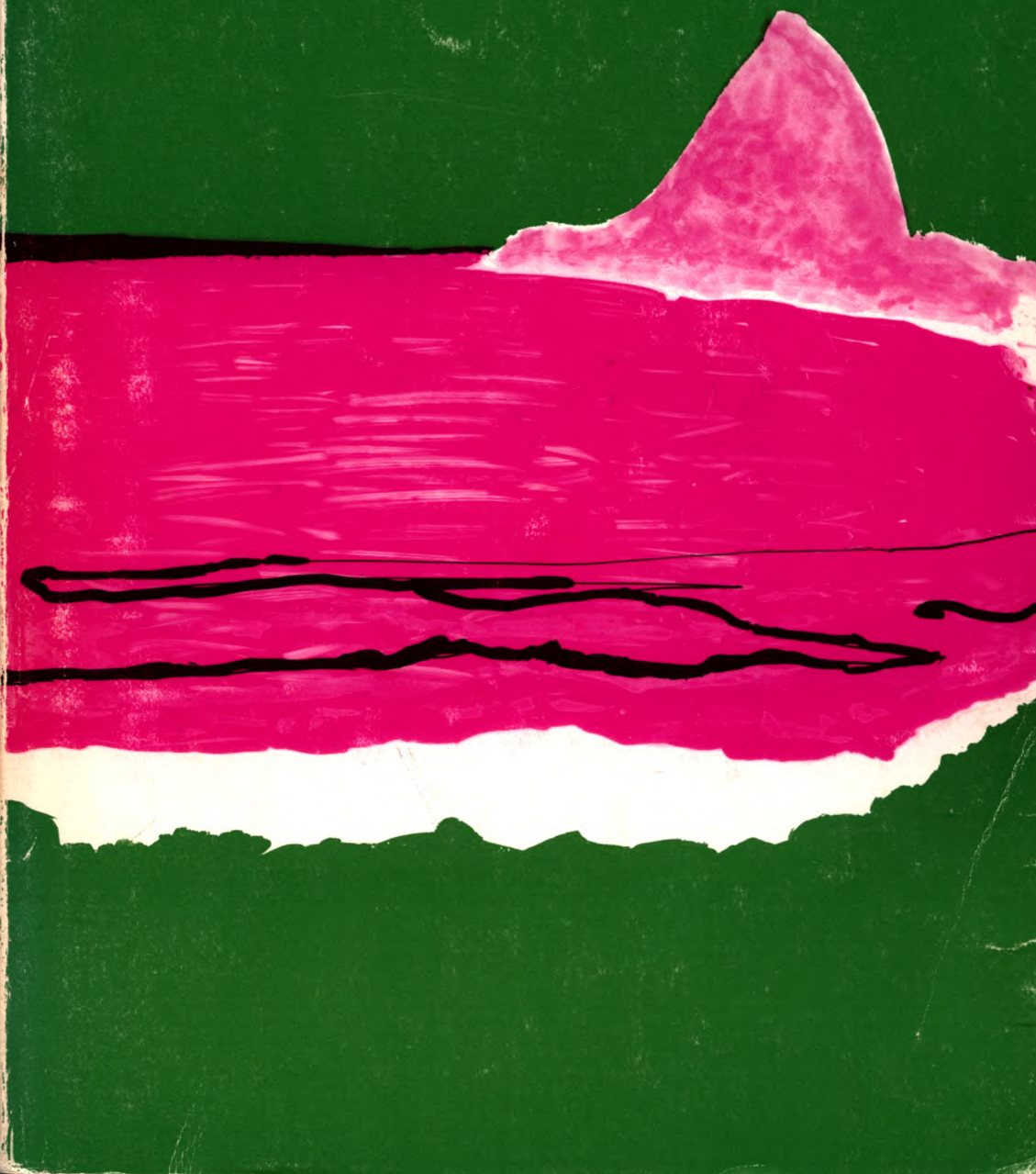


NEARBY EDEN

MENKE KATZ



NEARBY EDEN

OTHER BOOKS BY MENKE KATZ

In Yiddish:

Drei Shvester (Three Sisters)

Der Mentch in Togn (Dawning Man)

Brenendik Shtetl (Burning Village) 2 volumes

S'hot dos vort mayn bobo Moyne (My Grandma Myrna Speaks)

Tsu dertseyln in freydn (A Story to be told in Happier Days)

