1856 he moved out of the United States to Canada (Zamalin 19). While his views shifted later in life, he was a staunch emigrationist when he wrote *Blake; or, The Huts of America*, and he disagreed with other Black abolitionists like Frederick Douglass who pushed for assimilationist methods. Delany is considered to be a father of Black Nationalism. He died in 1885 (McGann xii).

Blake was first published in newspapers in two parts, the first in The Anglo-African in 1859 and the second in the Weekly Anglo-African Magazine in 1861 and 1862 (xxxiii-iv). It is widely believed that the novel is incomplete, and that there was an additional chapter or multiple published in 1862, however, these have not been recovered. Delany was writing during chattel slavery, in the aftermath of his expulsion from Harvard Medical School in 1850, the Fugitive

Slave Law in 1850, the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852 and the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* court case in 1857, and the second half of the novel during the Civil War (McGann x-xi; Adeleke "In the Service" 3). These laws and court cases reasserted that the government was not going to start protecting Black people. Furthermore, Delany was frustrated with the sentimental narrative of Harriet Beacher Stowe's novel. He believed instead that "black resistance required seizing unsanctioned political claims, rather than what Uncle Tom's Cabin sought to accomplish" (Zamalin 27). These influences led *Blake* to be a highly political text with a clear call to action, and while it was fictional, it was based on the real circumstances of Black people living in the United States during a time where people heavily debated over the abolition of enslavement.

These contexts shaped how Delany viewed himself and the Black community in the United States as a whole. While he was not theorizing about diaspora using this terminology, he was invested in the ways that living in the U.S. and the Caribbean was a key factor in the violence that white people inflicted on Black people. Delany saw the U.S. as a place of enslavement and subjugation of Black people and he did not believe that they could achieve true freedom while living there. This is evident in *Blake* and helps make sense of the plot that Henry Blake embarks on.

The novel itself tells the story of Henry Blake, a Black man who escapes enslavement, as he journeys across the United States to mobilize people in a revolutionary movement to end chattel slavery and achieve self-possession for Black people. *Blake* is widely considered to be "the first work of black utopian fiction" that imagines "black liberation on black terms" as explicated by Alex Zamalin in his book chapter about Delany and *Blake* (21). The novel focuses on the steps to build a revolutionary collective and efforts to end enslavement. There are hints throughout the text about a plan to create a new state in Africa, led by the Black people who will

by then have emancipated themselves from enslavement in the U.S. and Caribbean. Blake is adamant that people cannot simply move to a preexisting African nation, but that they must create one of their own. This acknowledges that the Black people who were trafficked out of Africa have their own culture now, and must claim power over the next state they live in in order to find true safety and belonging. In this chapter, I will analyze how Delany's understanding of diaspora shapes the way that freedom and sovereignty are conceptualized throughout the text and how this influences the vision of home, homeland, and belonging presented through Blake's two step plan for the ending of enslavement and the emigration to a new country in Africa. I will pay particular attention to the role of Euro-American masculinist ideas as they appear in and influence *Blake*.

Masculine Heroes and Camaraderie

In her book *Manliness and Civilization*, Gail Bederman tracks the historical construction of Western, specifically Euro-American, modern masculinity in the mid-nineteenth century. She argues that this version of masculinity was inextricably linked to the constructions of civilization and power. This idea was being shaped, stemming from a manhood that only included white men; where white men were the only ones with the rights to American citizenship and voting rights (20). Bederman understands this transformation as a "process which creates 'men'; by linking male genital anatomy to a male identity, and linking both anatomy and identity to particular arrangements of authority and power" (7-8). These linkages between self and authority are vital, and it is what Delany and other marginalized men attempted to cling to. If male identity is tied to power in a way that whiteness is, maybe gender is the way to this authority. Bederman explains that Black men could only try to "obtain civic power [...] by proving that they, too, were men" (21). There was a push from outer forces for marginalized men to assert their masculinity,

as well as internal logics of trying to align with particular aspects of those in power to create their own sovereignty. These connections between the nation and masculinity are key to these gender constructions. Bederman discusses how Black men enlisted in the Civil War in order to attempt to gain these civic rights. Delany himself served in the war, even as he was writing the second half of *Blake* and promoting emigration (McGann xi).

Connections to these ideals of gender and power are prevalent within *Blake*. Blake comments on the strict efforts to retain control over enslaved peoples, claiming that this "most rigid" system functions by "almost destroying their self-respect and manhood, and certainly much impairing their usefulness" (Delany 109). While he discusses the many horrific ways enslavement harms Black people, this alignment of manhood with self-respect and usefulness is central. There is a connection between masculinity, self-worth, and purpose that draws on Euro-American ideals to include Black men.

Delany leans into the idea of a traditional masculine hero character through Henry Blake. Blake is not representative of a common man, but as Andrea Stone describes in her book chapter about heroism in *Blake*, he "represents a heroic ideal" (Stone 178). Blake is described as "handsome, manly and intelligent" as well as "bold, determined and courageous, but always mild, gentle and courteous, though impulsive when an occasion demanded his opposition" (Delany 18). His intelligence is repeatedly emphasized as an aspect of his worthiness, and his actions are all rational and for a greater purpose. Unlike earlier conceptualizations of manhood, he does not rely on brute strength alone, instead, his rational, intelligent thought propels him. Furthermore, he is a father and husband, fitting himself into the ideal of a nuclear family. He is almost unreal — embodying all of these qualities at once — he appears as an ideal figure, not a real human being. Delany creates a hero figure who "combines ideals of the classical and

aboriginal hero" (Stone 182). Stone argues that the both the "violent individual circumstances" Blake finds himself in, and "association [...] with aboriginal leaders also makes available to him the figure of the noble savage" (182). However, because the text is geared toward Black people and encouraging them to rise up against enslavement, this framing may be less useful. Furthermore, Blake seems to use peaceful methods, his intelligence, and physical violence in ways that align with European rationality. While Blake is violent at times, the text always justifies his actions, and he is the voice of reason for this movement. He is not, however, unaware or unaffected by the circumstances of his people. The portrayal of him as a whole seems to be more of a classical hero rooted in the 19th century, than anything else.

As Blake begins his trek across the United States, spreading messages of uprising, it becomes evident that his strength is unmatched, regardless of who or what he is up against. When he first escapes Colonel Franks, he quietly kills an overseer. Blake is never caught, he is swift and quiet. Later on, when fierce dogs are set to attack him and his group, he is able to "slew each ferocious beast" (Delany 98). These dogs have been trained to attack, and yet even as a pack they are no match for Blake. The text is sure to remind the reader however, that he only kills out of necessity, because he "leav[es] them weltering in their own blood instead of feasting on his, as would have been the case had he not overpowered them" (98). There is a moral element here, as Blake asserts the negative aspects of killing. However, violence in self-defense is easily justified. At times, Blake does not even need to resort to violence, because his presence is intimidating enough in and of itself. In an altercation, simply holding up a gun causes an "affrighted Dutchman [to fall] on the opposite side of the fence unharmed," allowing Blake to "put down his weapon without a fire" (120). Blake has such a strong presence that he can win a fight before it even begins. Furthermore, this emphasizes that he refuses to be violent

haphazardly, it is only in self-defense or another moment that rationalizes the act. Blake ponders his views of violence and is clear about where he stands. While "maturer reflection drove me to the expedient of avenging the general wrongs of our people, by inducing the slave, in his might, to scatter red ruin throughout the region of the South. But still, I cannot find it in my heart to injure an individual, except in personal conflict" (129). The violence of enslavers is an injustice that needs to be responded to, however, Blake's personal morality is so staunch that he cannot harm anyone unless it is in direct response to threat against himself or his family. This desire to respond to personal conflict is clear in the earlier examples of self defence, as well as when he finally reunites with his wife, Maggie. Hearing about the violence inflicted on her, he fixates on getting revenge, and tells her "The villain who dares lay hands on you, I'll send into eternity as quick as my arm can execute the deed!" (184). Here, Blake displays his role as a protective husband, quick to desire revenge against anyone who harms his beloved wife.

Beyond this hero figure, friendships between men are also prevalent in *Blake*. When Blake's cousin Placido enters the scene, his support of Blake ensures that the mission continues on. He is a staunch supporter of his cousin, and encourages him when he is doubtful, reminding people that "We have examined every point, and weighed the whole matter, cousin: Henry Blake is the man!" (243). Placido reaffirms Blake's manhood and his power. Their familial and friendship bonds make Blake's efforts possible. For Blake, his confidants Andy and Charles are vital to spreading his plan and ensuring it comes to fruition from the beginning. They are the ones he first shares his ideas with, explaining "I have laid a scheme, and matured a plan for a general insurrection of the slaves in every state, and the successful overthrow of slavery!" (40). He confides in them because he trusts them, and because they share his perspective about the broader community of enslaved Black people. After cheering this plan, Charles shares that

"That's the thing which most concerns me, as it seems that it would be hard to do in the present ignorant state of our people in the slave States," being affirmed by Andy. These men are more educated than many enslaved Black people, and they are attached to this notion. Blake assures them that "It is so simple that the most stupid among the slaves will understand it as well as if he had been instructed for a year" (40). They want this to be a successful endeavor, and Blake has worked to do everything in his power to ensure it. While a simple, clear plan is often the most successful, these three men's views of themselves as superior intellectuals to others they will be fighting with is just as evident.

While this novel centers on a male protagonist and male secondary characters, Blake's wife, Maggie, is central to the plot. Blake is driven to embark on his schemes because of his wife. She is sold away from the plantation that the two of them have been enslaved at. The text begins with Blake's "anger at his wife's sale, his disregard for religion, and his frustration at being told to wait for something better in the afterlife" (Stone 177). Additionally though, "Commensurate with Blake's knowledge of Maggie's sale is his determination to free himself" (177). Blake loves her dearly and once she is sold by Colonel Franks he develops the courage to fight against enslavement. While the prominent hero and characters in the text are primarily men, "the centrality of women to the fulfillment of the hero's selfhood, of the ideal of healthy black manhood and by extension black political independence for Delany is clear" (177). The actions Blake takes and the revolution he starts is all because of Maggie, his beloved wife. Without her, he would not have had the motivation to actually embark on his scheme, at least not in the moment that he did.

However, Blake is fighting against the enslavement of Black people, not a broad fight against hierarchy all together. Once Blake and Maggie are reunited, there are moments where he

seems to place her as inferior to him. When discussing the future of Black people, Maggie asks a question, and Blake replies:

> My dear wife you have much yet to learn in solving the problem of this great question of the destiny of our race. I'll give you one to work out at your own leisure; it is this; Whatever liberty is worth to whites, it is worth to the blacks; therefore, whatever it cost the whites to obtain it, the blacks would be willing and ready to pay, if they desire it. Work out this question in political arithmetic at your leisure, wife, and by the time you get through and fully understand the rule, then you will be ready to discuss the subject further with me. (Delany 194)

Maggie's response is to simply sigh and "said no more on the subject" (194). The set up of this does not allow them to simply have a conversation, as her interjecting should, but he pushes her off. He implies she does not understand the issue in the way he does, and she needs to bring herself up to another level in order to be able to engage with him about it. It feels more like a father humoring his daughter, and saying she can join the conversation when she learns a little more. There is complexity here, though, as he does not demean her out of malice. Delany, when he was traveling the country, "found Black women to be the most illiterate, degraded, and subordinated of subjects" (Adeleke "Much Learning" 15). In discovering this, he found "that the poor state of female education, or the almost complete lack of it, had seriously limited the ability and capacity of Black women and, ipso facto, Black men [...] thus confining the entire race to the servile domain" (15). A more generous reading of Blake's interactions with Maggie perhaps demonstrates this barrier from education and knowledge. She is trying to learn more, and Blake thinks she can in more time. Nevertheless, these interactions, his positionality over her, and the emphasis on manhood as greatness throughout the text demonstrates the gendered undertones of

this text and that escaping enslavement does not necessarily entail freedom from gendered hierarchy.

