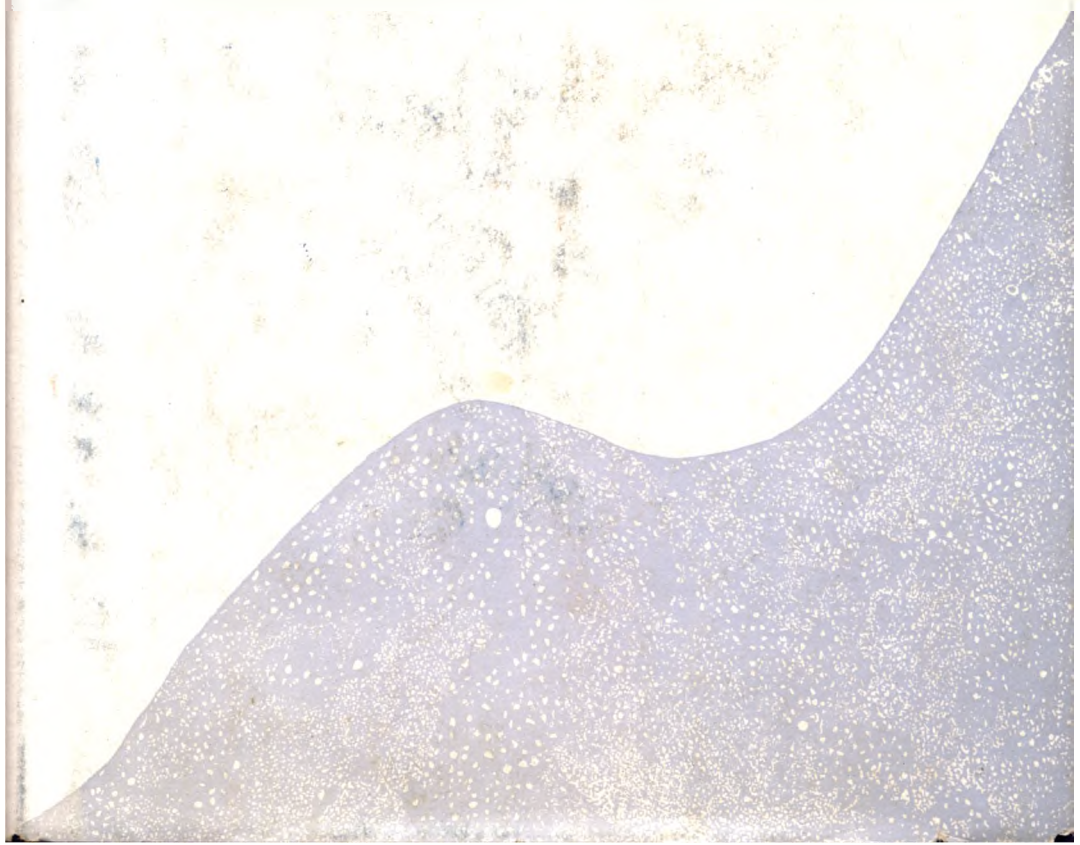


TWO FRIENDS

Menke Katz & Harry Smith



\$6.50

In this unique book, these accomplished poets have created an ongoing dialectic as their poems respond to each other on at least 57 subjects. In free, formal and sometimes prose poetry, they range from the nature of God and Creation to discussions on vegetarianism. Menke may begin a dispute on the best wine to drink by writing a formal poem, and Harry will rebut with a formal variation. Or Harry may propose a challenge: 'Menke, let's write about whores.'

Menke Katz, editor of *Bitterroot* and author of ten books of poetry in Yiddish and three in English, has doctorates in both theology and modern poetry. Harry Smith, publisher of *The Smith* and author of six volumes of poetry, was expelled from college for issuing a declaration of independence.

Humor, insight and friendship tie their varied speculations into a complex, rich unity of life and art. Whether the issue is small or large, *Two Friends* makes it a rewarding and original experience—a tribute to poetry and friendship with eternal L'CHAIMS.



TWO FRIENDS

Menke Katz & Harry Smith

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LISA SMITH

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The World of Old Abe received the Stephen Vincent Benet Award.

TWO FRIENDS

Menke is a Jew from Michalishek, an island village on Lithuania's Viliya River, a place of forest legends and folk who called a man Stranger if his forebears had been there only a century or two.

Harry is a typical American mongrel, born in New York City, of mainly German & Irish stock, seasoned with English & Native American.

Menke is a Yiddishist who is also at home in English, Aramaic and Hebrew.

Harry is still trying to master English.

Menke has doctorates in both theology and modern poetry.

Harry was expelled from college for authoring a declaration of independence, causing his dormitory to secede from the university government because of taxation without representation.

Menke is a cabalist.

Harry is a skeptic.

Menke believes that God keeps the world for thirty-six people.
Harry believes in the infinite potential of everyman.

Menke looks like an agile old satyr or an ageless warlock.
Harry is often compared to Falstaff, Orson Welles and Zeus.

Menke is an ethical vegetarian.

Harry is a fisherman.

Menke is over seventy years.

Harry is a generation younger.

Both are poets, and editors of little magazines.

Menke's is *Bitterroot*.

Harry's is *The Smith*.

Both live forever while they live.

Both are brandless mystics.

With L'CHAIMS over a decade ago they began a literary discourse that cannot end.

Sometimes they reach common ground by very different approaches.

Sometimes they debate mightily in kindred forms on wine, women, food and Creation, to mention a few of their omnivorous concerns.

Currently they are perfecting an escape from Death.

A FRIEND AND A FRIEND

Harry, if a thousand and one acquaintances who gather
flockwise are less than one friend, how many are a friend and
a friend? If there is more wonder in one handshake than
in the hanging gardens of Babylon, how much
wonder, in a toast clicking two cups of wine?
If in one hour the earth is younger by
one circuit of the sun, how near are
we to the first dawn, to Adam
before Eve shed her first tear,
before the cherubim
turned the flaming sword
to keep us far
from the tree
of life.

ON THE TABLE

I have never cared much about furniture. A man needs only one chair to sit on, I read while an impressionable youth, sampling the wisdom of Epicurus, whose profound materialism proved not to be the garden of hedonism which I had expected. Never since, at least, have I owned ambition bound up in such objects, and in our shack in a rocky island wilderness off the Northeast coast of Maine, we actually exist at that ideal: five plain, wooden chairs for a family of five.

Three chairs were in the kitchen when we came; we discovered the others in the ruins of other fishing camps on the island. The chair which is 'mine'—that is, most often used by me, because we both are largest—lacked a seat when we found it. I used unmatching boards to repair it, clumsily but serviceably. Except for that, it is beautiful, a casually graceful structure of bleached poles from the sea, the high back being ribbed with lobstertrap slats between the two curved driftwood poles that also form the rear legs, every piece matching closely enough for function, yet showing various gentle asymmetry in line and thickness. I enjoy its being, finding it more useful and truly more beautiful than artifacts from noble wood meticulously worked by masters. Perhaps it is, but of course I have never thought much about other chairs.

My wife finds a more important excellence in the two tiny tables built by our predecessors, the lobstermen. The tiny kitchen is much like a ship's galley, for the same space must serve a variety of functions. Thus, one table folds flat up onto the wall, where it becomes a cabinet door; the other table hides (under a trap-door) a tiny porcelain sink, without faucets, of course, but with a drainpipe which exits mysteriously underground. We marvel at the ideal utility of these rude things.

While living in this way, we often say our lives are obviously easier with fewer objects. Yet, perhaps due to the innate perversity of human beings, we also live in the city, among many objects which, whatever their particular uses for complex activity, certainly cause trouble in care and repair.

This is part of the reason why I never acquired the one table that I actively wished to possess. It was a dinner table homemade in Revolutionary times, rectangular and rather small and somehow perfect in its simple proportions—unmarred, golden and glowing. Somehow one knew that it had been respected and loved. Its present owner was an old lady in Vermont who was moving from her home to live with relatives. She was sympathetic to a young couple and would have sold it for very little money. Nonetheless, we decided that we probably would not have cared for it as well as it had been cared for. We thought the next young couple might be its right owner. We simply were not prepared to care for it. In other circumstances, we might have decided differently, but besides the necessary, unaccustomed care—the caution and the waxing, we envisioned the lusty bapping by our unborn first child. It did not seem that the table would be in harmony with our lives, or vice versa. It seemed a wrong use for a thing that could be good and beautiful for centuries. We would do better with the table we had, an unremarkable thing which could cause no worry.

My friend, Menke, has a mystic view of tables. At this moment, he is writing a poem to the wonders of the table: how it can become an island providing snug harbor for friends, an ideal retreat, a real utopia out of time, with intimations of God, as we sit at an old round table in the good restaurant Suerken's where old New York endures and the ribald ancient waiter, Moishe, banters in many languages.

All this truth is not a table.

A CHAT AROUND THE TABLE

1/*To Harry*

A chat
around the
table is the
oldest voyage on
earth, since winds were trains, clouds—
boats, Jonah's whale, the first sub
marine on its maiden trip to
torpedo the sins of Nineveh.
O traveling with you through time and space,
at a cup of coffee, we reach the end of
grief. I see a prison, vision-struck turn into
a castle where my enchanted love will dream of me
a thousand years, until I come to wake her with a kiss
and lead her to the island of our neverland : our table.

2/*Evening*

Evening.
The sun rolls
under wheels as
the trodden face of
a mugged Hercules. The
last rays are angels, blind with
smoke. The ill-lit sun is on sale
in all windows like an apple of
Sodom. Night. Knife-jawed rapists see every
woman : a stripped bride, raped on a garbage heap,
their shadows sly through back streets against frightened stars.

A suspicious hand resembles the serpent which lured
Mother Eve under the forbidden tree. Death on the streets is
a gun in God's image, we, at our table, are eternal,
death is the lie of the ages, though the summer skies of my
childhood will ever remind of blue murder. I learned from
wise wolves to shun light, to hide in dens of solitude.
I saw dead soldiers fear the uniformed arch fiends
(spick and span as polished evil, with eyes fierce
as bulldog ants) may command the dead to
die again, if they do not rise to
salute the emperor of graves.
I see the tree, bred across
the street, the roots eating
stones, bowing here to
Satan: a maimed
memory
of mine.

3/Daydream

I day
dream: my tough
grandfathers dare
to escape heaven,
to join our table, our
private wonderworld, to touch
again the exciting sins of
the earth, to tell us how lonely God
is among the sacred bores of heaven.
Lechaim to my ghostless ancestors (my
own skull, dream, marrow) who fought giants in legends.
They hear New York, the conqueror of ennui shouting
triumph against the elite of the souls, fat with bliss, armed
with the humdrum of stiff virtue, the holy scum of Eden.