Der posheter cholem (The Simple Dream)

Inmitn Tog (Midday)

Tsfat (Safad)

In English:

Land of Manna

Rockrose

Burning Village

Two Friends (with Harry Smith)

Forever and Ever and a Wednesday

A Chair for Elijah

Two Friends II (with Harry Smith)

NEARBY EDEN

MENKE KATZ



The Smith



Brooklyn

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*For my father Heershe-Dovid, my mother Badane,
my wife Rivke, my daughter Triom, my son Heershe-Dovid,
my brothers Elchik, Berke, Yeiske, Meishke,
my sister Bloomke
who always inspired me to love life more,
to believe that ages beyond me will not forget me.*

— Forever your Menke



YESTER - VILLAGE



BLOOMELE

Comely Bloomele,
the beggar maiden comes home
with kindly goodies
in her beggar-bag. June. Bride
wreaths adorn her sodden shack.

Cherubs — children of
late twilight frolic on the
tiny windowpanes,
play hide and seek on the humped
houses of Beggar Alley.

Daisies — April-joys
blossom in her knee-long braids.
A lover comes from
no and where with a wreath of
sky from once upon a time.

He is the bridegroom
who plunged from the lover's cliff.
She is the bride of
wondertales in the wondrous
poorhouse on Beggar Alley.

DANCER

Yoodl the alley dancer, the jolly beggar
of the hekdesch — the poorhouse of the village
of Michalishek would for a crust of
bread: leapfrog, hopscotch through fire, brimstone,
whirl with the devil-chasers in a
hellabaloo. In starless
nights, a winking wick in
an oilhole repeats each
dance on the low
smoke-eaten
ceiling.

LOVERS

Only
tombstones know the
secrets of lovers who
drown in the yearnful Viliya
river.

ON BEARDS

In my
village, a Jew
without a beard was like
a strange goose with plucked wings, crawling
to hell.



FOREST OF ZABORCHI

Midnight. Winterkill.
Ice crystals ornament the
eaves like frost flowers.

The frost writes on the
icebound windowpanes the fate
of stray wanderers,

lost in the forest
of Zaborchi. Hungry wolf
packs roam the forest.

Children suckled by
mother wolves cry through the nights
of the wild forest.

The queen mermaid who
leads the chorus of the seas
returns home to the

Viliya river
with gifts out of her mirror
for my wondrous maid

Paragoolt who comes
moon in, moon out to make love
with me in my dreams.

PRINCE OF BEDBUGS

(Septet)

Chaim Treitl, the queer fool, crowned
as the prince of the bedbugs in
the hekdesch — home of the homeless
beggars, in the back of the back
alleys of my village, follows
the night life of bedbugs as a
stargazer the motions of stars.

Some bedbugs are dreamers soaring
in dreams with grace and might of young
eagles who tear asunder with
claws and talons the foes of Jews.
Bedbugs — travelers, enemies
of dawn, journey through blind cracks of
windows which never saw the sun.

Bedbugs — snipehunters hide in the
seams of worn mattresses, in the
rot of gnawed sackcloth, drink the blood
of itchy beggars, bow their heads
in shame, they are the bloodkin of
cruel Titus: king death who left the
walls of Jerusalem wailing.

O hear the prince Chaim Treitl
bless the brave bedbug who sneaked in
to the ear of Titus the cruel,
chewed it until he fell off his
evil throne as a dead bedbug.

Small wonder then, in summer nights,
stars hug, like lovers, all bedbugs.

Sundown. The prince of beggars hears
angels calling him to Eden:
(All angels speak mamme-Yiddish.)
time to die, Chaim Treitl, like
Elijah you will fly on a
chariot of fire to heaven.
Moses will be your next-door pal.

You will eat Esau's lentils and
potato dumplings in heaven,
you will swim in a sea of borscht,
climb the mountain of marzipan.
Your bride — queen of the land of love
will meet you with a Lilith-dance,
yours, the charmed bed in her castle.



BARREN WOMEN

Barren
women know
every nook of
the seventh heaven
where souls of tomorrow's
children await to be born.
They pray to the angel of birth
to drive the desert out of the womb.
Sleepwalkers who wander through autumn nights,
see goat-sucklings waiting on goat-legged stools
to suck dry their breasts. They see King Solomon in
dreams, sending eagles, each one with a child under
its wings. Clouds sail to a dark nowhere. Barren
women know the grief of seeds in the wind
which never taste earth. Nights echo with
hammer calls of carpenter frogs.
Darkness falls in sight of its
foe — dawn. On windowpanes
play teeny hands of
light. Days rise with
first smiles of
a child.