The Utility of Religion

Religion is a central component in *Blake* as a persuasive tool, a mode of oppression and resistance, and as a spiritual function. It is evident in the novel that Delany recognizes that religion does not supersede race. Therefore, religion is not a means of finding unity across racial divides, instead it is more of a tool that can be beneficial or harmful depending on its use. Shreve argues that "For Blake, the Bible has all along been nothing but a tool [...] nothing other than social and political interest theologized" (455). He uses known stories and lessons to garner support and find collective understanding across the people he is bringing into his plans. Blake explains that religion can be used to support the quest for freedom, exclaiming that "You must make your religion subserve your interests, as your oppressors do theirs!" (Delany 43). Blake underscores the ways in which Christianity is used by enslavers to retain their superiority in the hierarchy. He references the story of Exodus to remind his peers that "God told the Egyptian slaves to borrow from their neighbors'—meaning their oppressors—'all their jewels'; meaning to take their money and wealth wherever they could lay hands upon it and depart from Egypt" (44). He continues by telling them that therefore "you must teach them to take all the money they can get from their masters, to enable them to make the strike without a failure" (44). He takes his plan for enslaved Black people to take food and money from their enslavers to rise-up and escape tyranny, and places it within the context of a well-known biblical story. If God's advice to the Jewish people who were enslaved by the Egyptians is to take what they need and fight back, this same advice appears to be pertinent for the Black people enslaved by white Americans. Not only are these necessary in order to achieve the plan Blake has set out, but even God would be a

proponent of it. Despite Blake's personal grappling with religious belief, once he determines the utility of religion, he does not falter in his use of it to persuade others or to attempt to change their total perceptions of faith.

Aligned with Blake's view of religion as a tool, in the novel, there is a sense of religious tolerance, or at least the notion that religious alignment is not the priority. At one point, Blake interacts with a group of conjurors, and he is chosen to become a priest (115). When questioned by Andy, Blake explains that "I'll do anything not morally wrong, to gain our freedom; and to effect this, we must take the slaves, not as we wish them to be, but as we really find them to be" (127). Whether or not he believes in the conjuror's work is irrelevant when considering that for the Black people who do, this will only garner their support for his plan for freedom. Furthermore, while the eventual goal may include a particular evolution of their community, this plan of rebellion relies on the mass support of people. Meeting them where they are actually at, "as we really find them to be" will garner the most support and thus the most success. While working toward the goal of uprising, a group agrees with Blake to a few terms about God and religion:

> 'We have all agreed to know no sects, no denomination, and but one religion for the sake of our redemption from bondage and degradation, a faith in a common Savior as an intercessor for our sins; but one God, who is and must be our acknowledged common Father. No religion but that which brings us liberty will we know; no God but He who owns us as his children will we serve. The whites accept of nothing but that which promotes their interests and happiness, socially, politically and religiously. They would discard a religion, tear down a church, overthrow a government, or desert a country, which did not enhance their

> freedom. In God's great and righteous name, are we not willing to do the same?'
>
> 'Yes!' was the unanimous response. (259)

Here, the group determines to put their mission for freedom over slight disagreements about faith. The primary goal is redeeming themselves from "bondage and degradation," therefore debates over variants in denomination cannot be prioritized. There is no religion they can recognize except "that which brings us liberty" because religion must be used as a tool to promote brotherhood and unity in order to achieve freedom. By bringing in the white people, Blake emphasizes the ways their oppressors have chosen unity of their race over divisions between religious particularities. Considering the circumstances of Black people at this time, Blake argues that surely, Black people with far more to gain, are "willing to do the same" and prioritize unity.

Blake's personal feelings about religion shift from the start of the novel to the end. At the beginning, he is frustrated with and entirely critical of religion. He exclaims "I and my wife have been both robbed of our liberty, and you want me to be satisfied with a hope of heaven. I won't do any such thing; I have waited long enough on heavenly promises" (18). What do "heavenly promises" mean when his family is facing so much oppression now, on Earth? Promises mean nothing when his material conditions are tragic. Blake is angry that his parents-in-law turn to religion upon hearing the news of Maggie being sold. He chastises them to "Tell me nothing about religion when the very man who hands you the bread at communion, has sold your daughter away from you'" (22). He does not understand how they can be comforted by the same religion that Colonel Franks, the man enslaving them, is committed to. If Christianity supports the enslavement of Black people and the selling of his wife away from him, how could he possibly follow it? At the same time however, around his anger, he works toward creating his

own understanding of religion, because “I do trust the Lord as much as ever, but I now understand him better than I used to, that’s all. I don’t intend to be made a fool of any longer by false preaching” (21). Empty promises of what might appear in the afterlife does not have use for Blake in his present moment. People attending church does not mean that they are good or moral people; the man who enslaved him and his family, and who sold his wife, is not a good person despite his regular church attendance. Furthermore, attending church does not equate to true connection with God. Blake eventually finds a way to connect with his faith and channel it for support in the quest for freedom, both internally, and as described above, as a method of mobilization.

The story of Moses, a male hero figure, is invoked and reimagined from the Biblical story as a Black Moses. Blake himself represents this figure, a man leading his people out of enslavement. Throughout the novel, Blake and other characters use iterations of the phrase “Stand still and see the salvation” multiple times, referring to the Exodus story (39). This is a sentiment that Blake initially loathes, but later comes to find his own satisfactory understanding of it. Blake does not attempt to simply follow the Exodus story as it is written, but he takes inspiration from it and adapts it to his purposes. When other enslaved people talk about waiting for salvation, Blake argues that “that part was intended for the Jews, a people long since dead. I’ll obey that intended for me” (23). Grant Shreve, a scholar of race and religion, argues that these declarations that invoke Moses to incite political action highlight how “Delany embeds a crisis of protestantized Mosaic leadership into his representation of a black Moses” (458). This shift to a Black Moses roots these references to the specific time and context that Blake and his peers are living in, and distances himself from the details of the original Exodus story which are not relevant. This all emphasizes that there are elements of religion that Blake finds useful. His

plans for salvation include waiting in particular moments and holding onto the belief that freedom will come, however, it also demands specific action from the people themselves, without waiting for or trusting the divine to step in.

Beyond this phrase, there are additional references to Exodus. While Blake is on the run, he "arrives at the banks of the 'Red River'" which is "meant to evoke the Red Sea" (Shreve 457). He then sings a version of the hymn "Could We But Climb Where Moses Stood" as motivation for his efforts (Delany 71). As the creator of this plan to free Black people from slavery, Blake is leading the people to follow to freedom like Moses did. Shortly after, he arrives on a plantation, and asks a group of girls there to speak with "a real clever good trusty man," and they choose to introduce him to a man they call Uncle Moses (79). This brings in a Black Moses figure who is not Blake himself. It is another subversion of the original telling that relies on one man who is backed by God. In this case, since this project is not the result of divine intervention, the leader is not the only man who can lead or help. While Blake is centered as the hero of the novel, other men are also stepping up to join him to save their people.

The use of the Exodus story is nuanced, and does a few things for the novel. Most obviously, this reference aligns the Black people with the Jewish people who escaped from enslavement. Having this success story to look toward, one that people will be familiar with, is key to rousing support and belief in Blake's project. Additionally, Shreve asserts that the text exposes "how emigrationist thought expanded the field of view in black Exodus politics to question what kind of social world needed to be established to sustain an independent black nation after liberation" (451). This look toward the future, of what needs to happen and will happen after liberation, supports the emigrationist lens of the novel, even as Delany does not expand on what this new territory will actually look like after its initial creation. *Blake's* focus on

the journey and mission diverges from a clear vision of the future, and focuses instead on how religion can be used to achieve the true important mission for freedom.

Emigration and Separatism

In *Blake,* emigration emerges as a practical response to oppression. Within existing nations, “nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history” (Anderson “Imagined” 149). Delany is hoping to remove the racial hierarchy, by leaning into creating a Black nation and embracing separatism. Due to this prejudice existing within these nations, he is fighting for the creation of a new one, where racism cannot be rampant because Black people will be the ones in power, and ideally or at least initially, the only people living there. Delany agreed with many features of Euro-American conceptions of nation and class, and elements of this are evident throughout the novel. He imagines “replicat[ing] the common sense of the American ruling class in a future black utopian society in which white supremacy would, at least in principle, no longer be a debilitating problem” (Zamalin 23). Delany’s own positionality as an educated man informs much of this perspective. Like earlier mention of gender hierarchy represented in Blake’s schemes, Delany also “rejected the idea that black autonomy depended upon realizing political rights or socioeconomic resources” (27). This alignment with Euro-centric ideologies explains Blake’s perceptions of other characters, and his judgements about intelligence and status, because he is still using hierarchical measures to assess the situations that he is in. The emigrationist stance in *Blake*, despite being critical of the United States, embraces ideas of American expansionism and exceptionalism. In his book, *The Race for America*, R.J. Boutelle examines how Black intellectuals like Delany engaged with ideas like Manifest Destiny and made them their own.

While the racism in the U.S. was "an obstacle to individual and collective Black progress within its borders" Black emigrationists ideologies "were nevertheless deeply mired in Christian chauvinism and US-American exceptionalism" (Boutelle 38). Blake saw useful elements of these ideals and projects to subvert like he used the story of Exodus.

Specifically tied to the United States, Blake invokes language of the American Revolution. Blake speaks about the "natural rights of man," "inherent privileges," and refers repeatedly to the vitality of liberty (Delany 274, 288). He professes the inherent and essential nature of autonomy, connecting the fight for Black rights with the fight for American independence from the British. The concept of "natural rights" is reminiscent of the rights granted to white men in the Declaration of Independence. Furthermore, *Blake* specifically references Patrick Henry's 1775 speech with the chant of "Liberty! Liberty or Death!" (288). The American context is prevalent within the rhetorical choices being made throughout *Blake*, with the repeated references to the successful revolution for independence. Not only does this inspire confidence in Blake's plan within the text, but inspires readers of the novel to make connections to the possibility of the abolition of slavery and freeing of Black people within the United States and more broadly. It also uplifts the possibilities of creating a successful nation after revolution, overlooking the fact that Black people are having to flee from the United States. In his allusions to this revolution, he is positioning the Black people in the role of the Americans, and the Americans in the role of the British.

While Blake's primary focus is to incite an uprising of Black people against white enslavers, various modes of emigration, rebellion, and nation-building are explored throughout the novel. In moments, he considers other prospects, or perhaps the prospects of what might occur after this revolution. When helping his parents-in-law and other peers escape Colonel

Franks, Blake orchestrates a migration to Canada. He does not see this as a permanent solution, instead a first step. In a much later conversation, Placido has an exchange with Madam Cordora, where Placido claims that "The foundation of all great nationalities depends as a basis upon three elementary principles: first, territorial domain; second, population; third, staple commodities as a source of national wealth" (263). This focus on nationality extends beyond revolutionary actions within the United States and Cuba, and pushes toward a future vision. This idea of needing to own territory, possess a large population, and have some vital commodity to offer the world, emphasizes that this vision of a "great nationality" is an imperial and colonial one. In reference to a moment of revolt on a ship carrying kidnapped peoples, Stone assesses that "Black revolution cannot come only aboard a ship but must take place on land that will become the site of black national policy and self-rule" (175). This true agency can only be permanent when attached to a territorial state. These revolutionary moments on ships or even on land within the United States or Cuba are not where the true total revolution can occur. As expressed in Blake, Black people need their own territorial claim in order to have sovereignty. The emphasis is not on the individuals within this population having what they need, or some kind of shared identity, but aspects that determine how a nation stands in comparison to other nations, or perceived by them.

There is an element of a desire to return in *Blake*. When discussing emigration, particularly from characters besides Blake himself, it is usually about returning to Africa in some way. There is a claim of inheritance to Africa:

> The whites in these regions were there by intrusion, idle consumers subsisting by imposition; whilst the blacks, the legitimate inhabitants, were the industrious laborers and producers of the staple commodities and real wealth of these places.

> They had inherited those regions by birth, paid for the soil by toil, irrigated it with their sweat, enriched it with their blood, nothing remaining to be done but by a dependence in Divine aid, a reliance in their own ability, and strength of their own arms, but to claim and take possession. (Delany 288)

Black people are the "legitimate inhabitants" of regions not only because of their ancestral ties, but also because of their work and efforts to cultivate these lands into nations. Additionally, the violence they have faced and sustained supports their claim. Relying on the divine, their self-assuredness, and strength, Blake argues that Black people can regain what is theirs and "claim and take possession" of it.

The oppression and horrific treatment of Black people suggests that the biggest push for wanting to create their own territorial nation is to escape persecution and garner respect. Blake is described at one point as "the leader of the Army of Emancipation and originator of the scheme to redeem them from slavery and an almost helpless degradation" (252-3). His scheme of redemption begins with escape from enslavement, but continues with the education and uplifting of the Black community, and the creation of a nation. This "almost helpless degradation" is not only the status that white people have ascribed to Black people, but the way they see themselves and the overall state of the Black community. The novel does not even pretend to consider assimilation as a strategy, and this is reasserted clearly in the final line. When Gondolier, a revolutionary who labors as a cook in Cuba, shouts "Woe be unto those devils of whites, I say!" about the violent beating and assault of a Black woman, there is no question of trying for coexistence or tolerance. This moment "signifies the beginning of the revolution and the collective union of realized black selfhood ready to claim the right to self-govern" (Stone 193). Again, like Blake's initial plans after Maggie is sold, violence against a woman is the moment

that sparks commitment to revolutionary action. The characters witness the aftermath of this violent assault by a white person, and the way that no other white people stepped in to help, and determine they cannot work together across racial divides.