4/*Babel*

An air

plane cleaves the
steel nerves of the
skies. I see New York,
climbing against the wrath
of God : a falling Babel.
I see the Empire State Building,
lie at rest, like a giant relic
reminiscing of peoples, towers in
cloudlands. I see America move to Mars,
leaving you and me, at our table, our highest
planet, touring through the Mays and Septembers of far
away tomorrow, listening to poems which yet un
born poets will write of our bygone twentieth century.

5/*Dreamsmith*

O the

farthest day

is near, with you

at the table, O

dreamsmith ! O to span from

century to century,

as from street to street, to hear the

first word of God, to shake hands with dust-

born Adam garland the figleaves which hid

nude Eve's birthflower then on to the end of

life, waving good-day to the last man on earth, to

the last angel in heaven, to see God uproot the

tree of life, to build the last table, in Eden, to chat

with you and me and the winds of all past and future bygoners.

6/*A Snowflake*

O a snowflake is the luckiest of all God's creations.
Its life, a moment of splendor, is more infinite than
all dead planets. I see snowflakes and cherubs flying
wing in wing and think of the steps of the lovers :
Hero and Leander, on a seabank, swept
by the waves of a lonely sea. Let us
learn from a snowflake to see death like
birth—all wonder, let us learn to
be kind even to dung, to
live, love and die like a
snowflake, leaving for
one another
a kiss or
a tear.

7/*On grief*

O our
table, a
loved pal, listened
years to our glowing
chat, shared the ecstasy
of every trance; o when it
will fall beyond repair, its death
will grieve us more than the loss of a
dull president, a pompous general :
a medaled slaughterer; dead or alive they
are brothers in arms with the fiends of the cosmos
who will invade the moon to hail doom on earth, to change
every star into the eye of a ghou, adhere to all
who fameflower dead soldiers, as they mint their souls into gold.

8/*Prayer Of An Old Table*

God of inanimate worlds, I pray to you in the ruins
of old age, duck legged, with a slab of trembling wood. I
fear the garbage-undertaker more than the angel
of death. I long for the saw to grind me into
sawdust so that I may stuff with life a dead
doll—the queen of mute children, or to be
scattered into a whirlwind like a
prayer for the cursed, the handsome
and the doomed. O condemned to
fire, dust, nothingness, I
know the doomed will be
here until the
last sunset
on earth.

—M.

LETTER TO GOD

Dear God,

Harry Smith here.

Trying to imagine us face - to - face. Faces . . . Yes, I have some words for you, and I regret the necessity of this rather formal method of address. Naturally I wonder if this message will arrive over the long distance, and if you will be there and read it if you're there and answer if you read it. I'm told you're kept busy, and I know you're sent many special requests and junk solicitations. Once, however, I received a reply from the President of the United States of America, who is very busy also.

I wish you would state your opinion on a dispute I am having with my friend Menke, who believes in a world without jails. I contend his ideal may be contrary to your intentions, as you are known as the great advocate of Law & Order. You allegedly endowed man with Free Will for good or evil, to strive for beatitude with the inalienable ability to commit mayhem and murder. If this was your design, I think you must have anticipated jails, or if not, you should have.

Of course, an incorrect design decision by you would explain many things and is, in fact, it occurs to me, implied in the ancient texts. If the reports are reliable, Adam and Eve displeased and disappointed you; you obviously expected better of them: you did not intend them to acquire knowledge; you said that they became too smart for their own good.

'as Gods . . . ' Does that mean I am as intelligent as you? I wonder, too, if intelligence is one of your true attributes, or are you just Being? Certainly I do not believe you are omniscient.

The early writings, likewise, portray you as fallible, jealous and spiteful.

When I was nineteen years old, I raged at Creation, proclaiming I could do a better job in seven hours than you supposedly did in seven days. Now I'm not so sure, yet I wonder if I would do worse.

My friend Menke asks if I would like to found an ideal society on my Maine island wilderness in the sea. We could begin with perhaps one hundred people, he says, or fifty, or even as few as ten, proving that we can live in harmony without laws, without jails.

No, I say, the people would spoil it. I would rather be there with my family alone, and a friend or two only now and then.

Though I sometimes ponder Blake's question about the tiger, I have no large complaints against my fellow creatures, except for man.

So what if we did it, that utopian attempt? What would we prove?—a small band of the chosen, under favorable conditions. What would we be like without food for all?

Even in easydays, I think we would need laws for routine functions: what is to be done with the garbage?

Perhaps Menke would reply that such decisions are simply agreement, but what else is law save general agreement on what can be allowed and how the common welfare can best be served? Thereafter, individual disregard of the consensus leads to conflict that demands resolution (banishment . . . sanctions . . .). Perhaps we think we would need no laws about sexuality. But what if one

of our coterie revealed himself as a pederast. We probably would agree that we did not wish to nurture this activity in our little society. Inevitably, also, two men will covet the same woman, or two women the same man.

Most dangerous of all are the Idealists, each in love with his own idea of what should be done. The most ferocious oppression—what zealous butchery!—is forever done in the name of God or good.

So this is your image.

I shall await your response.

GOD ANSWERS A LETTER OF COMPLAINTS

via Menke

Lucky
visitor
on earth, O be
gracious to your days :
the gay or the grim guests.
Learn from the Rose of Sharon,
to live longer in one hour than
the bore in three score and ten Junes. See
a thousand and one wonders in each glimpse,
at your mourning dust as well as at the stars.
Avoid the slow, drab end, meteors fall to show,
only the eternal die in their own splendor. Good,
you speak to me as you would to anyone who had a
beginning and will have an end, you speak the dream of my
dreams.

GOD'S PRAYER TO THE DYING BUTTERFLY

O hear
my prayer,
dying butterfly.
I am envious
Of your nearby, end-all,
leaving the wonder of a
long summer day beyond space, time.
I am weary of omnipresence
keeping vigil of the slow-eyed tortoise,
as well as of the shrewd tongue of the serpent,
weary of the zeal-blind idol who outknees, out
prays the praying mantis. Mine is the prayer of the
limbless lizard, the fragile creature with a broken tail,
the hymn of the cave-cricket which glories life under a stone.

—M.



FIRST LESSON IN DYING (Harry's)

'Where was I before I was born?'

The small boy, his scrawny body crouched next to his grandfather's rocking chair, waited for the answer. The old man leaned back and rocked more vigorously, puffing at his pipe, and looked off the front porch at the wind whelming through the maples.

'T'will be a good storm off the bay any minute.'

The boy watched the old man read the sky.

'Don't you know where I was, Pop?' I am that boy again, five years old, wanting to know.

'You weren't anywhere, Son.'

We heard a flood of wind rushing toward us out of South down the street, treetops bowing in progression. Soon, cool and powerful, it struck our place. Seconds after that windshock, rain reached us, a sudden torrent, splattering onto the porch, blowing onto us. Lightning and thunderclap! Loud and near. Pop stood up, I started for the door into the house. 'Tis nothing to be afraid of. I'm not going in. Just moving out of the wet,' he said, carrying his chair to the back of the porch.

'I must have been somewhere.'

'No, you weren't.'

'Why wasn't I?'

'What makes you ask?'

‘Nothing . . . just wondering . . . seemed like babies must go Someplace, I mean be someplace, before they’re born . . . Isn’t there a place babies can be until their mommies get them?’

‘T’aint that way. Before you were born, you weren’t anywheres, you just weren’t. You weren’t alive yet.’

‘Was I dead?’

‘Not exactly. Couldn’t be dead because you never lived yet. Then your mother and father made you.’

‘Mommy and Daddy made me?’

Grandfather nodded, his gray beard touching his chest; I remember his old brown coarse wool sweater that buttoned in front.

‘Your father and mother both started you, then you were born out of your mother.’

‘How long did it take to make me, Pop?’

‘About nine months, the way it always does.’

‘What did they make me out of? How did they make me?’

‘Flesh . . . Out of their flesh. That’s’—Creak/Crack, branch broke—‘That’s too much for a little shaver like you to understand. You’ll learn all about it soon enough.’

‘When, Pop?’

‘I don’t know just when : when you’re a little bigger.’

We sat without speaking, the old man rocking, the old rocker creaking, the strong fragrant pipe smoke wafting low over the porch in the wind.

‘It’s raining,
It’s pouring,
The old man’s snoring!’

I sang and Pop looked amused.

‘Rain, rain go away,’ I started and Pop interrupted, ‘I like the rain. Nothing I like better than to sit out here on the porch during the thunderstorm.’ I jumped as lightning struck somewhere very near, the thunder shaking the house.

‘It won’t hurt you.’

‘Mommy says it can come in along the electric wires and get you, if you don’t pull out all the plugs.’

‘She oughn’t to be like that, don’t know how many times I told her. She got that from her mother—you never knew her—the whole bunch of them going off to hide in the center room where there wasn’t a window—that was in the railroad flat we used to live in years ago in the city—sometimes even hiding under beds, I tell you—awful silly. Mind your mother, but don’t listen to that kind of foolishness.’

‘I’m not scared of it, Pop.’ I watched the wind work and waited for lightning, feeling mystery and importance in our watch. When the next bolt smote near, I didn’t flinch.

‘Smell that,’ Pop said, breathing deeply.

‘What’s that? It smells funny.’

‘Tis only the smell from the electricity—the lightning’s a kind o’ electricity ’n changes the air, the oxygen, that’s what we breathe, and a bit of it changes to ozone, that’s what we’re smelling ’n I always like it.’

‘Like my Lionel trains, the way they smell sometimes.’

‘Sure, the very same. Look’t the big branch snapped off down the road apiece. Looks like we have a squall.’

‘What’s a squall, Pop?’

‘Oh, this, a sudden sea storm with high winds. I’ve ridden out many a squall at sea. Tis nothing to be afraid of here.’

‘Tell me about it, Pop, about the storms you’—Bang! the world trembled. Pop saw me flinch. ‘I’m not scared of it anymore, Pop.’

‘You’ve got the right idea now. Well, let me see . . . Once aboard a cachelot, a whaling ship, we ran three days before a gale, the seas thrice as high as our ship, and I swore I’d never go sailing again, but I did. I’d say that seemed the worst alright, though I saw as bad or worse later on.’

‘Is a gale the worst kind of storm?’

‘Oh no. Of course it can be about as bad as any. The hurricanes out of the Gulf of Mexico are real bad, they say. I never saw one as bad as they get. And the Pacific storms, the typhoons, grow to be the biggest. We just caught the edge of one, but the mast was ripped off the schooner.’

‘Was that one of the times you were shipwrecked, Pop?’

‘No.’

‘Tell me about the times you were shipwrecked.’

‘Not much to tell.’

‘Please, please!’ I piped, ‘Com’on, Pop.’

‘Nary a pretty story there. Maybe some other time.’