THE PROPHECY OF YOSKE THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER

The last
war on earth
will be between
Gog and Magog, all
kings will fall off their thrones,
their crowns will be our gold
garbage cans. Queens will sweep chimneys
on beggar alley. Noah, the drunk,
will build an ark again of gopher wood,
will lead us all safely to hell. Even God
will be bombed out of all heavens, will stray bereaved
of man and beast, wolf and sheep, dove and crow, will seek in
vain, a trace of sin. God's solitude is endless as time.

YESTER - VILLAGE

Even
the graves of my
ancestors were massacred
in the yester-village where I
was born.

The wind rocks empty
cradles: ai-le-loo-le-loo
as if to lull the
souls of dead children with hymns
to a white little goat which
will bring almonds and raisins.

Still left is the dream
no sea can drown, no monster
can slaughter. Twilights
hoard the faery-gold of my
charmed aunt Beilke — the Yiddish
Scheherazade who talked

the head off death, hence
we are all deathless, like dust
and stars. The dream-rich
poor folk found their lost village
in their homebred heavenland.

Princes elope with
green-eyed, barefoot brides again.
Messiah is here.
My people from every hell,
dance a hora in Eden.

SORCERESS **(after battle)**

The old sorceress
turns the evening star into
a charmed thimble. Her
fingers like thorn-needles weave
shrouds for the graveless soldiers.

She strays alone, in
late dusk, through every nook
and corner of the
scorched village, led by the hand
which downed the day.

The earth returns to
oblivion beyond its
birth pangs. She crawls through
worldful darkness like a maimed
seraph seeking the clipped wings.



STORM

I hear whirlwinds like armies on horseback,
galloping, howling shoutsongs in a
sword to sword battle. I see
my village in flames as if
a thousand sunsets would
coalesce into
one torch.

CHERRY STREET

ANGELS ON CHERRY STREET

A full moon lures all angels out of Eden on Cherry Street,
down in the dungeons of old New York. Angels, love-peddlers,
pimps, birds, cats, the strays with nine lives, all *misérables*
share the goodies of generous garbage. Smoke-flies
cloud the moonlit street. Stone-faced lovers marry
in gutters dime-brides, whore-buds, minute-wives.
Angels crowd the slums, bathe in dung baths,
lick the piss of their ill-starred pals,
join the scum of God — the stone
cherries. Luck-tellers hand
out stars on silver
spoons, free for all:
riches of
tall tales.

BABEL ON CHERRY STREET

Here is
the tower of
Babel, under the yoke
of ages, eager to fall, tired
of time.

Mice hide
in the cracks of
the condemned walls, in fear
of light, hear God say: there shall be
darkness!

DELIRIUM

Drug addicts in dreams
turn into trapped mice who chew
their own mouse-ears off,
leaving only their tails to
sweep all their Junebuds away.

POETS ON CHERRY STREET

are God-blessed paupers,
rich as dreams, coin dimes out of
the stars, roll silver
dollars of the moon, eat their
goldarn poems like manna.

Poets — drug addicts, smoke
opium in iambic
nightmares; children of
wonder seek the unreached dawn
beyond their last night on earth.

MIDNIGHT

Ali Baba and
the forty thieves join at mid
night, knife-chinned muggers.

Streetwalkers — joy girls,
the bruised cherries of Cherry
Street unfold for two

bits like rouged blossoms,
offer enchanting minute
rides to all heavens.

An unborn child in
a womb asks: mother, how far
am I from the world?

OLD NEW YORK SUNDOWN

I see my Burning
Village of Michalishek,
in a sundown of
old New York. A cloud over
Cherry Street is like a scorched
hovel of Beggar Alley.

GUESTS ON CHERRY STREET

Robin Hood, tall Little John
and his jolly yeomen
are here to scatter sacks of
gold, robbed from the rich idlers.
The wind — a homeless fiddler
serenades the falling day.

HOMELESS

The long
winter night beats
the homeless folks with the
whips of whirlwinds. A whore on a
sidewalk

of old
New York lures a
fallen angel to a
bed of stars for a lucky moon
penny.