Something the novel does not argue, is that Black people should all migrate to Haiti, Liberia, or another preexisting nation. Relating back to the Exodus allusions, many emigrationists "argued that African Americans were similarly charged with a 'special destiny to lead the world to holy perfection'" like the Israelites (Boutelle 38). This, alongside the embrace of American exceptionalism, leads to a group of Black people in the United States who plan to create their own nation, run by themselves. Blake explains that "Hayti is a noble self-emancipated nation, but not able to aid us, excepting to give such of us shelter, as might find it necessary or convenient to go there" (Delany 289). He praises Haiti as "a noble self-emancipated nation," however, the country cannot free the United States. Blake is not opposed to an individual making the decision to go to Haiti, but that is not part of his broader scheme for his people. There is an element that the Black people in the United States and Cuba need to do their own work, and free themselves. Blake sees how they are connected to other Africans, but to an extent he recognizes that they have become their own people too. While he does not use the term, this understanding of diaspora and the inability to return to a place is similar to what will be discussed about Brand and Klepfisz in the third chapter. However, Blake comes to the conclusion that a territorial claim is necessary, even if it is one that does not exist yet. Additionally, he is not confident that people in Liberia or Haiti could provide the support that is needed. He tells his wife in reference to Liberia that "They are too weak, and too far off dear Maggie, to render us any aid at present, though making praiseworthy efforts to develop their own nationality" (290). He praises their efforts of development, however, he sees them as in the

midst of their own fight for freedom. While they are doing this work, he imagines those currently in the United States to engage in their own version of this. Ironically, Delany will promote mass migration to Liberia later in his career, however, that was not his intention while writing *Blake.*

Conclusion

The historical context surrounding *Blake* is vital in understanding the story and Delany's purpose in writing it. Rich character development or description is not as important as clearly conveying his messaging of collective empowerment, and violent revolt and emigration as the solutions to enslavement and racism within the United States, because he was living in extreme circumstances. As explored in the first subsection, Delany leans into a modern Euro-American construction of masculinity that links power with this ideal. The representation of a masculine hero in Blake uplifts the ideal Black man and the strength of the Black community, and it reaffirms certain patriarchal beliefs about women and patriarchal hierarchy. In the second subsection, he establishes religion as a means of achieving freedom and combatting oppression that is also rooted in religious structures and ideologies. He also leans on and subverts biblical stories of the Jewish people and Moses to construct his own narrative. Furthermore, Delany does not see a future in which Black people are treated as full humans and citizens within the U.S.. Due to this, he ensures that the creation of a Black nation for Black people is the step that must follow revolution, drawing on a Western understanding of nationhood. Delany's passion for self-determination is clear through his project, however, this colonial vision is limited. In the novel's discussions about this emigration, there is no consideration of the Indigenous Africans who will be living in whatever territorial area the characters plan to establish their new nation.

Delany's commitment to territorial nationalism and conclusion that a new state is the path to freedom from oppression extends beyond Black Nationalism. Theodor Herzl expresses similar

conclusions in his novel *Old New Land*, which the following chapter will analyze in detail. It is interesting to consider the ways in which Black nationalist and Zionist movements have mirrored and inspired one another. While Delany does not fully describe the specifics of what his imagined Black nation will be like in *Blake*, Herzl attempts to vividly construct his plans for a Jewish state in *Old New Land*. These two authors diverge in their locational contexts — the United States and Cuba for Delany and the continent of Europe for Herzl — as well as their desires for their new states — a form of separatism for Delany and more of a goal of coexistence for Herzl. Chapter two will follow the structure of chapter one, exploring the context surrounding *Old New Land*, as well as constructions of masculinity and male camaraderie, the role of religion and secularism, and the prominent emigrationist narrative in the novel.

Chapter 2

Imagining a Jewish Homeland in Theodor Herzl's *Old New Land*

Introduction

This chapter moves to the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries to consider Theodor Herzl's imaginings of a Jewish nation. His vision, as articulated in his novel *Old New Land,* argues that by its mere existence, a new state will help to eradicate antisemitism. Like Delany, Herzl views emigration and the creation of a territorial nation as the only way to combat the oppression of his people. Diverging from Delany, Herzl's vision is one of coexistence, not separatism. He believes that Jewish people need their own state to have a sort of authority and equality within the European nation-state structure, but he believes this is a step toward tolerance, not the final action.

Herzl was a Jewish lawyer, journalist, and political leader. He was born in Pest, now part of Budapest, Hungary, in 1860. His parents were successful and raised him and his sister "in comfort" (Penslar 13). The two children were well educated and the family was not particularly religious, but Herzl attended a Jewish school and synagogue during parts of his life. In 1878, his sister died and the family moved to Vienna, Austria-Hungary, now Austria. Herzl studied law at university and then spent the majority of his career as a journalist and writer. As his life progressed, Herzl felt more staunchly that the only solution to antisemitism would be the creation of Jewish state, which he details in *Old New Land*, *The Jewish State*, and his diaries. Herzl is considered to be the father of political Zionism. He died in 1904.

Old New Land was published in 1902, originally written in German. It was published six years after Herzl's pamphlet *The Jewish State*, and was essentially a fictionalized telling of the political pamphlet. Herzl was writing during the aftermath of the creation of Austria-Hungary in

1867, in which Jews became emancipated, as well as in the context of ongoing and increasing antisemitism in Europe, and the Dreyfus Affair beginning in 1894 (Avineri 9; Volková 32). The Dreyfus Affair and its response solidified many of Herzl's political views and his Zionist writings, including *The Jewish State* and *Old New Land*. *Old New Land* was a highly political novel with a clear Zionist message, and while it is fictional, it was based on the real circumstances of Jews living in Europe and the possibilities for a Jewish state as Herzl envisioned them in *The Jewish State*.

These contexts influence Herzl's views about himself and the Jewish community in Europe as a whole. Unlike Delany, Herzl explicitly talks about diaspora in some of his writings. He was focused on the ways in which Jews were oppressed, and he agreed with the logic of other German Zionists that "antisemitism was an inevitable consequence of the Diaspora" (Vogt 59). Herzl thought that eradicating antisemitism was only possible with the creation of a Jewish national territory or state. Herzl experienced and witnessed Europe as a place rife with antisemitism, but he had hopes that this could change. *Old New Land* argues that if the Jewish people have their own great state to back them up, then they will be welcome in the other great states of Europe. While Jews have faced a long history of oppression, this history did not cause Herzl to give up on his dream of tolerance. This is emphasized in the way that the New Society in Herzl's novel is praised as a place for coexistence, and how this homeland is all that it takes for the Jewish people to find safety and belonging in both Palestine and Europe.

The novel follows a Jewish man, Friedrich Löwenberg, as he leaves his home of Vienna with a Christian man, Kingscourt. Through these two men, the reader sees a destitute Palestine, pre-Zionism, experiences a 20-year time skip of the two men living on a remote island, and then returns to a Palestine that has been reconstructed by the New Society. In the beginning, the novel

emphasizes the destitute position of Jewish people in Europe during Herzl's lifetime, and the presentation of the New Society presents a clear vision of a utopian society in Palestine. In tandem with *The Jewish State,* the novel presents a solution to antisemitism as well as assimilation. In this chapter, I will analyze how Herzl's perception of diaspora and nation shape the way that homeland and belonging are presented in *Old New Land* through the scenes taking place before and after the creation of the New Society in Palestine. Like the previous chapter, I will closely examine the ways in which a particular Euro-American masculinity shapes Herzl's perspective and the novel.

Masculine Figures and Friendships

The entire plot of *Old New Land* is driven by masculine figures and masculine camaraderie. Herzl does not have one sole character who embodies the masculine ideal, instead, a combination of these traits appear in David Littwak, Friedrich Löwenberg, and Mr. Kingscourt. Littwak most embodies this ideal, and we are actually privy to Littwak's evolution from childhood to manhood. We do not, however, see his perspective directly. Littwak is introduced in the novel as a poor Jewish child that Löwenberg interacts with as he is begging on the streets. By the novel's conclusion, Littwak is elected leader of the New Society. As a child, his desire is to study, because "I have heard that one who studies becomes a free, strong man" ("Old" 16). He envisions education as his path forward, because if he can expand his mind he can expand his possibilities for the future. Strength here does not primarily refer to muscle, but to a tough mind and personhood. He is elected as leader of the New Society because he is "a quiet man, just and modest, above the strife of current opinion" who "concern[s] himself with the ideal" of the New Society (156).

Turning from Littwak, nothing about Löwenberg, the narrator, positions him as a hero or ideal figure. He is depressed, lacks purpose in life, and does not have hope for the future. What pushes him over the edge, however, is the woman he is in unrequited love with, Ernestine, becoming engaged to another man. This is what incites him to engage with Kingscourt for the first time, whose friendship is key to the novel. What is significant about Löwenberg is that he does not make any decisions in isolation, his relationships with other men propelled him forward. While Ernestine finding another suitor is what emotionally devastates Löwenberg, he only considers the advertisement after his peer Schiffmann brings it up in conversation with him in the first place. The ad reads: "Wanted, An educated, desperate young man willing to make a last experiment with his life. Apply N. O. Body, this office" (12). Löwenberg realizes that the "description fitted himself" because "He was sick of life" but "he might as well try to make something of it" (12). When he meets Kingscourt, a Christian, he is told about his life and how he has ended up in this place. Kingscourt is actually "Koeningshoff [...] a German nobleman" who moved to the United States where he lived for twenty years (17). Kingscourt is a daring man, who has worked hard and likes to lead himself. These traits diverge from Löwenberg's nervous life and inspire him to embark on a new path (8). Kingscourt tells Löwenberg that he has a private island, and that his offer is for the two of them to live there together (18). Löwenberg's only concern is about his Jewish identity, which he nervously inquires about, telling Kingscourt "I am a Jew. Does that make any difference?" (19). Kingscourt laughs in return, claiming "You are a man. I can see that. And you seem to be an educated man. You are disgusted with life. That shows your good taste. Everything else is frightfully unimportant where we are going" (19). Manhood, and intellect, precede this identification of Jewishness in this context. This ties into a

larger theme in the novel of manhood as universal, and of common views of self trumping religious or other identity-based affiliations.

The relationship between Löwenberg and Kingscourt evolves throughout the novel. Kingscourt is the one who encourages Löwenberg to visit Palestine on their way to the island, and to subsequently return after their twenty year stint. This is significant because as Shumsky articulates "the Western, Christian, German American who seeks to arouse in Friedrich some interest in Palestine," Löwenberg's supposed fatherland ("This Ship" 475). Furthermore, Kingscourt is the one who actually first calls Palestine the Old New Land (Herzl "Old" 30). Not only does Kingscourt make these comments, but his imaginings are proven true as they actually come to fruition. When they return from the island after 20 years, Palestine, "by virtue of Jewish settlement, has become Altneuland, a flourishing European country, just as Kingscourt had foreseen" (Shumsky "This Ship" 476).

This time that Löwenberg and Kingscourt spend together makes them feel responsible for one another; they become quite interdependent. At various points they confirm this, with Kingscourt telling Löwenberg that "I can no longer live without you" while Löwenberg states "You know very well that I belong to you and go with you wherever and whenever you choose" (Herzl "Old" 31, 101). The two of them do end up choosing to live in Palestine together, and become members of the New Society at the conclusion of the novel. While this relationship is presented, the reader is not privy to the decades-long evolution of their relationship. This friendship represents the ideal coexistence of Jewish people and non-Jewish Europeans. It underscores how this is possible and will lead to great benefits for Jews and non-Jews alike. Additionally, both of these characters are part of a European diaspora, which influences their investment in constructing a new home that is imbued with Western European values but is more

tolerant to those who break outside of the strict nation-state modes of places like Germany or France. Something significant about this novel is that a majority of the characters are not deeply nuanced, but instead, simply serve narrative purpose. The purpose of the women in the novel is to inspire the men to act, or to be a representation of an ideal life. This will be expanded on in the emigration section, as the workings of the New Society are more closely examined.