I lapsed into pensiveness. Pop was always like that : he’d never talk much about the sea, and this was the most he’d ever said. Sometimes he’d draw me a picture of a schooner or cachelot and tell me he’d sailed on it, and when I’d ask him to tell me of the voyage, he’d always say no. Once, he’d confirmed that he’d been around the world five or six times, which sounded grand, but then he’d countered my worship : ‘Forget about it, you dasn’t do what I did. You’ll be better off without it. I didn’t know any better when I was young.’ But I wanted it, I wanted to know, and I still do. No one knew much about what had happened to him, except that he’d been Shanghied off to sea when he was fourteen yet had stayed away for eleven years, jumped ship once in Singapore, been shipwrecked twice. The second shipwreck had happened in the cold reaches of the South Seas, my mother had told me, and only Pop and one other sailor were found alive, after drifting for weeks in a lifeboat. Pop had spent six months in a hospital in San Francisco—frostbite, lost some toes, which is why he walked with a cane. I never knew how many toes. We never saw him barefoot.

The old man, seeing my disappointment, told me with sad kindness, ‘Oh, I’d tell you if I could. Believe me, t’would just give you bad dreams.’

'No, it wouldn't, Pop. I promise!' Even as I said it, I knew my protests wouldn't sway him. We watched the rain again. I thought of mysteries, returning to birth and death.

'Am I going to die, Pop?'

'Everybody dies.' He smiled. 'But your whole life is still ahead of you. Years and years and years, a very long time before you have to think of it. Plenty o' time for those thoughts later on, when you're as close as I am.'

'Do you wanna die, Pop?'

'Nope. I enjoy living but I've lived a long time.'

'Are you scared of dying'.

He chuckled. 'You oughtn't be scared of it—t'aint right. I've lived my life. Someday it'll run out, that's all.'

'Was people always in the world, Pop?'

'Nope, they came later. Wasn't always a world either. Not like the one we have here now anyhow.'

'Did you know the first people, Pop?'

He laughed again and coughed, relit his pipe and coughed again, spat expertly off the porch, into the bushes. Wheezing, he resumed sucking-in on his pipe. 'Tobacco's a nasty habit, I wish I never started. Don't bother with it when you grow up.'

'Who were the first people, Pop?'

'Nobody knows. People've been in this world a long, long time, before ever I was born. For thousands 'n thousands of years and more, people have been born and die and their children and their children's children, and no one knows how many. Tis a big world, Boy, and people are being born right now and people are dying, and t'will keep on that way thousands and millions o' years after you and me.'

And I knew awe. I had never imagined the world existing without me, before me and beyond : the Generations . . .

It was much for me and soon forgotten when lightning struck the great oak behind the Earp's farmhouse.

That evening, after dinner at Pop's house, I remember the scene in the living room. Pop had gone upstairs to read. Uncle George dozed in his easy chair. Aunt Lillie and my mother chatted. Eleanore, my cousin who was six months and three days older than I, was dancing by herself all around the room as a zippy fox trot played on the Victrola. She pirouetted energetically and often, revealing holes high on her brown stockings, and I found the holes oddly annoying. 'Holes in her stockings, holes in her stockings,' I chanted finally, but she only stuck her tongue out at me and continued her dance, her dress swirling, and I saw her white underpants. How silly she was! I thought as I tried to sit like a grownup, watching: what did she know about stuff like lightning or dying? I thought again of generations and saw their passage in a highspeed blur—babies popping into the world and growing and grown and old people just disappearing . . . My own babies, my own leaving. I told myself Pop wasn't scared of dying as tears welled anyhow and spilled few and quietly at first, so no one noticed for a while, but soon I was sobbing.

**'I wonder what's gotten into him : what's the matter with you ?'
my mother asked.**

**When I could finally slow the sobbing, I yelled, 'No fair ! I don't
wanna die.'**

FIRST LESSON IN DYING (Menke's)

1

I saw a wounded fly call, in vain, for help to Beelzebub :
lord of flies. In its buzz, I heard the cry of all anguished
creatures. Tired of slow dying, wrapped in the ailing light
of the late dusk, I saw it knock its head before
me to teach me how to reach the end and end.
I saw it maim its wings, joints, butt, blind its
eyes, pull its horns, tear its tail; left of
it was a crooked ghost. I heard
in its zoom, every newborn
being cry for its end.
I saw every dawn
haunted by the
unknown, end
less night.

2

I learned from the last zoom of the dying fly the language which
only dust can understand. I saw God, in mercy for
his creation, turn the twilight on all windowpanes
into gateways to Eden. O fly of my sad
childhood, you came to me, my hate-proof friend, to
divine that grief will be here until the
last star will fall, when you—all darkness
will rule this non-existent world :
reminiscent nothingness.
Still left of you is the
Kaddish I said as
if over a
self-killed elf.
Amen.

GOD & THE FLY & HARRY

What God would be, Man should be

Would God kill a fly?

—Not wantonly,

but would God kill a fly at His Feed?

Could His Benevolence fade?

Would He let it sup in His Teacup?

Should He treat it like a puppy?

Why not? Make a pet of it,

Put out a wee dish of His Tidbits?

What is the life of a fly?

Suppose His Fly

buzzed Him merrily

cavorting in & out of His Great Ear

continuously thither

buzzing in & out & all about,

would He dither, blither & blast it?

Are all flies damned to His Hell?

Doomed to The Devil, poor devils?

Or does Heaven have flies?

PRAYER TO A SELF-DOOMED STRANGER

When I
reach the end,
on my way to
endlessness O give
me strength, self-doomed stranger,
to stray as a wandering
spider, in search of my only
prey—death, in the wonderworlds of my
city, away from the zealous care of
my loved ones, with the fear of my nearby end
in their eyes, tears dazzling like chips of smashed mirrors.
I am your cursed admirer, brothered stranger; like you
I shall defraud my fate, safe from the grief of a last kiss,
to meet death alone, in the private dusk of a lonely room,
in old New York, where I may hear a tree, tired of tireless howls,
wounded by stone snipers, crying havoc to the dull hordes;
or to welcome death in the solitude of our old
forest house as I listen to the streams rushing
to the truth of all truths : to nowhere, to hear
the Spring peepers eulogize my first and
last hour on earth, when wild buds change the
dimensions of their biased weed-
flowers : the condemned grace queens :
when sugar maples start
their run of sap to
sweeten the dust,
beyond the
last dawn.

—M.

ON GOD'S CHILDREN

Harry,
the knife is
here not even
to cut the throat of
a flea. I learned on Pig
Street that baby pigs are the
favorite pets of angels that
knives are here to break bread with all God's
children, such as the white little goat who
promised almonds and raisins in songs of my
mother when she lulled me to sleep, in the wooden
cradle, in the wistful village of Michalishek.

Harry,
the knife is
here only to
strip nude the fruits from
the trees of Eden. (I
heard a weary wanderer
saying in the shade of a tree :
all trees are from Eden.) Mine is the
fire (not the flesh) of the bull—the champion
lover. Let us drink no toast to life with the
hunter, Satan's sportsman, with hands of death. O let
us not pollute with blood the wine of heaven and earth.



ON EARTH'S CHILDREN

Menke,
the flea is
here to eat dog,
thee or me. Even
Quakers kill for comfort
or for meat. The baby pig,
favorite pet of the children,
slow-dies, throat-slit, for the new year's feast.
The farm and forest children learn early
how life is busy with death always; this is
the way : the fact of the flea—creatures visible
and invisible (the lion and his parasites).

Menke,
the knife was
invented to
strip the flesh from bone.
The trees of Eden need
no knives to pare the ready
fruit. People in that ancient shade
broke bread, and spared the precious knife for
the hide of the bull (the shocked bull thought it
neither cruel nor kind). Let us toast life frankly—
the handsome hunter and the yucca eater—for
oyster and artichoke are equal under its law.



LET US SWITCH TO RED WINE, HARRY

Red wine
is autumn
in full splendor
which is all mine : the
windfall of the deep-red
grape, the bronze of ashtrees, the
scarlet of bunchberries, the gold
of rock maples. Lilith, the whore of
my dreams will come to drink the red wine of
my last sunset. Drunk as Lot, she will flirt with
God, will rape the angels who will open for me
the gates of Sheol, welcome me to my private hell.
Red wines are woodnymphs, in late dusk, color-crazed, dancing
through
the autumns of tomorrow, drinking lechaim to two friends.

I'LL KEEP TO WHITE WINE, MENKE

White wine
is Maytime
in full sunshine
exciting the vine,
sweetwind of the young green
pollening in concerto
the gentle woodwind clarity
of mere being. Pan and the satyrs,
nymphs and wild spirits drink the white wine of
all first mating, sweeter than the red wine of
Dionysus or the whore of dreams, yet as strong
and like a quality of sun, yellow mildly, re-
freshing and renewing as spring water in a cold heath,
draught of morning when our tomorrows always promise spring.

LET US SWITCH TO WHITE WINE, HARRY

White wine
reminds of
the first light
Adam saw, the light
of God's first creation :
Genesis. O scent in white
wine the lily of the valley,
the fairest of women : Shulamith,
her lover sleeping between her breasts, drunk
with self. White wine caused my lips to speak in a
dream to my bride with wine-white linen for our first night.

Mine is
the light of
white wine, the wave
of the white flag of
truce, peace, surrender : the
victory of foe and friend.
White wine is bright as the white lie,
to shun the devil of tedium,
the wine amorous as my long white hair.
White wine : all my moondowns where angels make love.

LET'S DRINK RED TODAY, MENKE

Okay,
red today !
L'chaim ! To fall !
Face of aging fall—
deep red slow chill fire
creasing the leaves of our lives . . .
in all life this darkest burning.
Stoke the life fire with more wine, friend ;
greet old melancholy's mortal glories.
In this red shift of mind, the human years re-
cede into godtime, unwitnessed generations
of the stars, measured by our brave frail vessels chiming
as we voyage through Eternity, nectar of life on the tongue,
and the cosmos condensing to a glass of wine.

ON HISTORY

What is history,
if not a sea maniac,
who counts each swept wave?

—*M.*

HISTORY

History is lives;
I am history.
I am all lives :
I am the life,
before the man.
I am the gods,
before Elohim.
I am Jehovah,
before the Christ.
Before Abraham was,
I am.
I am universe.
I am small beneath the stars.

—*H.*

MIDSUMMER

The days tarry with the lazy chatter
of smart bumpkins, of cartoon characters,
echo with the gag of the dull, with the
silly laugh of giddy girls, like dwarf cherries.
Even the birds are bored in Ker-honk-son.
The spots of the woodthrush are like numb tears.
The minor poets of the birds end their song
in midsummer, poetasters sing in
season only. The robin sings best in June
when singing is at the height of fashion.
Only the wren, the true poet of the birds,
declines to retire as nature's pensioner.
The songsmith shapes a hymn out of every chore.
When the last fledglings fledge, he builds a nest for
the sake of building, loving, singing, even
in Ker-honk-son because build, love, sing he must.
—M.