VAGABOND

I was
a vagabond
roaming through the cities
of America. In homeless
nights on

pillows
of stones, I saw
ragged angels go up
and down the crumbling walls of slummed
cities.

Out of
a dream sneaked out
Solomon's thousand nude
maidens, all vying to make love
with me.

EVE

Winterbloom. Frostwork
reincarnates Eve on a
skylit windowpane.
Eve eloped from Eden with
the serpent, her prince charming.

The serpent is Mike
the pimp, he flies her down — a
nude streetwalker on
Cherry Street, hugging in a
bed of ice: Tom, Dick, Menke.

Eve is
the queen of the
royal whores of Cherry
Street, the under-wonder world of
Eden.

CHERRY MAIDEN

Autumn. Homeless men dream of warm beds and nude brides. Condemned buildings are praying ages for their downfall. Junkies sell wholesale night and daymares to bargain hunters. A cherry maiden — a new Eve, as if just born out of Adam's rib sells Eden for a beggar's coin and a sip of booze; a love peddler, she is here on sale, cheap as life. Winds wail like whores whipped by Jack the Ripper. Spilled semen: the stray children of Satan mob the street.

Envoi

Cherry Street, loved waif
of the cursed, stoned child of the
queen of queens: New York.

PRAYER OF THE ANGELS

Come
O come
Satan, foe
of God, brother
of evil, lead us
fallen angel, bring us
wingless, down to earth among
street fiddlers. Let us serenade
the sins of man with timbrel, dance, lyre.
May we be dust, ashes on a mourner's
head, alive with grief, not sterile angels in
Eden under the fruit of the forbidden tree.

FALL OF THE ANGELS

Sundown. I see the angels condemned to fall
in a tempest of flames, some escape from
hell through dreams of fire, hide in limbo,
on a dark star. Night. A thousand
moons pass in a trice. Come my
love, let us live unknown,
forgotten. Only
solitude can
save us all.
Amen.

TWILIGHT ON CHERRY STREET

Late
twilight.
The tired day
falls from mirror
to mirror. I see
Ethel, my love, self-doomed,
in a garret, praying to
the kindest of angels — angel
of death. Death is always nearby at
the end of day. The sun sets in throes as
if struck by a hit-run driver, bleeding through
the gloom of Cherry Street like cherry wine. The sky
shares its splendor even with manure. A blind beggar
at twilight stands like darkness against a God-lit mirror.

FROM ETHEL'S DIARY
(Ethel committed suicide July 11th, 1947)

EVENING

New York at sundown,
sets in flames like a forest
fire. A stoned tree in
the backyard — a dream monger,
dreams it is the tree of life.

Night. I am a lone
owl in a desolate house,
awaiting you, my
love through hour-circles, as time
crawls like a blind, limbless worm.

No darkness is
dark as my own. The nearer
I am to death, the
farther I am from heaven.
All heavens will live ever

and ever on earth.
Each nook and corner is a
wonderworld for you
and me, for the piping frog,
as well as for the nightingale.

INSOMNIA

Long, long Autumn night.
All dead live in the wind, all
mute cry in the rain.
The rain and God need no bed,
the wind and I need no rest.

I saw
a star drowning
down the river, night in,
night out, could not drown. Ill-fated,
damned star.

FROSTBOW

A white arc adorns
the winter sky. Green
goody-goodies on
our table are in
full bloom as a ripe
gardenbed with buds
about to open.

We travel through the
Book of Splendor* (where
God crowned every letter)
and reach a new heaven,
a new earth. I am
reborn of one of
your ribs, we are one.

* *Jewish mystical philosophy.*

MID MANHATTAN

Pray to loneliness,
at sundown on a roaring
street of New York when
even God, deserted, yearns
for eternal solitude.

GUILT

O if I could throw
myself on a street of New
York and let the crowds
pass over me, everyone
is welcome to kick me,
knock the evil out of me.

FARE YE WELL

There is more glory
in the last sundown than in
the first dawn. Good to
hear God's voice like Moses from
the burning bush, calling me.

I see death alive
as my shadow, follow me
step by step. Evening.
The sky is a playland for
cherubs — heavenly pranksters.

Fare ye well, my love.
If you choose suicide, die
in splendor like the
weary sun embracing death,
at the end of your last day.

ELYSIUM

ETHEL

Ethel, I see you
drinking Keats' hemlock in a
New York garret. I
see you making love with death,
and I am jealous of death.

I hear
you calling me:
Menke, let us elope
to neverland, beyond God — home,
my love!