Religion and Secularism

The idea of Jewishness is central to the novel, but Herzl is not entirely clear on the distinction of it as a religious, racial, or national identity. Jewishness is all of these things and combinations of them in various parts of the novel. In connection to this, religion and secularism are central themes in *Old New Land*. For Herzl, antisemitism guides his ideology of Zionism, and conception of Jewish nationhood, while “values, laws, traditions, ethics, culture” are secondary (Yadgar 34-5). Aligned with European Enlightenment values, Herzl is focused on “rationalist secularism” (Anderson “Imagined” 11). As Anderson explains, “With the ebbing of religious belief, the suffering which belief in part composed did not disappear” and something else was necessary to fill this void. He notes that “few things were (are) better suited to this end than an idea of nation” (11). Through a combination of this shift toward secularism and a feeling of helplessness against European antisemitism, Herzl clung to the idea of a Jewish nation.

In the novel, Herzl attempts to work out more of these details, but antisemitism guides the actions of the characters throughout the novel. Religious connection becomes a method of garnering support for the Zionist movement, not his own personal reasoning. Herzl did not believe that a Jewish nation needed to be in Palestine. He came to this conclusion because “The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvellous potency” (Herzl “The Jewish” 96). Herzl represents elements of his feelings about Palestine through the character of

Löwenberg. These understandings of religiosity and antisemitism lead to a sort of secularism and religious tolerance being presented as core principles of the New Society. In effect, elements of universality eclipse divergences in religious belief or practice.

For the New Society, despite being created by Jews in the Old New Land, religion is not a central aspect of public life. Löwenberg and Kingscourt are told that "Religion had been excluded from public affairs once and for all. The New Society did not care whether a man sought the eternal verities in a temple, a church or a mosque, in an art museum or at a philharmonic concert" ("Old" 142). This establishment of being excluded "once and for all" emphasizes a commitment to true separation of government and faith, in reference to the discrimination Jews previously faced in Europe on the basis of their religion. The value or belonging of a person is not determined by their religious affiliation or lack there-of. Early in the text, Kingscourt asks Reschid Bey, a Muslim man living in Palestine, "Don't you regard these Jews as intruders?" (69). Bey replies "Would you call a man a robber who takes nothing from you, but brings you something instead? The Jews have enriched us. [...] They dwell among us like brothers. Why should we not love them?" (69). This moment speaks to the question about entering and taking over a land in which there are already people living. In Herzl's utopian depiction, however, there seems to be no conflict at all. The newly migrated Jewish people have only "enriched" Palestine, and lived "like brothers." Not only is religious tolerance and harmony glossed over, but the violence and complexity of colonization are flattened.

Despite religion not being central in the Old New Land itself, part of Löwenberg's journey is finding some connection to his faith. When he first visits Jerusalem, he has a visceral reaction. He ponders as "He did not understand why the sight of this strange city affected him so powerfully. Was it the memory of words heard in early childhood? In passages of prayer

murmured by his father?" (25). Even a man so disconnected from his Judaism finds a connection to it while in the holy land. He remembers his father and seemingly fond childhood memories. Löwenberg finally gets a sense of why this is an important place to his people. Rhetorically, this promotes the positive and significant choice of creating the New Society in Palestine. It promotes a connection for all Jewish people to Palestine, even if they would not have previously considered themself tied to this land. It also possibly allows Herzl to appeal to a slightly more religious audience who do see Palestine as a spiritual homeland for the Jews, and whom his largely secular movement might dissuade.

When Löwenberg reflects on the state of the Jewish people before the establishment of the New Society, he is devastated by the restrictions on them, but more importantly, the way this became internalized (4). He explains that "The Jews had thus fallen always lower, as much by their own fault as by the fault of others. Elend…Golus…Ghetto. Words in different languages for the same thing. Being despised, and finally despising yourself" (138). The hatred and oppression from non-Jews severely impacted the Jewish people themselves, and, in Löwenberg's eyes, they did not retain self-respect and worth. What becomes clear to him is that a particular level of self-respect is required for the Jewish people to thrive, it is not only about the outer oppression or acceptance. While visiting the temple in Old New Land, he considers how:

> Jews had prayed in many temples, splendid and simple, in all the languages of the Diaspora. The invisible God, the Omnipresent, must have been equally near to them everywhere. Yet only here was the true Temple. Why? Because only here had the Jews built up a free commonwealth in which they could strive for the loftiest human aims. They had their own communities in the Ghettoes, to be sure; but there they lived under oppression. In the Judengasse, they had been without

> honor and without rights; and when they left it, they ceased to be Jews. Freedom and a sense of solidarity were both needed (139).

The only "true Temple" is in Palestine, why? He recognizes that Jewish people praying in temples all around the world, in languages from all around the world, had to be close to God regardless of location and language. However, he claims that the "free commonwealth," of the New Society with a commitment to "the loftiest human aims" was the only place where it is true. It is only when Jewish people have access to both honor and rights, freedom and solidarity, that the Jewish people are an undeniable community of Jews. If persecution is the only thing bringing them together in the diaspora, they lose their Jewishness when leaving the situation of oppression. Herzl is afraid of total assimilation, but believes that there must be a new form for Jewishness created in order to combat the old antisemitism. In the New Society, it is a great sense of rights and solidarity, the choice to be Jews, that enables them to be a community. *Old New Land's* presentation of a utopian future is focused on promoting the tolerance that can exist within a Jewish-run land, and thus as a model for how Jews can be treated in Christian or other religious majority countries.

Emigration and The New Society

Emigration is discussed from the start of *Old New Land*, when Löwenberg overhears a conversation that "The poor are beginning to emigrate" due to dangerous antisemitic driven attacks, "But they don't know where to go" (Herzl 9). In response, someone shares that "A new movement has arisen within the last few years, which is called Zionism. Its aim is to solve the Jewish problem through colonization on a large scale. All who can no longer bear their present lot will return to our old home, Palestine" (9). It is the people at the lowest in the hierarchy, the Jews who are poor and struggling, who are the most desperate to flee from the European nations

they are living within. Pogroms and other violence are making their lives unlivable, and Zionism is presented as the solution. Zionism is being named explicitly as a colonial movement "on a large scale." The vast number of Jews who are struggling, "who can no longer bear their present lot" will leave and "return" to Palestine, their "old home." The impacts that their colonial endeavor will have on the people who currently live in Palestine does not seem to be a consideration. Unsurprisingly, as Shourideh Molavi asserts in her book chapter about the colonization of Palestine, Herzl's New Society "develops according to a clear colonial logic" (44). The displacement of people and understanding of the people already living in Palestine, and of the Jews that are going to settle in Palestine, align with a particular Euro-centric settler-colonial logic. While Löwenberg is unimpressed about Zionism at the time, this sets the stage for the rest of the novel and foreshadows the eventual evolution of his perspective.

After he responds to Kingscourt's ad, they set off to the private island — an act of emigration. Löwenberg is tired of his life where he is and leaves in hopes of finding something more suitable. On their way, Kingscourt encourages him to visit Palestine, asking "haven't you any desire to see your fatherland before you say farewell to the world?" (Herzl "Old" 23). Löwenberg tells him:

> 'You are mistaken. I have no connection to Palestine. I have never been there. It does not interest me. My ancestors left it eighteen hundred years ago. What should I seek there? I think that only anti-Semites can call Palestine our fatherland.' But, even as he spoke, Friedrich remembered David Littwak, and added, 'Aside from the anti-Semites, I have heard only one little Jew boy say that Palestine is our land… (23)

Löwenberg asserts that he has "no connection" because he has "never been there," his ancestors left hundreds of years ago, and he is simply uninterested. He even dismisses the "fatherland" claim as an antisemitic trope. However, remembering about Littwak plants the seeds that it is not only antisemitic people and that his mind is going to change. Even this innocent child was able to see the possibilities for Jews in Palestine. On their first visit, Löwenberg is further disenchanted with Palestine, but Kingscourt pushes him to see the potential. Furthermore, the Jewish people are the ones who could revitalize the land. Because "You've nothing to lose. You could make the experimental land for humanity. Over yonder, where we were, you could create a new commonwealth. On that ancient soil, Old New Land" (30).

The dire state of Jewish people in Europe leaves them with a lot of room to take a risk. Like Löwenberg deciding to reply to Kingscourt's ad, the Jewish people as a whole are desperate. This commonwealth, on the "ancient soil," will be an "experimental land for humanity." Not only is it a return and revitalization for the Jews, but indeed a chance to inspire humanity more broadly. Sperber notes that Herzl was focused on a political project, "(1) the need to combat antisemitism and (2) assisting European powers in the colonialist project" (129). This project is presented in the novel not only as a way to help the Jewish people, but Europeans more broadly. While the discussion surrounding Palestine is a return of Jewish people to this land, Kingscourt, the non-Jew, is the one to continuously suggest these ideas to Löwenberg. Kingscourt is deeply invested in the creation of a renewed Jewish society in Palestine, he is even the first one to refer to Palestine as the Old New Land (Herzl "Old" 30). Eventually, while Löwenberg wants to stay in Palestine, Kingscourt's agreement to join the New Society is the only reason he actually does. This reliance and encouragement from a Christian European, with his experience living in the United States as well, points to the close connection with Europe that

the New Society has and the larger message about how a Jewish commonwealth could fit in with other parts of the world, ie Europe. In her book critiquing political Zionism, Jacqueline Rose argues that while "[Zionism] had the opportunity to forge a model of nationhood, neither belligerently nor preemptively, but ambivalent, uncertain, obscure, something closer to this disquieting and transformative space [...] did not take it" (Rose 86). Instead of creating someone brand new, the creators of the New Society and Zionists at large choose to follow Euro-centric logics to construct this new nation.

In the New Society, Littwak explains all of the developments made, and aligns the New Society with European ones. He draws connections between what is occurring in the New Society and what is occurring in other European nations. Littwak claims that "We are merely a society of citizens seeking to enjoy life through work and culture," with sports clubs that "were sufficient in Switzerland" and "competitive games [...] like the English" (Herzl "Old" 45). Furthermore, while the "Jewish children used to be pale, weak, timid" they are now strong (45). Antisemitic tropes permeating Herzl's time portrayed "Jewish men as physically weak, lacking bravery and resolve, and prone to nervous disorders" (Penslar 26). Jewish masculinity was seen as unaligned with non-Jewish European masculinity, and children represent the culture. This notion of Jewish children being frail falls into stereotypes about Jewish people, predominantly stemming from the poverty many previously experienced. In the novel, Herzl is not refuting this stereotype, instead, he is claiming that it had merit but the New Society has resolved it. Through physical activities for children, opportunities to labor and gain housing in the New Society, Littwak claims "We restore the dregs of society to manhood" (Herzl "Old" 132). Jewish people, particularly formerly impoverished Jewish people, are positioned as the "dregs of society." This restoration of sorts essentially Europeanized Jews. The greatness of this society, as praised by

Littwak, is in the way it aligns with European societal standards. Since, according to the novel's logic, this is not something that could be achieved while living in Europe without the New Society in Palestine.

As Herzl aligns with Euro-American ideals of nationhood, he leans into particular traits like liberty, that he positions as a universal desire. Littwak explains that:

> We made the New Society not because we were better than others, but simply because we were ordinary men with the ordinary human needs for air and light, health and honor, for the right to acquire property and security of possession. And since we were about to build ourselves a home, we chose a 1900 model, and not one of the year 1600 or 1800 or any other date. All this is certainly clear and obvious. We did nothing very meritorious. We achieved nothing extraordinary. We did only that which, under the given circumstances and at the given moment, was a historical necessity. (81-2)

The creation of this society is to fulfill the "ordinary human needs for air and light, health." Jewish people are "ordinary men" too. The first three items that are being claimed as needs are typically considered basic needs, and make sense. The following three items, honor, property, and possession, are not. These are rooted within European and Euro-American ideals of masculinity and ownership. An aspect of manhood is ownership. Littwak emphasizes that there was no desire to recreate ancient Palestine, but to make their home a "1900 model." This pitch about the New Society here is directed toward Löwenberg and Kingscourt, people with European sensibilities. It is a rational argument of completing only what is "a historical necessity."

Alongside this understanding of a universality of manhood and humanity, there are claims of gender equality. However, there are still clear divisions between men and women in

Old New Land. In the New Society, Littwak explains that “It is a common human trait—not only a feminine one—not to concern ourselves with things we already possess” (43). In this moment he is trying to express the shared experiences of people, however, his explicit statement that this is “not a feminine one” reflects the gendered divides within the New Society. Littwak also professes that suffrage and participation in government for women has advanced in the prior decades. Looking at these statements alone, the idea of gender equality might be possible to believe. Despite these assertions, however, later in the novel, Littwak’s wife tells Löwenberg and Kingscourt that “We believe that the place of a growing girl is beside her mother, even when she has been well trained for her duties in the New Society and fulfills them” (130). Clearly, women and girls are expected to fulfill different duties than men and boys, even if they believe they are capable of doing something else. This is not surprising, as the creation of the New Society as a reflection of an ideal European society does not allow for complete gender equality or an abolition of gender and familial roles.