TO THE NEW YORKER

O fine-vested gentleman New Yorker
(Tailored woman? Sometimes it's hard to tell—)
Press-dressed, Ivy-educated hawker
Of garments and gimmicks (that, you do well—)
Court jester for the kings of cosmetics,
Fool for the princes of advertising,
O arbiter of effete esthetics,
The Weakly Magazine, of Thee I Sing.
O Magazine of the narrow shoulders,
Caviar cannot sustain life, for long.
Look! You are composed of stuff that moulders.
Your ear is for death, you hear no life song.

When you are sunken past the gain or loss,
The world shall know, through me, the years with moss.

—H.



ON A LOVER OF FLOWERS

The old princess is in love with flowers.
The jasmine amuse her as fragrant elves,
the buds are rain-scented with rare perfumes,
bow blessings to her for their noble birth.

Flowers are trained, comedian cherubs.
The columbines are clowns in a gold pot.
The roses womb their stems, lick their own fire,
hug each other like blushing lesbians.

No dew will kiss the stingy earth in pot,
each pot is soothing as a cozy jail.
Orphans of the fields, godless flowers pray :
God, give us the pride of the piercing thorn.
—*M.*

CHIAROSCURO

Menke, I have been,
as in a polite painting, placed;
I stroll expensive gardens
the tough starlings seem to mock.

Menke, I have seen
through exquisite imported boughs,
my own transparent shadow
on the orchestrated spring.

SPRING-SPRUNG

.....:Quick
in greenspring i
unlock the hours
BLOOM the winding
watch of flowers
))))))
waters
wildly
i Harry
BOOM
unlock::::: Spring

MY FATHER HEERSHE DOVID
USED TO SAY

On Old and Young

Fools are old at birth, old is the laughter
of the young bore and the voice of the toad.
Old is the gossip of the cricket, the
tattle of the telltale, the piping crow.
Old is Mammon who sees the stars diving
into busy rivers to mint rare coins.

Young are the kisses of the Song of Songs.
Young was my grandfather's last rising dream,
as he took death out of his lucky bag,
listened to the labored wind, bread scented,
operating the sails of his old mill,
grinding the ripe grain into sated flour;
blessing with the townfolk the new moon.
Young is the oldest gold of every dawn.

—*M.*

APRIL

I praise
lengthening days,
early dawns, white evenings and life's ways.

* * *

Spring Fool,
April fooled me !
One daffodil 'n I'm drunk on it !

* * *

Blind babes
grope to my heart
toddlng joy in the Fragrance Garden.
—H.

WILLOW PLACE

No willows weep on Willow Place.
Tough sycamores push out in smokey air,
shading serenities of old houses,
brick-style nostalgent of a quietude
when willows wept on Willow Place.
Rows of carriage lanterns are, as before,
But the lane is thinned to an aisle by cars,
And now weird wailing shrills up and down the street.
Midway, perhaps where willows were,
obtrudes a mammoth building for machines,
incongruous as urban elephants,
bleating with turbines & electric gens,
its trucksize door always open :
Peer into the cavernous Inhuman
pulsating panelbrains, automatic guts
ongrinding independently of men—
whining wheels, the works of the world.
—H.

EATING AN APPLE ON ORCHARD STREET

Apple as I take you in my hand to eat,
yielding so kindly, as if you grew for me,
that I may grind you lusciously with my teeth,—
I am your longing to return to the tree.

You mellow as the immortal rose I promised
my love, in these plucked gardens of Orchard Street.
(I am, like Abraham, an innate bigamist.
Eternity dies, moments are infinite.)

You still blush as a ripe bride, stripped to the skin,
still remember the thriving ache of each floweret.
O nail me forever to guilt, not for the sin
of eating you. Shame-eaten, I bow in regret,

when I think, chosen fruit of Eden, what you
will turn into after I gnaw the last bite,
(You will be again with God—dawn, earth and dew.)
I fear, I may leave sin-black the stained daylight.

The air is furtive with apple-scented deceit.
Vendors smell with the stale grapes of pushcart vines.
Even the sun peddles its gold on Orchard Street.
Furrowed apples of love dream of blossomtime.

—M.

AILANTHUS

Porched, how many tired evenings, I
Watch ailanthus swaying leaves on sky . . .
Why, I ask still, will the tree of cities
Thrive where roses die.
Cinder-sprung, smoke transpiring—
Yet strangely palmlike in the spring,
With simple symmetry, haloed high
The long lush-green psalms upon the twilight
Seas of paradise . . .
Touched, how many tired evenings, men
Snatch wonder from the tree of Brooklyn.
—H.



BITS OF SUN

O my father's house : the proud patch, mortgaged tear,
with the tale-spinners under the humblest tree,
which begged bits of sun on his ice and coal yard.
No birds—full bearded, virile men found solace.
in the genial blight of its shriveled shade.
The carefree chat, the prime sport, rolled as a stream.

O my father's house, bleak as the winter night,
when out of quenched fires slipped in Eden neighbors
and hid in ambush, in the covered mirrors.
The moon went down as an indolent tumor,
in the dull-eyed hicktown, at Passaic River.
Stones knew the mute panic of silenced objects.

The gray street was a legendary snowland.
The tree : frost-rent, each limb—a shroud in the wind.
The urine of sewers was its smarting dew,
gnawing it from heartroot to crown gall alive.
The sole admirer left was the woodchopper.
Hewed down, it was my father's wood nymph again.
—M.

RINKY

Rinky,
not a Saint
Bernard, the dog
wondrous, rescuing
lost travelers, buried
in snowstorms in the Alps of
Switzerland. Rinky, a Brooklyn
dog in the shadow of ailanthus,
the tree of heaven, taught by the gods to
break the teeth of stone-devils in the backyards
of the city. Rinky, simple as the folks in
the neverworlds of the crooked alleys of my gaunt
childhood where the ragged God-sent mystic named every
bitch : sister. He would see you in the forest of
Zaborchi, teaching your first ancestors to
be kind, dove-eyed wolves. I hear you barking
against God for bereaving you of
his image. I see each dawn crown
you as the queen of light. I
hear the wind proclaiming;
No, not man, Rinky
is blessed with the
true image
of God.

—M.



GOD'S LITTLE DOG

Growler
in the air
invisible
prowler behind clouds
snarling darkly closer :
scared Rinky snarls back bravely
defying the Beast of the Sky
that comes rumbling across the ridges . . .
When the hills howl, Rinky sings her answer—
wailing quavering declaration of Dog
to the unknowable beastkings of Creation :
little goddog in the doorway watchkeeps over the rain.

Soaking heat on the midnight hearth sleepy Rinky smiles
at fire Being and magic fire-bringing
and dozes into dream a ki-yi yiping
all round the merry rabbit-go-round
Rinkitink bounds over the greenground—
dreamdigger after woodchucks,
terror of the fieldmice,
finder of Big Bones,
handsomest hound,
true namesake
of God,
Dog.
—H.

OLD FIG TREE

Eve, shamesick, still weaves of leaves her gown,
weary of good and evil, of heaven-crowds.
Stray flocks of sheep still seek Abel in the clouds.
Winds like harps play under the same old fig-tree :
—Come, Adam drive awhile the seraphs away
Drown ! Nude Eve in a dream is the deepest sea.
There is no life or death here, no night or day.
Only seraphim and I—Adam's first kiss,
bone of your bones, mother of all life again.
The spotless sky is a blue humdrum. Ours is
the stream of the cloudland, the splendidous rain.

—*M.*

IN THE WIND AT FIRE ISLAND

Spume—
All day the northeast wind opposite the breakers,
rain half-galed against the southwest sweep
against the southfaced barrier
beach, and mythic shapes are natural—
the wave beings of the ocean
with plumed tresses, the phantom
presences of air, the palpable
spirits of the shore

:mind shapes : but nature engenders mythic shapes.

—H.

GEORGE'S DRAGON

My son, George, subdued the dragon
harnessed to his small red wagon.

My son, my son will mourn his morn;
The dragon is forever born.

—*H.*

ON THE BIRTH OF MY SON

My son, I am so
affluent with beginning
that if I die now
God will see me as first light
and he will say : 'It is good'
—*M.*

HARRY'S WHORE SONG

They offered me a Chinese whore,
I said, 'My wife's worth waiting for;
She's as good as any Chinese whore.'

'Spicy as the Ceylon shore!
Ah, home to me is not a bore!
Take away that lovely yellow whore.'

They offered me an Afri-whore,
sleek as sin and wild as more,
dark as night at Congo's darkest core.

I said, 'To me my wife is more,
she loves me better than a whore,
and she's as wild as any sleek black whore,'

They offered me an A-rab whore.
I said, 'My wife's worth waiting for.
She knows more than any A-rab whore.'

'My dreams of paradise are yours,
but I need no harem whores—
take away that lovely dusky whore.'

They offered me a Nordi-whore,
white and smooth as marble floor.
fair as Aphrodite on her tor.

I said, 'To me, my wife is more,
she loves me better than a whore,
and she's as fair as any smooth white whore.'

They offered me a Hindu whore.
I said : 'My wife's worth waiting for.
She knows more than any Hindu whore.'

'The Karma Sutra is a bore
when my wife takes off her drawers—
take away that lovely skillful whore.'

They offered me a Paris whore,
chicly costumed by Dior,
lithsome in a lacy black pegoir.

I said, 'To me my wife is more,
she loves me better than a whore,
and she's as chic as any Paris whore.'

They offered me the rarest whores.
I said, 'My wife could teach the whores.
She's worth more than any thousand whores.'