Autumn.
Crickets never
tire to repeat your name.
All shadows, like the blind, dream of
lost dawns.

The late
day, like you, like
all self-doomed, is eager
to die. My first dawn, your last dusk
embrace.

ON THE ROADSIDE

I came here on the roadside, across your grave to return
your visits to me. The grass is well fed on your grave.
Leafbuds flower in daymares. Day lilies are loved
by the dying sun, by their only bygone
day — the span of all life on earth. Damsel-
flies shrill one note songs as they patrol
the quick-tempered brook. A mouse runs
to demand of God equal
rights on earth, calls on all
mice to face the sun,
to march against
the foe of
God — man.

Solitary wasps: masons, carpenters, diggers — miners,
mud daubers — potters mix their saliva with mud to
form mortar to build urns. All neighbors are welcome
to torment, paralyze spiders, dissect life,
rear with the delicacies their young. Fire
beetles star the nightfall. Memories
crowd to conquer death, to reach my
love. Gooseberries smell of jam,
pies, tarts and you. The wood
thrush sings to remind
the psalmists, they
learned to psalm
from birds.



Autumn.

**Leaves in a
danse macabre,
celebrate their own
death, until at rest, guard
the dreams of the roots, the sap
of the earth. Rains bewail entombed
summers. The angel Raphael flies
over the graves to heal the dead. Winter.
The four winds are packs of wolves. The coldest moon
of the year: a clown's face of mock eternity,
laughs at you and me, at life and death, Eden and hell.**

MIDNIGHT BLUES

A calm,
earful, lambent
with starry fear, hears cries
of the mute, hears snores of Honi
Hamaggel.*

Did I
die? My dead
bride lures me into her
grave: cheers Menke, my infinite
lover.

All out
of tears my bride
laughs at her fate, and all
the dead since Adam laugh at birth
and death.

Dawn. A
dream breaks the locks
of time, floods the earth with
all the gold of my aunt Beilke's
legends.

** Honi Hamaggel slept 70 years under a carob tree.*

SPINDRIFT

A pale
grass on a street
of New York, under a
stone, asks the steel-clad June if Spring
is here.

Through a
towered window
pane, a peep at the sky
tells us how eternal our love
will be.

My love
lives at the grave
yard with a heart of grass.
A miser's god hoards the gold of
sunset.

The days
do not tire to
count her lost hours. The nights
do not end to yearn for her by
gone moons.

The clouds —
witch-boats, propelled
by the wind, sail to take
us all to the nearby land of
nowhere.

WHY WE ALL DIE (cinquains)

The sun
dies, dusk in, dusk
out when it tires of its
own light. Lions die when they tire
of their

own roar.
Stars drown in all
rivers when they tire of
the skies in summer nights. We all
die when

we tire
of dawn as of
dusk, of Keats' nightingale,
as well as Poe's raven.
God will

die when
he will tire of
dull divines as well as
of our sins; of ruling heaven
and earth.

WAITING FOR ETHEL

New York is rushing
under the earth, climbs over
and over Babel.

A flowerpot in my
bachelor room faded to the
last summer's endbud.

Come O come Ethel:
My room is nerve-ridden with
your silence. O come!

Moments are eager
ears which pine away for the
echoes of your steps.

Which storm can outhowl
this silence? O I am a
roomful of yearning.

A speck of dust is
a crumb of eternity.
Who am I, life, death?

Darkness wavers, falls.
A voice says: there shall be light
and ho, you appear!

ETHEL, MENKE'S

I swear
here at your grave,
by my first cry, by your
last laugh, we are one, my yearning
woman.

The angel of love
reveals infinity for
ever-oned lovers,
before they are born. Our love
has no beginning, no end.

Hence, we
lived before the
first Adam. We will live
beyond the last Eve, in Eden
or hell.

Our love
is undying,
till seraphs refuse to
guard God's throne, until God returns
to dust.

At the end of night
and dawn, tears and laughter will
still be left of me,
an eager echo in some
timeless world, calling you from

wondrous
dreams, as you crave
for me, in neverland.
We will meet, my love, like fire through
whirlwinds.

NEARBY EDEN



AZAEEL

The fallen angel Azael
had to fall ever and ever,
between the mountains of darkness
and the mad, rock-throwing river
Sambation.* Prayers, since Adam,
did not allay God's hand of wrath

until brother Satan appeared
to tell him God's secret name, hence
he can fly out of hell to meet
his love Emtelai, awaiting
him on earth, in the Eden of
her dreams under the tree of life.