A significant divergence from traditional European nation states is the stance on violence and militia. As told to Löwenberg and Kingscourt, “There is no army in the New Society” (45). Though, perhaps, this is more of a reflection of the utopian nature of the novel. The lack of an army, and a lack of desire to create one, underscores the safety of this nation. It demonstrates a future where antisemitism has been largely eradicated, and there is no threat to the people living in the New Society. Diverging from *Blake*, the prospect of violent revolution does not seem necessary to Herzl’s context, and thus, the absence of physical violence or militarism in *Old New Land* presents a hope for a future where that will not be necessary. This is perhaps the most clearly utopian presentation of the novel that goes the farthest beyond existing structures from the other states that are emulated in the New Society.

In addition to this notion of militarism, or a particular lack there-of, Herzl and early Zionists who shared his ideology were primarily committed "to an autonomous Jewish region within Palestine [...] and certainly not a state that covers or claims all of Palestine" (Boyarin 75). Perhaps this is why his novel is so focused on what daily life looks like in the New Society as opposed to how governmental formation or structures work. While the colonial impulses were undeniably part of this project, the undercurrents of coexistence and tolerance were central for Herzl. Boyarin explains that "even classical Zionism did not envision a state dominated by one ethnos, the Jews, nor certainly the ethnic cleansing that is being en-acted right now, as I write" (76). Herzl believed that the only way to reinvigorate the Jewish people and to live without facing antisemitism would be to create something new to prove that the Jews could be as civilized as Christian Europeans. To be clear, these Europeans are involved in violent colonization and imperialism throughout Africa and other regions. However, Herzl is not considering this in his desire for alignment. This is particularly evident in the ways in which his goals to 'help' the poorer Jewish people extended to people of other faiths and races, even if his intentions were complicated.

While the element of returning to a former homeland is at the forefront of *Old New Land*, Herzl is not advocating for strict segregation between Jews and non-Jews. The biggest push for wanting to create a territorial nation for the Jews is not to simply create a place to escape persecution, but to garner respect. Clearly stated, this is not a plan to fulfill any kind of separatist desire. In one of his diary entries, Herzl writes that "No nation has uniformity of race" (Avineri 24). Through an analysis of these entries, Israeli political scientist Shlomo Avineri presents passages that indicate Herzl is not interested in finding uniform racial or religious ties to create a

nation, but unifying symbols like flags, institutions, and political consciousness (24). The New Society boasts clear unifying laws, institutions, and consciousnesses.

In regard to language, Anderson suggests that language, particularly print-language “laid the bases for national consciousnesses” (“Imagined” 44). Herzl does largely agree with the significance of language for national identity. In *The Jewish State* Herzl discusses how people would use their native languages in the future Jewish state, and “that the most useful language would thus eventually become the state language anyway” (Shumsky “Theodor” 61). While this seems relatively openminded, he does not actually have no stakes in what language or languages eventually become the state language. Instead, he imagines that “the most useful language” will be a European language, and he envisions that the language that eventually is established will be German, his native tongue. In *The Jewish State*, “Herzl wrote that language was ‘the beloved homeland of [our] thoughts,’” and by this he means German and European languages, not “miserable stunted jargons” like Yiddish (Shumsky “This Ship” 480-1). This is an instance of contradictory perspectives, where on one hand he is less strict about promoting a national Jewish language and on the other, hoping and planning to eventually have a state of people who primarily speak German or another European language. This openness is only for the initial call, but not for the long-term.

In the novel, Dr. Walter, a man who is part of the New Society and going to become the minister of Justice, claims that the uplifting of the Jewish people only occurred after many of them left Europe. He explains “Only when the Jews, forming the majority in Palestine, showed themselves tolerant, were they shown more toleration in all other countries” (Herzl “Old” 99). Having their own nation, and acting as a model of tolerance and coexistence, was the necessary step to more acceptance within European countries. By leading their own society, the Jewish

people in Palestine align themselves with the qualities of Europeans and prove their status as an equal people. The Jews are acting as role models in a way, of the possibilities of religious tolerance in a largely secular state. Much of this novel was and is criticized "for its lack of Jewish national content" (Rose 61). Again, it adds levels of nuance to this text that "contains as much pure colonialist fantasy as surprisingly progressive thought" (61).

Löwenberg is concerned about the degradation of his people before the creation of the New Society. Thinking about a Jewish singer who mostly sang in German, he ponders "What a degraded era, that was, [...] when the Jews had been ashamed of everything Jewish [...] They need not have been surprised at the contempt shown them, for they had shown no respect for themselves" (Herzl "Old" 138). He feels regretful about this time when Judaism was seen as shameful, but he does not only blame Christians and other non-Jews. Löwenberg believes the lack of dignity shown for Jewish people was in part their own fault; if they do not respect themselves why would the Christians? Many Zionists of Herzl's time believed that "If the Jews would be more self-confident, it was argued, they would be less vulnerable to antisemitism" and that a purpose of Zionism is to "raise the feeling of dignity among the Jews" (Vogt 60). This ideology is reflected in Löwenberg's thought processes.

Old New Land centers on a vision of the rehabilitation and uplifting of the Jewish community through emigration and it also engages with the struggles of other marginalized groups. While inequality is largely absent from the New Society, all social ills have not been resolved outside of it. Specifically, the novel considers the enslavement of Black people in the United States. In Palestine, Professor Steineck speaks with Löwenberg and Kingscourt about this issue:

> There is still one problem of racial misfortune unsolved. The depths of that problem, in all their horror, only a Jew can fathom. I mean the negro problem. Don't laugh, Mr. Kingscourt. Think of the hair-raising horrors of the slave trade. Human beings, because their skins are black, are stolen, carried off, and sold. Their descendants grow up in alien surroundings despised and hated because their skin is differently pigmented. I am not ashamed to say, though I be thought ridiculous, now that I have lived to see the restoration of the Jews, I should like to pave the way for the restoration of the Negroes. [...] That is why I am working to open up Africa. All human beings ought to have a home. Then they will be kinder to one another. Then they will understand and love one another more. (Herzl "Old" 94)

At this time in the novel, the New Society has been established and the Jewish people have been revitalized. Steineck discusses the horrors of slavery, claiming that "only a Jew can fathom" the horror of the situation. He is directly linking the suffering of these two groups together. He explains that now that he has "lived to see the restoration of the Jews, I should like to pave the way for the restoration of the Negroes." The "restoration" of the Jewish people came from creating the New Society, and his idea of "restoration" of Black people is the creation of territory within Africa. He argues that having a "home" will allow people to "understand and love one another more." This argument roots itself in the notion that a physical homeland of sorts is required for a community of people to have respect, self-worth, and compassion for others.

Conclusion

The social and political climate that Herzl lives in greatly impacts the purpose and messaging of *Old New Land*. Instead of focusing on the interiority of characters or plot, the novel emphasizes

the messaging of the value of a Jewish state and possibilities for tolerance across religious backgrounds. This openness to coexistence highlights that while antisemitism was rampant, there was still room to hope for growth. In the first subsection, I engaged with Herzl's presentations of a Euro-American masculine camaraderie, and how the Americanized Christian character bolsters the life of the Jewish protagonist. This friendship underscores Herzl's idea that collaboration across religious differences will lead to a more enlightened society. While Herzl features questionable depictions of non-white characters, he also aligns the struggle of the Jewish people against antisemitism with the struggle of the Black people against racism. This is reflective of his own biases as well as his rhetorical push for equality. While the New Society is progressive in certain elements, it is evident that it also reinforces patriarchal hierarchy. The following section explores the role of religion as a force of division, and the ways in which a particular brand of secularism can be embraced to promote alternatives to separatism. Like Delany, Herzl believes that a Jewish territory is necessary to create wider acceptance of Jewish people. However, Herzl does not think all Jews must leave their current European homes, instead, drawing on Western perspectives of nationhood, the existence of a strong Jewish nation itself will resolve existing prejudices and oppression. Herzl's desire for coexistence beyond freedom from persecution is radical. However, this project is limited by its colonial nature, because there is not ample consideration about the Palestinians who have been living in Palestine. The novel romanticizes what this interaction will look like, with characters like Reschid Bey claiming that the creation of the New Society and Zionist settlements only had positive impacts on his life.

While Herzl and Delany lean into the power of nation-states, their visionings of a future free from oppression is not limited to nationalists. As examined in the following chapter, people who push against nationalist rhetoric often do so for the same reasons that people turn to

nationalism. Moving away from the novel form, the more poetic literary works of Brand and Klepfisz capture similar themes to Delany and Herzl in another way. These contemporary authors live in a world post-World War Ⅰ and Ⅱ and have more removed perspectives from historical issues that Delany and Herzl were facing. However, they are living in a world in which these ideologies have developed and taken on new meaning. While Brand and Klepfisz have unique contexts and perspectives, they share particular elements that make their works interesting comparatives, particularly in the context of Delany and Herzl's earlier texts. Chapter three will diverge from the topical structures of chapters one and two, following how Brand and Klepfisz discuss origins, relationships to place, and conceptualizations of belonging beyond nationhood. Through these sections, it will follow their argument that nation building is not the only means of fighting oppression nor creating belonging.

Chapter 3

Constructions of Diasporic Home: Dionne Brand and Irena Klepfisz

Introduction

This chapter moves to the end of the 20th and early 21st centuries to explore Dionne Brand and Irena Klepfisz's critique of nationalism and alternative approaches to combatting hierarchy and violence within their literary works. While Delany and Herzl believed that liberation within the places they had been living was impossible, Brand and Klepfisz are more optimistic. They focus on how liberation and belonging can be found within diasporic community, drawing on Gopinath's queer and feminist notions of diaspora. While similar notions can be seen in Herzl's limited idea of coexistence, Brand and Klepfisz hold more intentional and collaborative aims to build community across identity markers and create change where they are.

Brand and Klepfisz are lesbian feminist scholars and writers living in North America who are concerned with questions of diaspora, home, and belonging. As contemporaries of one another, they engage in similar intellectual circles, and their works have been paired together in various publications such as *The Longman Anthology of Women's Literature* by Mary K. Deshazer. In "Unfinished Migrations," Patterson and Kelly argue that there is much to uncover regarding "the degree to which the 'black' world can only be understood in the context of the larger world and vice versa" (26). Diaspora and culture do not exist in a vacuum and it is vital to look at a broader context to fully grasp it. Brand and Klepfisz see themselves as intrinsically tied with other people and speak to other experiences while describing their own. In their works, they conceptualize diaspora, home, migration, and dis/connections to place, while situating themselves within historical and present contexts. These authors are fascinating to examine

together because of the similarities in the questions and concepts they explore, as well as the divergences in their perspectives.

Dionne Brand is a Black lesbian writer, scholar, and activist. She was born in Trinidad in 1953 and immigrated to Canada in 1970 (Mathews). She was living in Grenada when American troops invaded in October, 1983, and then was evacuated and returned to Canada (Bell 28). The majority of her teaching and scholarship occurred after this invasion and the failure of creating a Black state in Liberia. Among other things, these events greatly influenced her writing.

Irena Klepfisz is a Jewish lesbian poet, scholar, and activist. She was born in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941 (Weiman-Kelman). She and her mother fled after her father was murdered during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, eventually migrating to the United States in 1949. Her parents were Bundists — members of a secular Jewish socialist movement — and raised Klepfisz with a commitment to secular Jewish culture, socialism, and the idea that Jewish people belong everywhere (Crabbapple; Blatman). These ideas, in addition to her experiences as a child during the Holocaust and founding of the state of Israel, have greatly influenced Klepfisz's writing.

Both authors have grown up in and continue to live in a world grappling with anti-Blackness, antisemitism, homophobia, sexism, other forms of oppression, and the impacts and significance of increased globalization. Brand's poetic, nonfiction, autobiographical book, *A Map to the Door of No Return* incorporates personal anecdotes alongside archival and literary materials. Brand positions herself within history and the present, from the kidnapping and enslavement of African people to debates surrounding nation and migration in contemporary Canada. Klepfisz's poems, "Bashert," "Fradel Schtok," "Instructions of the dying elder…," and "Warsaw, 1983, *Umschlagplatz*," examine memory, history, and language, and how the past and present interact. Within these texts, Brand and Klepfisz construct ideas of diasporic home, and

reconceptualize belonging outside of nationalistic ideologies. As Klepfisz explicates, she wishes to understand and learn from the past, but not be "limited or controlled by it" ("The 2087th"). Through their written works, Brand and Klepfisz argue that through understanding the past and recognizing their present, people can create new futures and find belonging in the process.