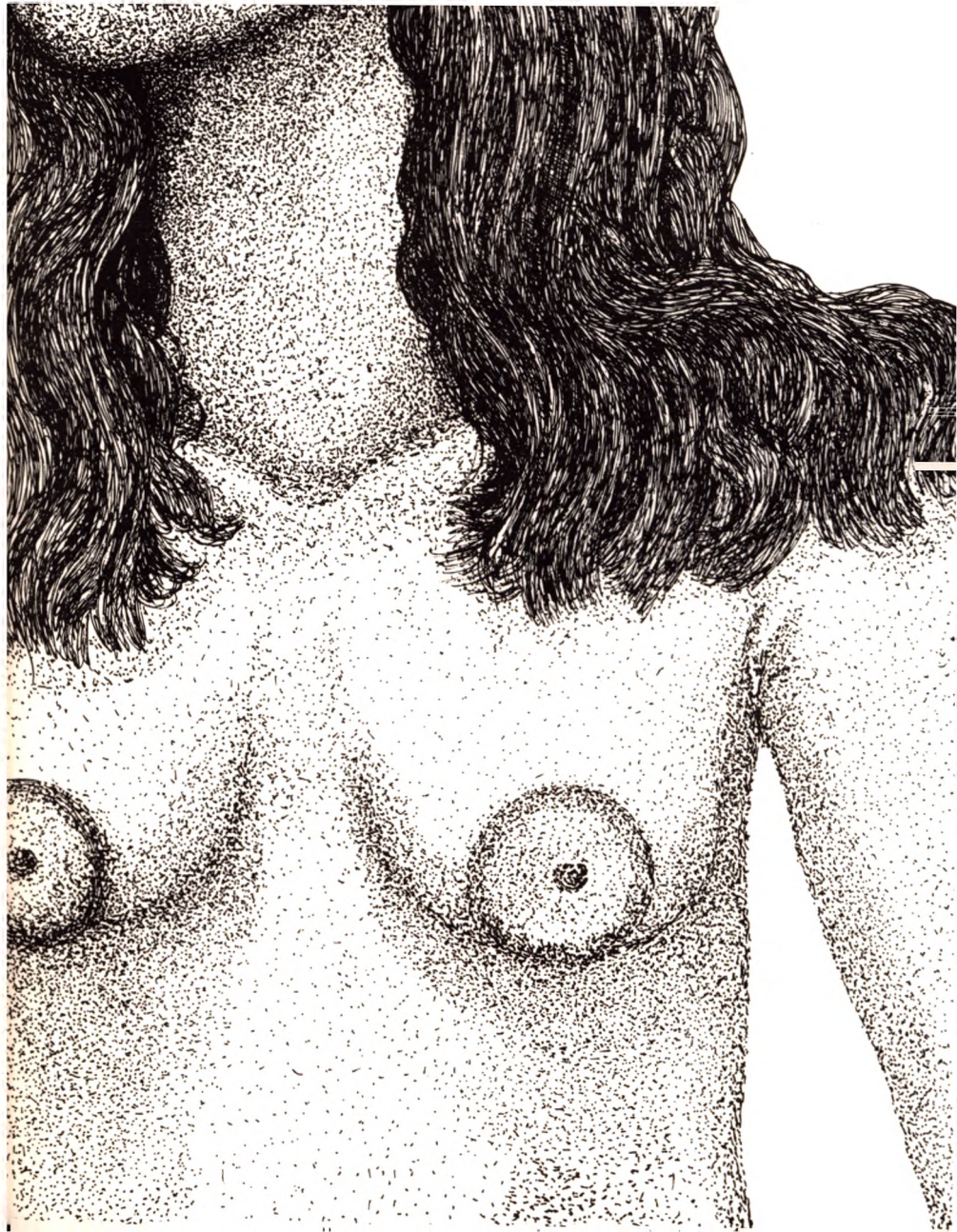
ROCKROSE (Menke's)

The loveliest harlots are in New York,
nocturnal at midday, children of twilight,
paramours of the mist, menaced by light,
they sweet-scent the nights with every balm on earth.

Here comes Lilith—the first wife of Adam,
hellbred, out of a night-scene of Goethe's Faust,
(Her room in the slums—a perfumed, stale mouth.)
a whore more naked in garb than all nude wives.

Her eyelids are like the green gates to Limbo,
her naval like the eye of a sky-gazer.
The streets are charmstruck by her generous arse,
her delicacy—a rockrose of old New York.

The stars in the gutters are free dimelands.
The wind—a daredevil rapes her in broad starlight,
plants stoneseeds in her womb and runs the gauntlet.
Her bride-bed, skyworn, is guarded by the cherubs.



NIGHT

I light candles for you as for the dead.
As on gallows hangs here headless your dress.
Lilith comes to rip it to the last thread.
Left of you is a tear, a frown, a guess.

The mourning candles wave to you farewell,
in the sullen room of this condemned house.
Visions with bodies of smoke, souls of hell
dance on the fierce ceiling. A friendly mouse

and this moon-mad poem is their sole meed.
The night vies with the wretched lanes, homebound
On a faded wall, a stray dawnstreak bleeds.
Flickering wicks in a merry-go-round :

Foggy ringlets speed in a dreary race,
touch the last flame as a guillotined face.

—*M.*

TO THE TUNE OF LONDON BRIDGE

All the leaves are falling down
falling down
falling down
All the leaves are falling down,
my fair lady

*Golden leaves before the snow
fore the snow
fore the snow
O the spring beyond the snow,
my fair lover*

O the spring will come & go
come & go
come & go
All the springs will come & go
my fair lady

*All the leaves are falling down
falling down
falling down
Golden leaves are falling down,
come my lover*

—H.

ON THE DEATH OF A DAY OLD CHILD

All dead, day old children will welcome you.
The wind will sing my lullabies to you,
when the sun falls where the saddest grass grows.

You are the beginning when light is wise.
God will guard to the end of days your day,
in the land of manna, Eden of bread.

With ray and shade you will play pranks all day.
Autumn will teem with the brown of your eyes.
With my grief will forever weep the dew.

—*M.*

FIVE YEARS BEFORE MY BIRTH

I was potential in my sister's song
a plucked song quavering,
'The Good Ship Lollypop'—her voice, her toy,
My father's tenderness :
his little girl, 'The apple of his eye,'
May, growth from his Maytime.
I was possible in the dreaded blights
no mother's care can cure,
The little girl to be torn away
as the wind took unripe fruit
down, down from the trembling orchard boughs
—the wind through my father's land.
Four winters forth, they seeded me
quickenning at the thaw,
the smell of mildewed memories in spring.

—H.

ISLE OF PITT STREET

Our castle is on the isle of Pitt Street.
The skies of Manhattan are in your eyes.
You are all wheat-scented, like Miriam,
dancing triumph through a rain of manna.

Dusk. Our garret plunders seven heavens.
Moses on a casement splits the Red Sea,
his rod—an ember of the dying day,
a day, patched and darned as the grief-worn street.

Beacons dwindle in the urban twilight.
Birds serenade the freed slaves of Goshen.
Night. Through New York, the goddess of cities
climb, moon loved, the visions of Isaiah.

The child to lead the leopard and the kid,
slumbers out of time—a lake-bound naiad.

—*M.*

WORLDS

1

Sundown. Liberty harbor sky outreds—
Tides, distant fire wide . . .
Night armies conflagrate, steeled at Suez.
Struck men, lightning shells on Sinai.
Mars & Venus rise, tandemed in our air.

2

Planetary wanderings, flickering
Worships, the wondering . . .
Warships part of the Red Sea, waters waking
Stones burn in Syria again.
Horized love throbs, bloodied in our dust.

3

The seawind that lands the hour past the sun,
Late. Smoke lies, becalmed.
And thunder! Unsteady Mars advances.
Gemorrah roars, guerillas die.
And now a moaning in our wounded air—

4

IT stormed & cleared, the gods appeared.
Stud Jove bullwayed, grazing starfields.
Gaza. Broken gongs. Deadmen. Viet Cong.
Hosanna for imagined worlds!
Another star winks out forevermore.

—H.

REMINISCENCE

Let us hide my love,
like gods or small blind fish who
understand darkness,
guarded by caves and deep streams,
hidden from light—their arch foe.

O see the sun rise
as a blond medaled robot,
kind as iron, in
love with birds, roses, children,
efficient as cold terror.

Let us live unknown,
as lovers in a dream :
lost as names on sands,
against sad rains which sing odes
to their immortality.

Let us hide my love.
The super brave soldier is
here, the death drummer
with a heart made of the flesh
of free, victorious morgues.

Learn from the blind to
see God like John Milton, the
soul-lit, poet-king
who lost and found paradise,
in self, in his own great deep.

—*M.*

NOSTALGIA

The lilies of our nights
Yearn toward remembered light in calms
like silences of gentle arms
holding,
 Before alarms of worldstorm . . .

The pale flowers of nostalgia
like lilies rafting on the reservoir
Gather,
 on the shallows
near a shady shore.

Always the aqueduct ways of memory
lead backward to these pons
by a palmgreen shore,
This frail state of flowers,
Nostalgia in the dominion of the reservoir.
 —H.

HER CONFESSION

The twilight is a soaring orchard of wild cherries.
Golden fairyfolk haul the sun as a celestial corpse.
The night, city-bred, wine-wise,
a starry hag who flirts with each throe.
I follow her through steel and shame, iron and gloom.

I have the fate of a goat, the sin of a serpent.
My mother died of too much longing for beauty and for love.
My father still dreams of birds and hoboos,
in Sing-Sing behind eternal bars.
My childhood blossomed as a wound.

My childhood was a harlot,
when gnawed by hunger and dread of life.
I have been the home of unborn children,
playing under the barren leaves of a wrung berrybush.
I saw angels soar in the wind,
as seeds which never tasted fields.

The ghost of spiders is in my breath.
I saw my lovers glaring as venomous spears.
In the suspicious shimmer of a third backyard,
men tossed a handful of pennies
for my dozen skinny Aprils.
O dear gutter, remember me!

—*M.*

A SCREEN

Night is shimmering like a silken screen,
white with spreading lamp-light

Green signals

seem father messages, of pale sharp cold.
Steam is rising from the underworld.
Horns of harbor-leaving linger on,
borne on heavy air, a mourn of warning.
Tall buildings join to channel us.
All lives are walking in a cloud.

—H.