The Question of Origins

Gopinath explains that "A desire for home and belonging, in other words, is central to diasporic consciousness, even as there is a concomitant recognition of the impossibility of return to an 'original' homeland" (67). This desire is central for Brand and Klepfisz, and they pay close attention to how this emerges within their personal identifications and broader political assertions. In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, "Bashert," and "Fradel Schtok," the primary concern is a sense of rootlessness. What does it mean to feel disconnected from place? How does feeling ungrounded affect one's sense of self? What is the impact of this particular cultural gap?

Brand does not know where her family is from, leaving her feeling untethered, wondering where she belongs. As a child, she believes learning her origins will solve this issue, and she is frustrated that her grandfather cannot remember their ancestry. As Johnson notes, "When history fails Brand, as in the case of her grandfather's inability to furnish her with an ancestral past, even indexical memories are impaired, and Brand has to actively work out personal connections thwarted by the colonial past" (152). She lacks a simple linkage to her history and therefore needs to take action to find these connections. Brand later realizes that "A name would have comforted a thirteen-year-old. The question however was more complicated, more nuanced" (6). As a child, her resentment for her grandfather was rooted in the notion that his remembering would resolve everything. Her crisis of identity and grappling with the significant and violent history of enslavement is bigger than simply knowing the language group or tribe her ancestors

were from. For Brand and her family, "the name [her grandfather] could not remember was from the place we could not remember, Africa. It was the place we did not remember, yet it lodged itself in all the conversations of who we were" (18). Africa, the continent taking on almost a mythic quality, has a looming presence over her and her family's identity. Knowing they had origins there, without any more specifics, is painful, but knowing those specifics would not resolve the violence and impacts of the transatlantic slave trade. While this particular discussion is about her family, this is far bigger than them. This was a "rupture in history, a rupture in the quality of being. It was also a physical rupture, a rupture of geography" (7).

Throughout *A Map*, Brand uses the language of mapping to explore beyond just physical place, the rupture she tracks is about being, and history. Nalini Mohabir explores the way Brand maps memory, writing that "Brand maps not fixed spatial geometries but the crossroads of the local and global, the personal and historical, yearning and its impossibilities reverberating through time and space" (Mohabir 204). The places and stories she maps, including her expansive understanding of the Door of No Return, point to these complexities that she engages with. The moment her ancestors were trafficked out of Africa was a moment of loss, but the broader system of this violence means it reaches beyond Brand. She speaks of the Door of No Return as the place of this rupture — both physically and metaphorically. She explains:

> The door looms as both a horror and a romance, though. The horror is of course three or four hundred years of slavery, its shadow was and is colonialism and racism. The romance is of the place beyond the door, the Africa of our origins. Some of us reinvent these origins as a golden past of serenity, grandeur, equality — as one living in a state of dread invents its opposite for sustenance. (Brand 24)

The idea of the Door of No Return represents not only the violence of slavery, and the colonialism and racism connected to it, but also a nostalgic idea of Africa before colonization. She explains that some people in the diaspora "reinvent" this as "golden past." However, as Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins argues in an article about diaspora and culture, "For Brand, the feeling of rupture and dispersion brought by diaspora extends to the present [...] Whether haunted or present in repeated practices of marginalization and exclusion, the history of diaspora continues its course" (Martins 199). The "shadow" of racism and colonialism, alongside the personal familial traumas, ensure that the moment of rupture has not eased in the years following emancipation.

What devastates Brand is that she does not know her origins, and therefore she feels estranged from herself. Talking with children on a playground, they ask her where she is from. She panics, as "I suddenly realize that I cannot answer this simplest of questions. I don't know where I'm from" (Brand 179). This is meant to be a basic introductory question, however, Brand has no clear answer. She "became frightened" during this conversation because the children "felt to me so assured, so certain, that they were from a place and I knew that I was not" (182). She can not explain her background to these children because it is "even out of [her] own reach" (182). She is envious of this assuredness that she perceives the children as having when she feels so uncertain. This anecdote highlights that knowing her history and origins is not only a desire to know who her ancestors are, but who she is.

History haunts, both what is not fully known, and what is. Brand believes that the "Black experience [...] in the Americas is a haunting" because "One enters a room and history follows; one enters a room and history precedes" (27). Everything about the Black experience in the Americas has been shaped by the history of enslavement. This history itself is, as argued by

Black diaspora scholar Rinaldo Walcott, part of "the far-reaching brutality of the invention of Black beings/the Black life-form" ("Diaspora" 23). Blackness itself, the identity of Blackness itself has been created out of these histories. Individuals carry these histories with them, and they are imbued in all aspects of daily life and culture, even if certain details have been lost or erased through time. In an article about the use of archival materials and memory in *A Map,* Erica Johnson argues that Brand's use of archive and memory within her book "engages, revises, and imagines a particular piece of history into presence" (Johnson 158). She is doing "archival work through memory" and creating a sort of self-archive (158). Instead of ignoring the weight of history, Brand embraces it, explicitly drawing connections between the past and present.

Klepfisz knows her family history, but she still feels the haunting of history, and is pulled between two worlds that she feels equally disconnected from. In "Bashert," she considers her thirtieth birthday, the birthday when she will become the age her father was when he died. She believes this day is the moment that she will be equally between Europe and America, the two places she has considered home. As the time comes nearer, she considers how:

> I am almost equidistant from two continents. I look back towards one, then forward towards the other. There is a need in me to become transparent like water, to become the salt water which is their only connection. (Klepfisz "Bashert" 154)

Nearing this age brings up the pain of her father's death, and how much time has passed since she lived in her birthplace of Europe. Klepfisz's desire to become like water, in many ways, reflects her complicated feelings. The two continents of her heritage are connected by salt water — the Atlantic Ocean. At the same time, salty water is reminiscent of tears, grief, and loss. Furthermore, water is a liquid and is thus able to conform to any space it can find. Klepfisz is not only pointing out the literal barrier between the two continents but her grief and the way she

must be fluid and adapt.The question of where she belongs is pertinent to Klepfisz in this moment, as she does not see how she can maintain this connection to both places, she thinks she must choose. She longs to remain tied to both.

Language is central to identity in the works of both Klepfisz and Brand. Brand has a moment of identity fracture as a child, when her teacher, Miss Sirju, decides to pronounce her name incorrectly. This teacher tells Brand that this is the correct pronunciation. Reflecting back, no other authority figures had ever "questioned my authenticity or my identity until Miss Sirju" (Brand 115). Her name is one of the factors of her identity that she knows, unlike her origins. It has been clear and never challenged in her early years, something concrete in the midst of blurred family history. Her name is hers, something that is known, and does not rely on her grandfather's remembrance or anything else.

Klepfisz delves into the significance of language as culture in "Fradel Schtok." Klepfisz embodies Schtok to highlight the impact of loss of language and culture over simply the disconnection from land. The epigraph provides a brief biography of Schtok:

> Yiddish writer. Born in 1890 in Skale, Galicia. Emigrated to New York in 1907. Became known when she introduced the sonnet form into Yiddish poetry. Author of *Erzeylungen* (Stories) in 1919, a collection in Yiddish. In 1927, switched to English and published a novel, *For Musicians Only*. Institutionalized and died in a sanitarium around 1930. (186)

Considering this is an extraordinarily brief biography, the dates included are significant for Klepfisz's argument. Schtok's pain and difficulty are expressed as she struggles to retain her connection with Yiddish. She explains that "You try to keep track of the difference / like *got* and god or *hoyz* and house / but they blur" (186). This emphasizes the slow distancing she

experiences from her native tongue while surrounded by English. She is trying to learn this new language and retain her own, but it becomes increasingly difficult.

Near the end of the poem Schtok is confused, and standing in front of a house. Then, the door opens and she is ushered in. She replies "*A dank! A dank*! [...] till I heard the lock / snap behind me" (187). While she believes this "Come in!" is welcoming her, it is actually trapping her. Maeera Shreiber, scholar of religion and poetics, analyzes "Fradel Schtok" and claims that "What are taken to be offers of help [...] turn out to be expressions of deceit" (170). Schtok simply believes she is being welcomed in, however, then she is confined. The lock of the door harkens to her institutionalization. Whether Schtok chose to write in English because she had lost too much of her Yiddish, or because she desired to appeal to "external standards of literary excellence," this move away from Yiddish harmed her identity (170). In her dissertation about language and identity, Justine Pas explains how the snap of the lock "ends the poem by equating the loss of language with madness" (119). Furthermore, this emphasizes that "it is not geographic but linguistic displacement that proves most devastating" (Pas 119). We see this sentiment in the end of the epigraph, where Klepfisz includes a quote from Czeslow Milosz, "Language is the only homeland" ("Fradel Schtok" 186). Based on Klepfisz's emphasis that Schtok's death occurred only three years after leaving behind her Yiddish writing, but over twenty years after arriving in America, it seems as though the poem argues that she felt welcomed by English, but the loss of her native language caused a loss of her sense of self. Her language was a core element of her identity, and her home, and the shift to writing in English was the final disconnection that destroyed her.

This story of Fradel Schtok "informs Klepfisz's own multivalenced view of 'home' — a desire (for a sense of place) tempered by [...] the knowledge that such fixed entities are usually

purchased at the cost of more fluid models of self and community" (Shreiber 170). Klepfisz's understanding of Schtok's story, as represented in this poem, points to how Klepfisz understands the desire for home, with an understanding that other elements of culture — like language — are even more important than physical geography. "Klepfisz locates home not in a particular location, but in language and culture [...] this location is *yidishkayt* or the prewar secular Yiddish language and culture of Eastern Europe and particularly Poland" (Pas 102). Instead of denoting a physical location as the site of her home or identity, Klepfisz anchors herself to Judaism and Yiddish, particularly *yidishkayt*. She does not believe that any particular location is her home or will make her feel at home. Instead, she holds only Yiddish culture and history for her sense of self and community. Klepfisz refuses to give these "more fluid models" up in order for a piece of land or to belong to a nation. However, this language connection is complex, because the poem demonstrates that a belonging rooted in language still struggles under the pressure of migration and assimilation.

Brand, too, grapples with place and begins to question how important origins are. She explains that "Too much has been made of origins. All origins are arbitrary" (Brand 66). How these origins have been interpreted and utilized, and how past generations have passed on traditions and responses to history are what matter more now. Brand's interpretation of the Door of No Return directly supports her take on origins, as Black studies scholar Christina Sharpe observes, "This schema names the door as that which inaugurates the long history of our interpellation into the scene of slavery, its aftermaths of unbelonging and the everyday violences that continue to rupture being" (3). Additionally, having an understanding that you are directly linked or descended from something in the past, something with "an unchanging essential core" as cultural theorist Stuart Hall theorizes about cultural identity, is "a myth—with all the real

power that our governing myths carry to shape our imaginaries, influence our actions, give meaning to our lives, and make sense of our history" ("Thinking" 209). Humans and society are never static, and thus there is no specific thing we are tied to. However, even though these are constructions, they hold "real power." What matters most is not whether one believes in origins or cultural identity, but how one interprets these connections and makes meaning. Without something to draw on, people can become disoriented, and longing for the comfort of roots. Considering the moment when her ancestors were taken from their homelands, Brand posits they must have been "bewildered because they had a sense of origins," while those in the diaspora "have no such immediate sense of belonging, only of drift" (120). While knowing one's ancestors and origins can provide a sort of roadmap and assurance in identity, the present circumstances are vastly different. Brand connects herself to the broader Black diaspora, and the broader history of Black people. But is it because she doesn't know all the specifics of her family's history, or are there other reasons? Would she still be looking at this collective so closely even if she had more specific details about herself? Gilroy argues that "The need to locate cultural or ethnic roots [...] is perhaps best understood as a simple and direct response to the varieties of racism which have denied the historical character of black experience and the integrity of black cultures" ("The Black" 112).

Klepfisz, while knowing her specific history, also situates herself into a larger Jewish collective and diasporic community. In "Bashert," she claims the legacy of her people. "I claim it as mine whenever I see the photographs of nameless people. [...] People dressed in coats lined with fur. Or ragged at elbows and collar" (Klepfisz 157). She sees these people as connected to her, regardless of class status or other factors because of their Jewishness. They share aspects of history and culture, and thus she claims this legacy, refusing to be contemptuous or pick and

choose who she claims connection to. In moments where she witnesses "the judgement the coldness the indifference the distanced curiosity [...] all time merges and like rage like pride like acceptance like the refusal to deny I answer Yes. It is true. I am keeper of accounts" (158). Her impulse upon witnessing antisemitism is to embrace her Judaism and all Jewish people.

Brand states that at various points, she longed for a freedom from history. She argues that "Blacks in the Diaspora feel captive despite the patent freedom we experience, despite the fact that we are several hundred years away from the Door of No Return" (Brand 53). Black people do not feel free just because emancipation legally occurred. This history and the ongoing elements of racism and generational trauma do not allow for true freedom to be felt. Though Brand has expressed "frustration with having to continually revisit and revise the archive," as a postcolonial writer, her "work is exquisitely engaged with the archive" (Johnson 150). Despite her anger over the pressures to interact with the archive, she continues to center archival work while complicating the narratives that exist within the colonial archive. At one point in time, Brand "wanted to feel as if history was not destiny," and "wanted some relief from the enclosure of the Door of No Return" but found this to be impossible (170). She wanted to be free from the painful history she descends from, like she wishes to leave the archive behind. She wants the shadow of the Door of No Return to shrink back, but because the present is made from the past, she finds herself unable to find the "relief" she desires.

This idea of destiny is central in "Bashert," as the title itself means inevitable or predestined in Yiddish. In the poem, Klepfisz questions if "there [are] moments in history which cannot be escaped or transcended, but which act like time warps permanently trapping all those who are touched by them?" (152). During this moment she is considering the death of her friend Elza, whose death came years after surviving the Holocaust. The Holocaust did stay with Elza,

and the impacts of her family's deaths and her trauma led to her eventual death. Her death was not necessarily inevitable, but it was tied to this particular time period and traumatic experience. The past weighs heavy on Brand and Klepfisz, but they recognize that separating themselves from it is impossible, and not only is it impossible but there is value in connecting with it. Therefore, instead of being proponents of a return or emigration project, they reconfigure their notions of a better future through creating alternative means of moving forward and finding belonging.

Relationships to Place

A central belief for Brand and Klepfisz is that return is impossible. Brand explains that "the sense of return in the Door of No Return is one of irrecoverable losses of those very things which make returning possible. A place to return to, a way of being, familiar sights or sounds, familiar smells, a welcome perhaps, but a place, welcome or not" (26). The desire itself for return in the Black diasporic context is rooted in what does not exist because of the violence of trafficking and enslavement of their ancestors. It stems from these longings for familiarity and ties to a place to call home. The core requirement of "return" is to have a "place to return to," with familiar aspects and ways of existing. However, because of the historical violence, this possibility has been severed. Later in *A Map,* Brand states "I cannot go back to where I came from. It no longer exists. It should not exist" (92). What does she mean by "It should not exist"? Perhaps because some sort of shift is inevitable. Nothing can stay exactly the same after years, and Brand could not return to Trinidad because both she and it have changed. She could not return to the place in Africa she has descended from because it does not exist in the way it had when her relatives were there. Some prior or authentic version of a place, "The original 'Africa' is no longer there. It too has been transformed" (Hall "Culture" 265). While there is violence and

trauma embedded in the transformation of Africa, the Caribbean, the Americas, and the people connected to them, these effects have occurred and the only way forward is to move forward, not try to go back to something that used to exist. As Hall argues, the people and culture in a place have lived and shifted during the time of absence, it has not stayed static. Keeping in contact with or even visiting a place periodically does not erase that the people who have stayed "have an entirely different experience from mine. Now that gap cannot be filled. You can't 'go home' again." ("The Formation" 192).

Klepfisz recognizes that you cannot return to the exact place you left. In "Warsaw, 1983, *Umschlagplatz*" she reflects on the memorial to Holocaust victims in Warsaw. Looking around, she ponders, that while "This street might have been my home / This street might have been the beginning / of my journey to death" in fact "it was neither" (194). She lives in America now, and is simply "a visitor. / History stops for no one" (194). There is a memorial in honor of those murdered at the Treblinka concentration camp, but upon reading it she says "I do not cry. What's to cry / about? An ordinary street" (193). This poem speaks to Klepfisz's purposeful disconnect between events, experiences, and physical location. Like Brand, she is recognizing that what had existed no longer does. All the deep meaning this place could have held for her, is purely hypothetical. She no longer lives here, this is no longer hers, she is only a visitor. She recognizes that "History stops for no one," not even if one's memory has paused, the real world has continued on. Despite her imagination of Poland being limited to the first three years of her life, she has lived a life during her time spent in Sweden and the United States, and Warsaw — the city and its people — has also been living and evolving. There is no way to go backward, and what allows culture to continue on, is movement. It is vital to understand that "What keeps culture alive is change and not a frozen adherence to what is inevitably an imagined and static

past" (Pas 115). Returning to Hall's theories of cultural identity as myth, it is about "the real power that our governing myths carry to shape our imaginaries, influence our actions, give meaning to our lives, and make sense of our history" ("Thinking" 209).

Connected with this idea of return, Brand and Klepfisz's are critical of national identity, and are not drawn to the territorial impulse of creating or aligning themselves with a particular nation state. They do not ignore the ways in which "Thinking that an identity, self-determination, and a nation-state are what liberate people has led to several ethnic cleansings, genocides, and disasters the world has yet to recover from" (Anderson "The Lingering" 27). They hold both the violence against their people, and the violence that others have faced, in tandem. In Klepfisz's case, she specifically considers how the genocide of Jewish people has been used as a justification of the Palestinian people. Brand and Klepfisz are explicit in asserting themselves against creating new nation-states, or clinging to national identity.

Brand asserts that "National identity is a dance of artificiality, since what it dances must essentially be unchanging [...] We are drawn constantly to the European shape in its definition. A shape, by the way, which obscures its own multiplicity" (74). National identity is created, it is not an inevitable state of being, but a curated dance. This identity must be shaped, and as Brand notes, the "European shape" is the one "we are drawn constantly to." She recognizes the influence of European national identity, a consequence of empire, across the Americas and beyond. As examined earlier, Delany and Herzl's national projects follow this shape. Brand acknowledges how rigid this ideology has to be, and questions the way it "obscures its own multiplicity." She believes that there is more to identity and collective belonging than a carefully crafted national identity. Similarly, Gilroy asks who these articulations serve. He ponders if the "question of where the impulse to formalise and codify elements of our cultural heritage in this

particular pattern comes from" is a useful framing to pursue ("The Black" 33). Who created these rigid boxes of identity and who has deemed them necessary? In order to break free from this grasp the European framework holds, there must be a willingness to address why this is the case and dream beyond it. While addressing the violent implementation of the Euro-American view of national identity, "We will have to free our imaginations to conceive of new forms, configurations, and modalities of life and living; and we will have to risk articulating and uttering them as real, as actual" (Walcott "Towards" 130). Instead of "thinking the solution is the same as what the generation before us said, despite changing conditions" there must be efforts toward new ways of thinking and creating new possibilities (Anderson "The Lingering 31).

While Klepfisz roots her own Jewish identity in diaspora and Yiddish culture, she understands that many Jewish people, particularly since the Holocaust, have aligned themselves with Zionism. A core tenet of Zionism is "that Jews living outside the homeland — in the *galut*/Diaspora — are in exile and can never realize their full Jewishness until they return" ("Di mames" 13). This is not only a Jewish ideology, but one that persists among various diasporic peoples. The conceptualization of migration itself, "suggests we are in places where we do not, supposedly, naturally belong, and therefore migration has to be managed—or so the postenlightenment logic goes" (Walcott "Towards" 121). Like Walcott and Brand, Klepfisz finds this to be limiting. She argues that rooting one's identity in a nation-state and believing that unless they live on that land they "can never realize their full Jewishness" does not constitute being "firmly rooted in [one's] own cultural soil" (14). She firmly believes in "*do'ikayt*/here-ness, the principle that Jews should be and could be full Jews and full citizens of any country," and this guides her critique of national affiliation and that nation-state

identification is the only way forward (Selliot). Both Klepfisz and Brand push against the strict belief that national identity is the identity that will provide a sense of home.

Brand problematizes the idea of belonging in settler colonial nations like Canada. She questions "How do we read these complicated juxtapositions of belonging and not belonging, belonging and intrabelonging" in a place like Canada, where "everyone is deeply interested in belonging" (73). The danger of trying to categorize national identity or other ways of belonging is not realistic in our world where countries are filled with people of various backgrounds and experiences. Specifically about the Caribbean, but applicable to Canada and other places where Black diasporic people live, Hall asserts "Everyone who is here originally belonged somewhere else. Far from being continuous with our pasts, our relation to that history is marked by the most horrendous, violent, abrupt, ruptural breaks" ("Thinking" 210). All people do not live neatly in the places their ancestors have lived forever. The violence of forced removal and displacement of indigenous peoples around the world has led to the globalized and diverse communities that now exist. Attempting to singularly define national identities is a disservice and only continues the ever-existing question of belonging. Brand rejects the call to align with a national identity.

In "Instructions of the dying elder…" Klepfisz engages with Zionist views of Israel, and the realities of various peoples' ties to Palestine. Throughout this poem, she grapples with the way that history never stops, people make meaning for themselves, and how one people is not more entitled to land, meaning, or recognition than another. Directed to the Israeli government, her epigraph explicates that this poem is about the "announcement of plans to build a Museum of Tolerance in Jerusalem on part of the site of The Mamilla Cemetery, a Muslim cemetery reputed to go back to the 7th century" (221). This is an ancient burial place, and she highlights the holy nature of burial sites, how "such ground is forever sacred / not for a god but for ourselves" (221).

Human beings bury their loved ones for themselves, to remember and honor those who are no longer alive. Klepfisz is skeptical of the decision to create a monument at all, but particularly on this specific plot of land. She implores the Israeli government to consider "whether today's new is necessary" and if it is, "then erect your marble monuments museums to your better self / elsewhere / (but may i suggest: perhaps / not at all)" (222). Implied in this suggestion, are a couple of rhetorical questions: Why is your remembrance more important and sacred than those who are connected to this cemetery? And: What purpose does a large monument dedicated to tolerance serve? There is great irony in destroying Muslim graves in order to build a museum dedicated to tolerance.

Furthermore, how is a museum going to ensure tolerance? She urges a change of plans, because "Your tolerance requires no plot no grand design / surely no land" (223). Tolerance cannot exist while actively causing harm. If there is true desire for coexistence, then perhaps a monument, or museum, or nation are not requirements to achieve this. Monuments may help to remember something, but they also often erase pieces of the story. In this case, the lives of those buried in the Mamilla Cemetery, and more broadly, Israeli dispossession and killing of Palestinians. Klepfisz is focused on this specific instance of the museum's construction, but she is pushing at larger questions about the state of Israel and the necessity of land to achieve tolerance. Even in *Old New Land*, Herzl argued that the Jewish state will allow for co-existence both in the New Society and for Jews living elsewhere. A significant factor in pushing for the creation of Israel and the continued defense of it is that Jewish people need a place they can call home, where they will be respected, and where will not face antisemitism and oppression. In this poem, Klepfisz is questioning these assumptions and their validity.

Within this dissection of national identity and belonging that Klepfisz and Brand both partake in, Brand also argues the importance of questioning what is meant by culture. She asserts that we must "reject [...] The overstrong arguments about 'culture,' which are made both by defenders of what is 'Canadian' as well as defenders of what is labelled 'immigrant'" (Brand 71). There is no guarantee of safety by aligning with the nation or fighting to fit into neat boxes. These strict divisions that emphasize an in vs out group are only comforting when one is included, but this ideology requires exclusion to function. One way that Hall articulates this is by emphasizing the power of words and providing a different way to consider labels. He warns "Don't clutch onto the word, but do clutch onto certain ideas about it. The diaspora is a place where traditions operate but are not closed, where the black experience is historically and culturally distinctive but is not the same as it was before" ("Subjects" 338). A better future is only possible by continuously working with people, because the future is rooted in the present. As Walcott proclaims, working toward a different future "should be a radical undoing, so that the new might emerge" ("Towards" 132). Attempting to use the same frameworks of national identity is not going to lead to a future that drastically deviates from the past.