FERRIED

Buoyed irreverencies of bells
Tinkling knell you, Knell
you ferried on unfathomed water, gray,
berthless bay.
Bells tinknell you on
Deep harbor stinking in the sun

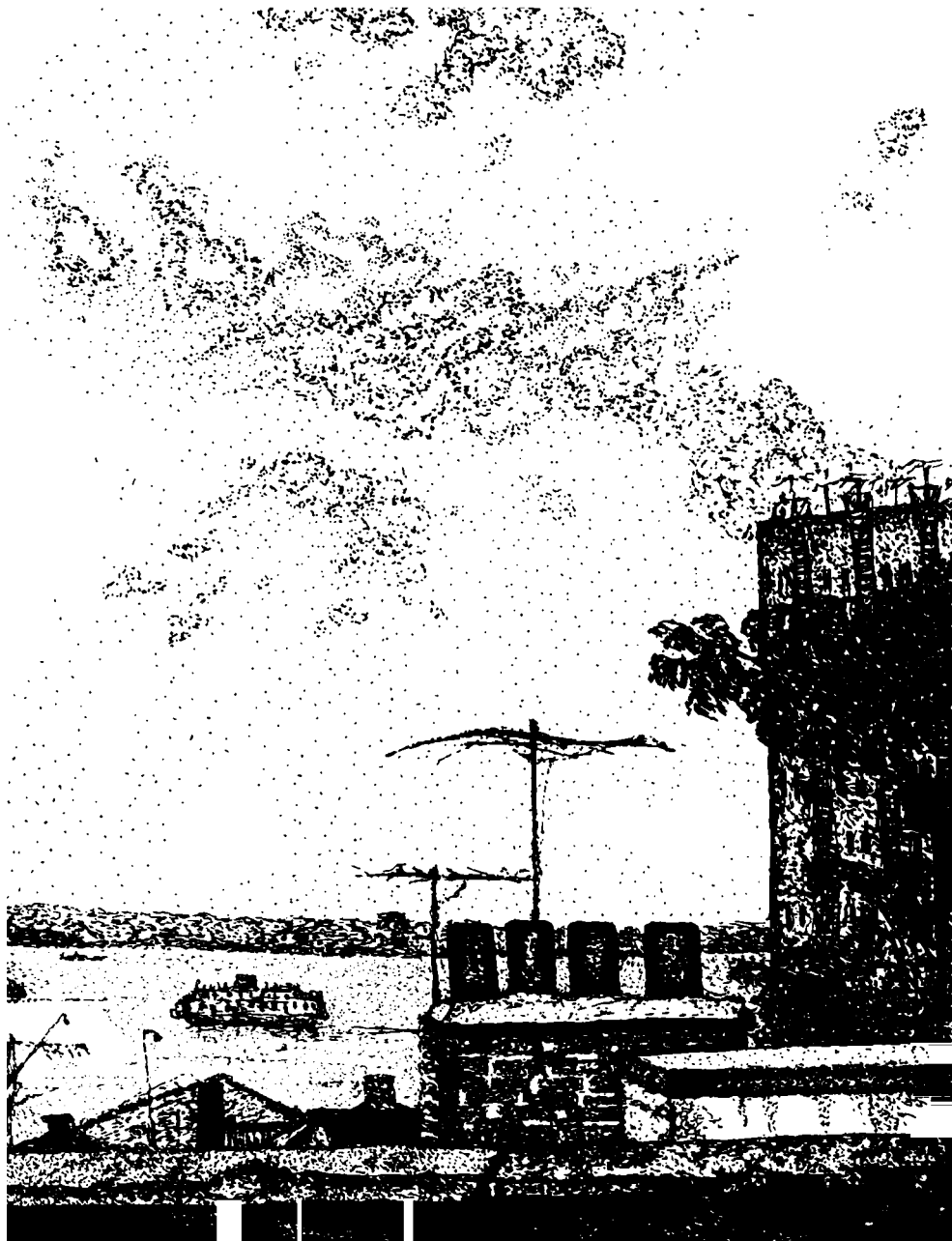
—*H.*

DUSK IN BROOKLYN BAY

Boats sail at twilight in Brooklyn bay where
the urban rivers meet with the might, grace
and valor of the Verrazano bridge.

Hudson is a tale which the narrows tell.
Elfmaids, archaic visitors are here,
to charm the panes of our metropolis.

—*M.*



KEATS, AGAIN

(At the age of 27,
Every poet writes a poem
Or thinks he should)

Half October of the bright stars,
I walk the windnight in a search,
And I am lost.

The diamond ferries glide like dreams
Upon a blackness mirroring lights,
Like opaled onyx.

And I am pompous on the height,
Challenging eternity,
While waters mock.

On the harbor, ferries go,
Ideas of splendor; silent, slow;
The dark tides flow.

I only know the almost tears
For shining voyage through the night,
And graceful sorrow.

(At the age of 27,
Every poet thinks of Keats
And knows he should)

—H.

LAKE POETS

Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, I also live
in the lake district, hence we are neighbors.

Only a poem between the idle,
dreamlit lakes of Westmorland, Lancashire
and the busy Hudson and East rivers.

Only a century, a step of time
from the many tribed roar of New York to
the cuckoos of Cumberland which cu-ckoo
in perfect trochee to the ghost of humdrum,
as they leave their eggs, motherless, in strange nests.

Only a horselaugh between the English
cavalry, in a race with subway trains :
the tunneled underworlds of Manhattan.

—*M.*

OLD NEW YORK

The *Old New York* is falling down,
Half torn down, half torn down—Downtown
Shell with a sign :

The South Ferry tavern's demise
Is for fifty-story-high-rise,
New York Plaza.

Up on Front, Gouverneur Lane
Is bulldozed pit & morain.
The name remains.

By The Bridge, the old Trib Tower
Fell to progress in an hour—

Downtown, all around the town,
The Old New York is powered down.

—H.

OLD MANHATTAN

Sundown. God, I am lonely, I will go
to the whorealleys of old Manhattan
and fetch me a jolly liberal bride.

The evening is drunk with its own wine on
our wedding bed, you will be my wife an hour,
I, your lover—a thousand and one nights.

I am all yours, my unmothered, unowned love :
I swear by the ecstasy of our trance,
by the hatched shadowbands of this twilight.

Night bears the commerce of licensed kisses,
the law ridden guardians of humdrum,
bereaved of you and me, of our soulquake.

You left, O firefooted elf of the streets.
The summer, greensick, cankers on cracked walls.
Flowers in a pot pine for home—the far fields.

My bride coquets through the blight of slummed streets :
wholesale dealers in smoke, iron, gold, death,
praying through the ages for their downfall.
Even time is tired here of night and day.

—*M.*

NIGHT OVER WALL STREET

Night. Winds
on Wall Street
scatter the forged
dreams of gold-diggers
who shake the sun out of
their sleeves, leave the sold moon for
beggars—a god-awful dollar.

—*M.*

WALL STREET TICKING

WORKDAY . . .

ON WALL STREET . . .

SCUTTLE TEEMING . . .

HOMO SAPIENS . . .

TERMED . . . TRADERS . . . CLERKS . . . BANKERS . . .

ANALYSTS . . . RUNNERS . . . BROKERS . . .

TOURISTS . . . CUSTOMERS . . . PASSERS-BY . . .

—H.

GRAYING OUT

The drizzling out of winter stays
days low
on stealth of speeding year.

The mouths of all the harbors close,
in mist
onto infinity
graying out of all the seasons
like love's eyes
brooding on gray ocean
—*H.*

TWILIGHT

Barges of ice float in the Viliya river, the winter
sails beyond the unknown. The sun, at dusk, is a Sabbath
kugel in a dream, last rays are envied by all who
crave to trade end for end. The puddle where piggies
wallowed the day away mirrors gold apples
which the children try to pluck until the
dragon who guards them swallows the whole
orchard in one gulp, then devours
himself, left in the mirror
is his tongue to lick the
fires off the window
panes and his claws
to seize the
first stars.

—*M.*

LITTLE BRIDES

Little girls playing
brides are all out of cries for
their ailing snowmen :

O help us angel
of snowmen, the sun drinks our
bridegrooms, limb by limb.

O send us quickly
doctor frost before they melt
in the mouth of Spring.

The queen of spiders
who dolls her children in silk
gowns weaves with all her

eight fingers bridal
dresses for our wedding feast,
may she prosper here

in every nook and
corner a thousand winters
and a hundred Junes.

Little brides—little
widows wash with their tears the
windowpanes as their

snowmen rush home like
rivulets to their cloudlands,
to mother wonder.

—*M.*

A CHILD'S GARDEN OF GERTRUDE STEIN

By Rebecca Smith, age 8

KEY TO CLOSET : It was the gargiest disgustingest thing on earth the thing inside the closet. There is no key to the closet.

HAPPEN TO HAVE : She did happen to have a she and ate a banana in the story.

RIGHT AWAY : The right away is the right of way of the right away book.

PINK : Does pink go Pink in the eye's ear?

DECISION : Claire Claire the cat's climbing a tree. Why that? Is that Claire the cat?

CHOOSE : Choose something about choose.

TODAY : Nothing can stop.

A COUSIN : I'm making a headless lady a headless girl I'm making from a lady. Instead she has a design for a head and big ears on it and a microphone from out of her legs.

HORSE : I'm lost in a farce forest with Gertrude's horse.

LOOK LIKE : Twenty million dogs look like ten million dogs unless you can think of something smarter.

QUESTION : Don't you ever?

What else? In this part of the story I killed a puppy in the smoke.

HELP! I killed the wind I squashed bighose I see I snake I made it into a bird. Help I'm getting smothered in smoke.

LONGER : The longer the longer the longer we work then what happens to longer?

GERTRUDE : If she had a daughter she would the daughter would write about ours so this is for people who don't like Gertrude. Who's Gertrude?

CITY MOON

I saw angels dream under
a city moon, like a handless
clock which tells time beyond time,
beyond play, ache and laughter.

I said : motherless children,
woe, you are all Spring, autumn
will not know you, you can not
grow a wink older than God.

If you are weary of the
endless day, you are welcome
to take refuge in my poem,
to taste stone, tears, steel, longing.

Angels, no sadness on earth
is as sad as your heaven.

—*M.*

AUGURIES OF AMORALITY

A blackbird sitting in a tree
Subverts enthroned majesty.

All solid thrones are overthrown;
Flesh wears down to chalky bone.

The moon as scimitar is awe
Beyond H-robotic war.

Hissed aggressions of rushing wheels
Shall be silenced by the fields.

The green rushes of wet meadows.
Shall hush the giant bellows.

Consumption as an end shall squeam
Obscenities of whipped cream.

Production as an end shall bate
As great nations constipate.

Sure visions of the Sea of X
Shall make desperado sex.

Young lovers' gentle cries in fear
Are all the Heaven you shall hear.

Yet love shall be a game, insane,
Until the tress make cities tame.

—H.

LITTLE WOMAN (Menke's)

(To Rivke)

My little woman standing nude at the
mirror is from head to toes midsummer,
fragrant with the grape which is still uncasked wine.
End of July, glory of her season.

The harvest moon will rise (ripe, not for reaping)
with wondrous fruits, unknown to any autumn.

Night. A conflagration of planets revolves
around her navel, the middle kiss spot.
The center, the flame of the enchanted bush
like the hubble seed can not be consumed.
Every evil is crushed in our whirl dance.
The stars over us are a fire hazard.

We are rowing with one oar from Eden
to hell and visa versa, back to birth,
on to death, reborn again, cleansed through fire,
redeemed from the devil of dust, we are
all light, even death is a shade of light.
We come from light , we return to light.

Our rowboat (entrance to the beginning
and end of life) is miraculous as
the creation of Eve, our pulse is the
rhythm of the cosmos, our fervid moments
are hymns to the penis, the true god of love,
(debased by debasers) blaze to the core, knows
the agony of drought more than any desert,

rising as a self-assassin, he is
the first one to fall in the winter solstice.
We relish, a minute, the glacial climate,
our little ice age. My little woman
is plowed, hoed, tilled, (she is always hard to plow)
fertile with the rain of immortality.

SUMMER WOMAN (Harry's)
(for Marion)

Full summers indolence of pregnancy
Weighs upon the day. A summer woman
In a laze of ripeness plays with breezes,
And the world is scented hay. How surely
Her most casual touches can amaze,
Like warm tangs of strawberries wild on glades,
And loving stays, complete as laden boughs,
Growing always, gently with the sunblaze.
No graying history can betray here,
And even time is but the stream of dreams
And drowsy haze, slow across high pastures.
Not death nor past nor future may intrude.
Sweet eternities of sun shall never
fade. You shall live anew, when sun is shade.

LOOKING THROUGH A RARE GEM

unrhymed, unrestrained villanelle

An elfmaid lives in this lonely castle.
When hungry, she eats a star, when thirsty,
she hits a gem and it turns into a brook.

The brook is here in a mirage, nearby.
The mirage, the father of lies, offers
the wines of emerald, of noble opal.

I see three mirrors scintillate in the brook.
A stingy angel (half scorpion) guards
the brook, night and day, in the first mirror.

The second mirror, drunk as a wine-fountain,
waits for Bacchus, god of the merry cup,
to drink a toast to every grape on earth.

A sorceress in the third mirror observes
the witches' Sabbath, hoarding the gems of tears
since Eve, in the castle of misfortune.

The fiends of the castle break the mirrors,
the pieces scatter like startled rivulets,
flowing to scorch with thirst the locked elfmaid,
doomed, by the gods, to immortal splendor.

—*M.*

JEWEL

Incandescencies of sky aspirings,
Iridescent lapidations quivering
on black harbor;

Moondomes floating. Bridges silvering,
white arcs of light entincturing space :
New York, the night is thy monstrous jewel.

—H.

MATINICUS

Amid Manhattan's quarried stones I dream
prayers of evergreen on other rocky shores,
matins of island bells, Menke

the wind the sea
the life of berries in untrammelled fields
and cloistered bogs secluded in blue spruce,
the history of birds.

the elements.
'It's the last frontier,' the shy captain said.
'Not many places left . . . anymore.'
I might learn to live with men and deer
until quarried stone is laid upon my dreams.

—H.

MY CITY

New York, city of refuge,
from listless calm, stoic ease,
welds its own skies, the fate of
live steel, drills its own lightning,
streets compete with galaxies.

Towers at dawn are rising
torchbearers, dust remembers
when alchemists built Babel
with the iron of alchemy,
when lovers lived forever.

New York, city laureate
of cities, vies with seven
wonders and always wins, sees
a Broadway on the moon, day
dreams the Genesis of man.

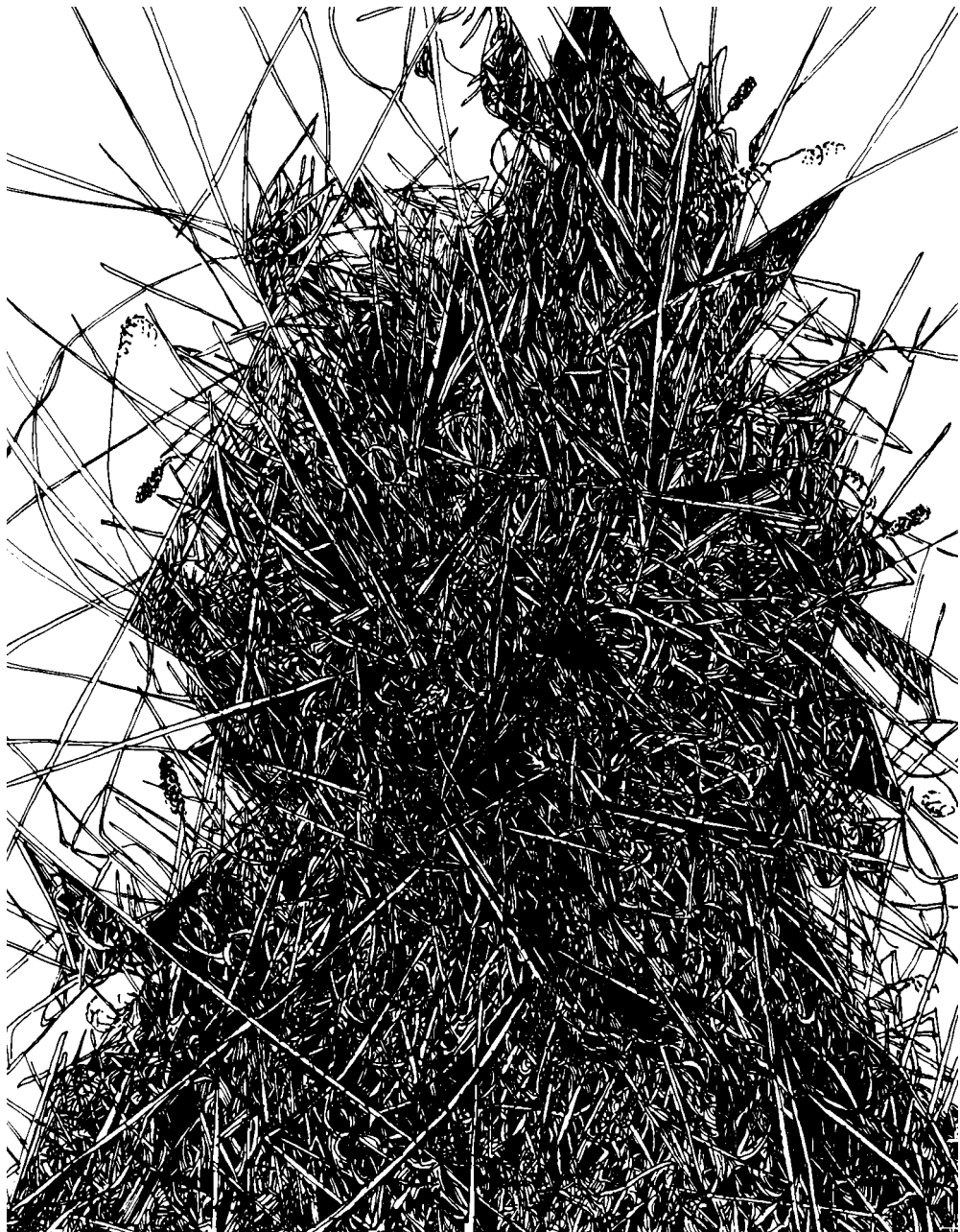
—*M.*

HARVEST . . .

A field
in harvest
not worth a bean.
The wind garners the
chaff of the grain, the pod
of the pea, the empty glume.

I serenade you my love on
reeds made of straws of oats. Wild roses
bullies of the old scratch ganglands nip the
harvest in the bud, stab the nurse crop before
yielding grain. Thorn brooms puncture the ears of the corn.
Headache shrubs dissect the heads of the lettuce. Gout flies
invade the barley, the seeds escape in the wind from the
bearded darnels. Grim reapers with hands — scythes,
reap at dusk the sun.

—*M.*



SONNET FOR MENKE

Other men shall reap the fields I sow
In unwanted lands, virgin and remote
From malls and markets, gray Chicago
To gray Moscow. Today I shall devote
To keeping farms in peace with wilderness,
Granite islands for berries and the birds.
Tomorrow will need them. In Megamesse
Where the buffalo roamed, the human herds
Thunder down the plains, stampeding.
Whoever will survive the canyon crush
Shall come forth to find new worlds succeeding —
Again with the god in the grasses' hush.

A molten hope may make belief, I know;
Yet in the furnace of my faith, I make it so.

A DATE

My love of the year 2980 :
I will come to you —
handsome with the sunsets of ten hundred years,
washed by the rains of a thousand summers,
cleared by the snow of a thousand winters.
I will be light, dew and earth long before your birth.
I will be in your water, in your bread, in your rainbow.
—*M.*

JUNE

Welcome June to the slums of my city.
Even condemned tenements celebrate
your arrival. Flowers tramp through bright sloop,
dress like elves in all colours to greet you.

Skies, nearby, wreath garlands out of soot on
crooked walls, pave with gems the bleak alleys.
God's breeze spins a yarn, only wise babies,
dandelions and little birds understand.

A hermit dog — the homeless philosopher
of the slums meditates at midnight blue.
The moon dumps its silver in charmed sewers,
as if to get rid of its counterfeit.

Cats marry under starlit canopies,
mewing their love to all past and future Junes.
—*M.*

SOULSCAPE

Look the sun down and the deepening
Down veiled garden terraces to harbor,
Night; and early stars, singly, pulsing to,
anew through ambient, scented, seeded air,
when bright Venus moves, entrancing evening,
and cats, dark-mating under arbors, sing;
The June violets linger on horizon :

O the tremulous distances of love.

—H.

COCOON

The silken season of the softest nights
languishes, spreading white a woven ease
upon the city.

Heat is gone from stones;
temperate harbor breezes, swirling, soothe;
the structures that defied the other seasons
shake a-shimmer through the leafy hebetude,
and summer rules.

Ornaments in courts and window boxes
mocked the Spring; Fall was but the drawing-in;
Winter was the realm of brownstone houses,
Snug and solid, warm and lit, a domain
challenged only by the greatest of storms.
Yet days beneath the sun of ripening,
staunch dominions fade.
Ambition's monody
yields to deep lassitude in moth joy.

—H.

STILL CLEAR NIGHT

Stars sleep
on needles
of ice, hushed brooks
are fettered with frost.
Chimney swifts, smoke-blinded,
join the winter moths, flutter
over burnt pentateuchs, seeking
Spring at the last sparks which refuse to
die, scintillate the ashes like rare gems.
Two brave pages (ancient sunsets yellow each
letter) find their way back through the remains of the
synagogue, cover as with the hands of cherubs the
anguished commandment : 'thou shall not kill.' Moses leaves
the scorched
tablets, rises wherever the mourned dust is thirsty for tears.

—M.

THE CATHEDRAL OF THE ROCKS

I feel very near the stars.
Perhaps, in the higher Alps,
I have seen the stars intenser clear,
but never have I lived with them as here—
 the whole vault of supreme night
nor could I dream how starlight can light
great forests in a moonless time,
as here, lone upon a hill by Fundy
in a fugue of tides and pines
life and sky and wind whelming
 the ultimate music through the rocks.

—H.

ON BLUEPRINTS

I saw on blueprints
the engineer's dream. I saw
New York dawn in the
farthest era—a young myth,
ascending for love and light.

I heard tomorrow's
subterranean cities,
merrily roaring
under a fortunate earth.
I saw America fly

to the nearby Mars.
O steel nerved poet of the
cautious motor and
the daring propeller : I
saw you build the eighth heaven.

—*M.*

GREEN TOWERS

Tremendous towers aged in ivy,
sparrows hidden in the turret eaves;
Great towering oaks with broad young leaves,
hollows old in owl and squirrel love;
Quick honeysuckle's fragrance aching
up serpentines overting inching;
Berryvines entwined on forest floor,
ripe in the dankness strong of sunflare;--
Live in green towers, take the plain loaf,
Drink the spurting June-juice, lewd with life.