An element of this rejection of national identity for Klepfisz is the fact that living in a place does connect you to it, regardless of how you arrived there or how you feel about it. As she writes in "Bashert," the city she is in at any given moment, "is not simply a geographic place, but a time zone, an era in which I, by my very presence in it, am rooted" (152). She is tied to this place because she is literally there, and she is not only connected to the physical land, but the entire environment of people, culture, and the moment in time. While she holds connections to Judaism and culture that go beyond geographic borders, there is a rootedness that exists in the physical place you are, regardless of the emotional ties or lack thereof you believe you have. She

asserts that “No one simply passes through. History keeps unfolding and demanding a response” (152). Even if she is focused on another place or time, the world keeps “unfolding” around her, and “demanding” her to engage with the present surroundings. She realizes that no matter where she lets herself wander, she is still deeply rooted in the present. When she turns thirty, the age her father was when he died, she realizes that “America is not my place of birth, not even my chosen home. Just a spot where it seemed safe to go to escape certain dangers” (155). Here, Klepfisz is overt in her belief that the physical locations or continents do not dictate who somebody is, or their connections to heritage. Additionally, her experiences in Europe do not conflict with her life in America, nor does she have to claim one over the other. Both places have been part of her life and she has connections to people, life, and history in both. Klepfisz also begins to detangle herself from the notion that where she lives must be her home. She had been so worried about where she belonged and put so much weight onto physical place, but she realizes it does not matter as much as she previously believed. Her explication that this sense of safety “is only temporary,” and she has only “stayed because there is no other place to go” highlights her understanding that being in or moving to another place does not permanently guarantee protection from antisemitism, isolation, or other harm (155).

Other Conceptualizations of Belonging

For Klepfisz and Brand, belonging is not about ties to a particular piece of land, but about something bigger that brings people together. Connection, through shared religion, culture or something else, breeds belonging, and overtakes the necessity of shared origin or ties to land, though this may be a factor. Brand and Klepfisz find belonging or at least a sense of familiarity with other people within their diasporic communities. This familiarity Klepfisz and Brand find is tied to the historical truths, and the ways these have been interpreted. Klepfisz finds this within

Jewish community, and recognizes it even more when she is lacking it, and feeling isolated. Moving to Chicago, it is her "first time away from a Jewish neighborhood, Jewish friends" since migrating to the United States, and it leaves her "isolated, baffled at how to make a place for myself in this larger, gentile world which I have entered" ("Bashert" 150). Her entire life, the only constant has been being surrounded by other Jewish people. There has been shared history, shared values, shared traditions, and now she is leaving her specific community behind. This unfamiliarity she feels at first is disconcerting, and something she has to work through as she navigates her life in Chicago. Brand also acknowledges the connections she feels with others who are part of the Black diaspora. While on a bus, she notes that "The bus is full, but there are really only four of us on it" (Brand 223). This use of first person plural pronouns positions this group of four, Brand and three others, as a group. What she means is that there are only four Black people on this bus, including herself, and there is a deep connection they have because of this shared identity. In this moment, the rest of the bus could be completely devoid of people, and it would have the same impact for her.

Another aspect of belonging is the shared histories of violence. Brand highlights a conversation with her friend Marlene, reflecting on the American invasion of Grenada. She asks "Marlene, did we, ah, did you go crazy after? Did you have trouble with life?" (Brand 158). This questioning leads Brand to explain her experience during this invasion and the stress and trauma she experienced. At the end of this section, she repeats the question, this time with Marlene's answer: "Yes" (171). The long-term impact on the individuals who are part of the Black diaspora, who have ancestors who were part of the transatlantic slave trade, and or have experienced violence themselves, are tied together with this shared experience. These histories are violent, but there is an element of comfort in knowing someone else understands it.

While shared culture and history are factors that invite belonging, Brand and Klepfisz find connections beyond borders of identity. For Klepfisz, allowing herself to find presence in her present enables her to make other connections. In "Bashert," she discusses the grief of the death of her friend Elza, however, as she begins to heal, her perspective shifts. "I find myself more and more grounded in my present life [...] I begin to perceive the world around me. I develop perspective" (152). Her grief had stopped her from recognizing her current situation, she was rooted in the past and unable to look beyond her memories. But as she begins to heal, she starts to recognize where she is now. Klepfisz considers how "the heritage of one continent," Europe, holds her birth, the Warsaw Uprising, the Holocaust, and her father's death (153). On the other hand, "the heritage of the other continent," America involves her navigating her role as a white Jewish teacher to Black and Puerto Rican students (153). In relation to her understanding of *do'ikayt*/here-ness, she believes in the importance of feeling connected to culture and community. She writes, "I believe that only when we ourselves are firmly rooted in our own cultural soil do we understand the commitment of others to their cultures" ("Secular" 44). Klepfisz believes having a strong sense of culture and community allows people to extend their understanding of other people's connections to their cultures. There are ties here as she begins navigating the complexities of identity, as well as the past and present. Her past has shaped her, but now she is navigating the ways in which other pasts have influenced her present context. She believes that our "energies must be directed towards holding on to the past in such a way that it is not an event apart from our everyday life, but rather is intertwined in the present and future" ("45th Anniversary" 4). The histories that led to her teaching in Chicago coincide with the histories of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, and Spain's colonization and the United States' continued colonization of Puerto Rico. This interaction between her and her students, is an

interaction of various diasporas. Klepfisz does not shy away from the nuances of privilege and positionality, and she recognizes that time can make room for the building of connections.

Both Brand and Klepfisz are wary of believing shared identity or nationality is the only way they can find belonging. Brand explicitly brings in multiple moments of this familiarity with people who are not part of the Black diaspora. There is an aspect of connection for people who have been victims of, or impacted by, empire. She draws parallels between the treatment of various peoples, from the Maori in New Zealand to Jews in Nazi Germany, and her experiences as a Black person in Canada (Brand 82-4). She claims that people who have been victims of oppression and violence share histories, even if they are from disparate parts of the world, and might still live in vastly different places. In a conversation with a few Maori people, Brand claims "We laugh in recognition, we laugh like old friends, like people who live in the same country" (82). Despite the fact that they are not old friends nor do they live in the same country, there is an element of recognition, familiarity, and connection. Brand does not see the world as disconnected or peoples as entirely discrete. Throughout the text she is sure to emphasize that even though there is familiarity with other members of the Black diaspora, all people, especially marginalized peoples, have more in common than not.

Conclusion

Brand and Klepfisz implore their readers to understand the significance of the past and the present. It is a problem to only remain rooted in the past, but it is also impossible to fully disentangle oneself from it. Brand states that "one is born into history, one isn't born into a void," while Klepfisz explains that "we do not mourn in a vacuum" (Brand 84; Klepfisz "45th Anniversary" 5). They both work through their own understandings of the world and their places within it, emphasizing that the past directly influences the present, but that one must remember

to engage with their surroundings. In the first subsection, I examined how Brand and Klepfisz each deal with the question of their origins and how they grapple with their personal and familial histories of being forcibly uprooted. The subsequent section continued this line of thought to emphasize their belief in the impossibility of any sort of return, and the idea that one can make meaning out of the place they live in currently, even if they have particular ties somewhere else. Both writers struggle with and long for belonging, and the third section aimed to analyze how they find community and solidarity beyond territorial ties.

For the two writers, there is no ideal past or place to return to. They recognize that this desire is rooted in loss and painful histories, but this desire cannot make something reemerge that no longer exists. Their acceptance, or at least consciousness of diaspora and of globalization means their visioning for the future is rooted in where the world is at, in the moment they are writing. Brand and Klepfisz are fighting for people to become more open about acknowledging the histories that shape the present, and imagining a future beyond the ways in which the world is currently oriented.

Conclusion

This thesis is a critique of early Black and Jewish nationalist movements and an exploration into the ways contemporary scholars and writers have offered other paths toward liberation. While there are strides toward self-determination and respect through emigration in the early works, these projects ignore or diminish the significance of the potential impact on people outside of their imagined national community. Furthermore, working within the framework of nationalism does not actually resolve problems of prejudice and oppression across differences. This alignment with nationalism reinforces a strict sense of belonging that only further entrenches division in the long-term.

Elements of these colonial liberation projects are useful, and they allow us to understand one way that people were working to stand up for their communities and create new structures free from the ones that were oppressing them. Alternatively, Brand and Klepfisz present ways in which liberation movements do not have to take colonial forms. While Delany and Herzl are reacting to their circumstances, Brand and Klepfisz are living in a different context, and are able to question and critically examine earlier liberation tactics. They assert that resistance to colonialism cannot take the same form as the methodology of oppression. Furthermore, they look to make changes in the places in which they live, instead of abandoning the place and people entirely.

Throughout this thesis, I examined the similarities and divergences between politics of diaspora and nationalism in Black and Jewish literary texts. The introduction provided context for theories of diaspora and nationalism, while the body chapters provided context on each author and delved into the ways they engage with diaspora and nationalism within their work. Chapters one and two mirrored each other to emphasize the parallels between Delany and Herzl's

novels, while noting the divergences of context, time, and perspectives. Chapter three analyzed Brand and Klepfisz's works in direct conversation with one another, accounting for their shared timeframe and differing experiences.

The literary works examined in this thesis underscore how memories of the past influence imaginings for the future. Delany and Herzl see territory as directly tied to social treatment, and believe that the establishment of a new national territory is the only way to create a future free from oppression. They are looking to places beyond the location where they are currently, drawing on Euro-American notions of Enlightenment, progress, and strength to justify their colonial and national reasoning. Parts of these arguments include an idea of returning to a land or continent that their people belonged to at an earlier time in history. Alternatively, Brand and Klepfisz are living in the aftermath of these histories and national projects, as well as the failures of these projects to create true equality. They use not only the histories of chattel slavery and violent antisemitism, but the histories of the movements to change these prejudices to reimagine futures without oppression. They are not, however, trying to return to lands that their ancestors came from in their plans or leave to establish something new. As Brand explicates through the metaphor of the Door of No Return, a return to some unchanged origin point is not possible. Brand and Klepfisz reject the romanticization of return and the possibility of it, recognizing how these factors can lead to catastrophic results like genocide. A key framing difference between these four writers is that Delany and Herzl are focused on freedom from oppression, while Brand and Klepfisz are working toward a future where people feel like they belong. Furthermore, Delany and Herzl believe that they must leave the place where they are in order to achieve this goal while Brand and Klepfisz are determined to make change in the places where they are, from the places where they are.

The role of gender, specifically the divergence of masculinist vs feminist perspectives shape key differences in the early works vs the contemporary ones. While the masculine callings of nationalism and colonial projects greatly appeal to Delany and Herzl, Brand and Klepfisz are wary of it. Delany and Herzl are attempting to use the structures of hetero-patriarchal Euro-American nations to free their respective communities from oppression. They believe that nationhood is the way to garner respect and safety, and attribute the violence they face to living within diaspora and existing as a minority and marginalized community within a larger one. Brand and Klepfisz instead learn from the ideologies of Delany and Herzl. Their personal identities as lesbian women, and their contexts encourage them to look beyond the hierarchical systems that exist that harm them in various ways. Instead of attributing horrible histories to diaspora itself, Brand and Klepfisz reconsider notions of diaspora through feminist and queer lenses that are more expansive, creating space for them to imagine a better future without eradicating diasporic life or establishing a new nation.

There are many important related topics and debates that this thesis does not delve into, leaving exciting possibilities for future research, but I wanted to highlight a couple of them. First, there is much more to analyze within Black and Jewish nationalist movements, including the evolutions of them from these original thinkers to the present day. Even within Delany and Herzl's lifetimes, their perspectives shifted on various elements of their ideology. How have their ideas been followed, adapted, and co-opted by nationalist thinkers who have come after them? How do Delany's ideas align or diverge from other Black nationalist thinkers in the 20th century? How have Herzl's original ideas in *The Jewish State* and *Old New Land* been embraced or rejected in the state of Israel post-1948? Second, as discussed in this thesis, gender is a significant component in the nationalist ideologies. How have women nationalists approached

these movements? How central is gender and gender norms in influencing later nationalist leaders? How much of a role does gender identity play vs broader understandings of gender and gender roles? How have these values shifted over time and how evident is this within nationalist literatures?

Third, there is a significant time jump between the primary texts that I am examining, and there is more to look into related to the evolution of both nationalist and diasporist politics in Black and Jewish Literatures from the 19th century to today. Finally, there are those who are both Black and Jewish, who are part of both of these diasporas. What do these intersections look like? How do these intersections of identity influence understandings of diaspora and belonging? Third, though it engages with territorial claims and settler colonialism, this thesis does not deeply engage with Indigenous scholarship and studies. There are many ways to engage with Indigenous studies in this work, particularly with Brand and Klepfisz as they live on Turtle Island, to consider how an Indigenous perspective might shift or expand their understandings of diaspora, home, return, and belonging.

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