—H.

GOOD-BYE (Menke's)

Good-bye,
my love, good-
bye, though we live
in the same city,
same century, we are
farther from one another
than the farthest distance of time,
spaceless as the void beyond the first
or the last Adam on earth. O vanish
my love as if some evil sorcerer, drove
you out of existence. We shall meet only in
nightmares, my thorn-poppy, where each kiss will turn into
a hag with nine specters, love—a servant of the devil,
left of you, in my treasure chest, a curl—a bastard mouse ear.

A GOOD-BYE (Harry's)

That youthy knot ! Girl, your hasty reeving
seized me taut. Your pale red tresses shimmered
warning of Scottish altars and cold queens,
love-damned, in passion lashed to praying stones.

Thus, I struck, in young straight ruthless speed—I—
like Alexander with one cruel slash—freed
the grannied tie and fled without farewell.

Ancient poets praised the pale of your skin,
soft, starved, white, O domain of denial,
like the lost plains, unblemished, unto Death
whose fleshly pale blushed all my fingerprints.

FROG SERENADE (Menke's)

O hear
my love, all
frogs serenade
our parting like a
choir of slimy gods. The
bullfrog croaks good-bye as the
moon with a frog-face bathes in the
cozy muds. See the leopard-frog, dressed
in your honor, bright green, like the guts of
hate. No nightingale is worthy of singing
farewell to you. Only the frogs, the oldest
pipers on earth are fit to pipe to you good-riddance,
as I hop, leap, dance with the whole frog family, run with
every brook : good-bye carrion flower, spring pipers are here.

SMITH'S SKUNK SONG

One starry morn I spanked a skunk !
I did ! I did ! and that's no bunk.
I whacked it twice—kerplunk ! kerplunk !
 And didn't get skunked.

I wasn't daft, I wasn't drunk—
I didn't know it was a skunk.
I didn't hear it when it slunk,
 Till my grub cans clunked

So loud I woke up in a funk :
A bear ! I thought, big hungry hunk
Might hanker for a human chunk,—
 And make poor me defunct.

I prayed much stronger than a monk,
But starlight showed no hulking lunk.
I gathered up my scattered spunk
 To check what plunked.

The thief was *in* my camp box junk :
That coon ! I thought, that brazen punk
Snuck back while I was in my bunk—
 Clunk ! Plunk ! there it dunked !

I grabbed a tent pole to go WHUNK !
I'd teach the stupid little punk !
I smacked it right, a-THUNK ! a-THUNK !
 And didn't get skunked.

Halfway through my second SWUNK
I saw the white stripe of the skunk!
It seemed for sure that I was sunk—
 But whomped its tail, ker-thunk!

It raised that tail to spray its glunk—
I jumped over the tail of the skunk!
Next camp was the one that got stunk—
 Whew! the skunk's aim flunked.

So if you want to spank a skunk,
Best circle quickly while you whunk
And jump on time high over the lunk—
 And you won't get skunked.

SKUNKS AT TWILIGHT

A family of
skunks stroll leisurely in the
late twilight. Their broad
foreheads remind of the shrewd
skills of all the downtrodden.

Their arched backs carry
the weary sunset to rest;
welcome the nightfall,
over the last ditch of light,
light is their dangerous foe.

The long bushy tails
sweep the summer days into
burrows, hollow trees.
(Where is the world where skunks and
nightingales are hymned alike?)

All stinkards know, not
the aroma of the rare
rose but their stench is
a feared stronghold to frighten
away the angel of death.

O lovers of night,
their little feet, slow walk through
the moonlit unknown,
teach patience to endure all
evil of man, beast and God.

—*M.*



WATERS

Waters,
as you and I,
are destined
to their own stars. Rains
through streets are stoned alive.
Rains over arid wheatfields,
prosperous rains pour blessings through
the beards of wheat, thrive the wheatstalks,
ripen the kernels, ready for rattling,
thrashing by the fatherly struck of the flails
which drive the glumes, the husks, the chaff to the four winds.
Brooks at twilight are beauty mongers, the authentic
jewelers of the universe, angels bathe in the seas of
their gems. O all waters are children of the same mother clouds.
—*M.*

MISERABLES

Waters
with the fate
of the wretched,
born in the bowls of
toilets, rush away from
the good light, in the darkness
of subterranean sewers,
the mouths of hell; the miserables
in the family of waters, envy
the fertile destiny which keeps
well fed the bugseeds as well as the grapeseeds, bless
the breadbaskets of the rich soils, prove that even in
the quality of dung, the cattle rank higher than their
moral slaughterer, the foul-seeking preacher of the earth—man.
—*M.*

DRISKO ISLAND

To want nothing more than what I have,
No more
No more than island, sky and sea,
This earth—the anemone's cold seacave
Wave-carved in the same Devonian reach
of yellow rock that founds the springy sod
from whom little flowers and great forests
Go quick & slow; seal, cod, osprey & God :
Find our mother motions and our rest.

—*H.*

THE WORLD OF OLD ABE

(Twin narrative chant royal)

Meet Old Abe, penniless as an angel, slugged by
the suspicious sidewalks of New York, streetful
as if his life were donated by the
charitable garbage of the slums.

At sundown, he sees his tatters,
in royal splendor, his bruised
head is a beaming crown.

He proclaims : I am
Job, my fate whipped
in the Land
of Uz.

The day dies, in Manhattan, as a polluted
Eden. The wind, at dusk, is a gold beater,
beating hell into gold, the calf-god of
the ages. Old Abe knows : Satan pays
his debts in boils, from head to toes,
a pride possession which he
pampers with a potsherd,
his broken wand. O
he is the prince
of boils, of
the cursed.

Old Abe sees the late sun guillotined by giants
of bridges, spanning rivers, visions, chasms, lure
suicide to join the great abyss of
the dauntless, elude the noble rot
of moral vultures with the scent
of carrion blossoms. Not stars,

but piping frogs with the
sermons of swamps, the
palms of the doomed
prophesy
the end.

Night. Old Abe sees Satan in fear of thugs, holed up
in the moonlit crevices of the condemned
tenements. Iron rainbows on Broadway
foretell him a deluge which will leave
only jolly graverobbers with
the smiles of hyenas. He
sees Messiah come when
brute flogmen may flog only
dead horses when
whipkings will
eat their

whips, when cowboys on the moon will harness angels
like flying bulls, when God will give his image
only to the mouse—the wingless cherub,
on Drisko Island (God's refuge from
good and evil) for unlike man,
the mouse was never in the
council of the wicked;
man shall come when the
lucky mouse will
yearn for his
shrewd trap.

Envoy

At the end of days God will exile all angels
into limbo where darkness is the fiercest
of all fires, only the humblest angel
of the wretched will be worthy to
be saved in the ark built of the
first and last gallows on earth,
to sail to the stainless
beginning, before
shackles, kings, hang
men shamed the
heavens.

Listen

to Old Abe :

you can hang a
hangman, not his death
ful shadow, even the
shadows of dead hangmen may
change trees into gallows. O they
follow the steps of the doomed, join the
blues of barred Aprils, joyride through autumns,
celebrate enmasse their might like demon herds,
their harvest moon resembles a noose with nine knots.

Old Abe

lives beyond
the end of night
and day, after flags
of all nations are ripped
by tooth and nail, fly like free
rags, waving triumph against the
mugs of the deep. He can hear the stones

of razed cities lock the rage of bygone
man : inventor of traps, cages, guillotines.
(Longing will haunt forever meditative dust.)

Still left
is Drisko
Island, land of
God's true kin : super
races, such as the mouse,
the night crawler, the princely
skunk and, Old Abe, under the
tree of life. Fishes splash their prayers
to an unpeopled world, in unbiased
waters, without netmongers, dancing horas
with the naiads, in the four rivers of Eden.

God will
not squander
dust to create
man again. The new
Adam will be born in
a dream without the zeal of
the rib which bore the woman who
chose the serpent as her first counsel.
New Eve will be rockborn, her rock children
will suck milk of her bosomy rocks, will go
down the drain, chasing rainbows on Drisko Island,

where the
earth has a
motion of its
own where King Midas
is the only guest of
the sunsets to change the scum

of the ages into fabled
gold, every sunset—a bonfire to
highlight the depths of the lowly. Old Abe
sees every beginning divine the end, each
star, a mortal, ill-starred, is doomed at birth to fall.

Twin Envoy

Lovely
mouse, doll of
fear, chosen by
God, to live among
the first inhabitants
on earth. You knew the light of
Genesis before man. I am
with you, in the holes of panic to
share alike the terror of your eyes. Teach
me the wisdom of the hunted, the mobbed, lynched,
as the angleworm, burrowed in soil, taught me to

seek death,
the treasure
of deviled Job.
Child of the hellborn,
at the end of man, end
of grief, the trap will only
lurk itself. The first as the last
June is nipped in the same bud. Ours will
be the chosen dust of the cursed. God will
bow to mourn our death, the last lives on Drisko
Island. Solitude will expand the universe.

—*M.*

RETURN TO GENESIS, HARRY—

No O
no, it is
not the end of
me. The lucky star
never fades, when alive
I built poems, now I shall
create dust of which we are all
made. I shall return to Genesis.
Death is no less a miracle than birth.
In the handsome crowd of seventy, bygone
Junes, I will celebrate my last, nearby sunset.

I will live as long as winds will wander, as long as
crickets will monotone the end, as long as stray
cats on the moonlit backyards of old New York
will meow serenades to my love of
a hundred years ago and to my
love of a hundred years hence, both
will meet on my last ray's dream
of a dream, to yearn for
me, to kiss away
my death under
a pauper's
rich sky.

If I
am destined
to be a sin
less ghost of Eden,
longing for sin under
Eve's apple tree, then O then
is the end of me. If I am
doomed to Sheol, I will lick the fires
of my Burning Village where I saw God
burn at stake, then I will live like the death of
my undying forefathers, like lost giants breathing
storms, crying havoc to the stone-eared god of the deaf.

TO GENESIS AND BACK, MENKE OLD FRIEND !

Kosmos
always was,
creation *is*.
Time never began,
and when all our stars are
gone, time shall keep on going
through re-condensing energies
to entropy and stormy stars to
Genesis and back, as we, recycled,
flow in perpetual Braechus, extinguished
yet existing in the last sunset on earth.

As physical time is the motion of things in space,
human time is the motion of events in mind.
As a human moment is the infinite,
I find eternity in the inter-
stices of my *am*, and my heaven
in yester hay, unknotted nows,
my futures of flesh, springing
songs of generation
past the winds of earth
and sun. Our poems
shall outlast
the suns.





Harry