MIDNIGHT RIVER BALLETS

The star-struck rivulet
at our old forest house
lures the whole celestial
hierarchy out of
Eden: seraphim, thrones,
cherubim, archangels
flow through the charmed streams in
wondrous river ballets.

** According to Jewish lore the ten lost tribes of
Israel live beyond the legendary river Sambation.*

FIRST POET

God, the first poet
created worlds out of words,
as the last poet
will at the end of love, hate,
tears, laughter, good and evil.

God overblessed as
if driven through prayer-mills;
bored with sins as with
divines will return heaven
and earth to tohu-bohu.

VISIT TO NEARBY EDEN

There is no sin or
dung here, how can the Garden
of Eden blossom?

There is
no sorrow here,
how can a blade of life
rejoice when a new Spring is on
its way?

There is no one to
cry here, without the cry, how
can laughter echo here?

There is only dawn
here, in all heavens I long
for earth-old darkness.

Even God is bored
in Eden, tired of so much
heaven, will reach down
like you and I to never
worlds, to never and never.

STRANGE FAMINE

There is a famine
of noise in Eden. O if
some jester would cry
wolf just to frighten the dull,
eternal silence away.

There is
a famine of
pain in Eden. Toothless,
goody-goody souls pray for real
toothaches.

Storm birds
do not presage:
storm is on the way to
save us all from the fate of the
dumb-mute.

Angels sneak out of
Eden to gather all the
sorrows on earth from
flea to elephant and hoard
them like Satan's rare treasures.

RESURRECTION

When each man who died
since Adam will rise again
where shall we hide from
all evil if not in the
darkness before Genesis.

RETURN SHOCK

No fear frightens as
the light of day. God, let us
return to our graves.

DREAM OF A SERPENT

Every serpent, cursed
to crawl forever in dust,
dreams he is tall and
handsome, sees Eve in dreams nude
as fire — thrill of the first sin.

PETITE WOMAN

After a hundred
and one ages in hell, I
have been sent to the
Garden of Eden (for good
behavior) on a hundred
years and a dawn probation.

Now I pray for safe
return to hell. For me and
Rivke, my fire-lit
petite woman, a chimney
nook is enough to love, dream
on the wondrous sinful earth.

HUNTER'S MOON



FOLLOW THE LEADERS
(on visiting the Gettysburg National Cemetery)

Follow the leaders:
archfiends blessed the swords of the
North as of the South.

Follow the leaders:
man and beast, skunk and angel,
dove and grave digger.

Skull and crossbones are
the pirate's flag. All flags are
pirate flags. Let us

follow the leaders,
our lords and saviors beyond
God to the Eden

where all dead soldiers
are heroes where every home
is a medaled morgue.

HUNTER'S MOON

I see the hunter's
moon over soldiers' graves, time
to pray for the end

of hoorayed heroes,
war and drums, honored carrion
of unknown soldiers,

admired by naked
vultures, by sword and buckler
swallowers. Time to

pray for the end of
all flags — the many colored
deaths, hail the tomb bats!

REINCARNATED QUEENS OF ENGLAND

BEHEADED QUEENS

All the beheaded
queens of Henry the Eighth, the
noble monster of
England, reincarnated
into kind mice, each leaving
her private mousehole
to accommodate a queen
of wasps, to hatch old
majesties in a new nest,
to sting his treacherous balls.

GOOD QUEEN BESS

Elizabeth the
First, Good Queen Bess transformed
into a hedgehog
caterpillar — a woolly
bear, winter-worn, a frozen

vision. She rises
each Spring to spin a cocoon
in a desolate
castle, wrapped in silk of a
royal worm — a queenly moth.



LOVE UNDERFOOT

Love is
Keats' nightingale,
beheaded, the wondrous
song turned into the cry of the
betrayed.

O hear
the Spring-call of
the bullfrog in mudlands,
croaking: jug-o-rum, dear mud, you
are mine.

The moon,
the oldest flirt,
is the kissed doll of lies,
though we are infinite as mud,
my love.

DREAMERY

Terah,
the god-smith, in
a midnight vision, called
out of hell Baal Zebhubh, the lord
of flies.

LAND OF NOD

All stars
are evil eyes
in Land of Nod where the
same Cain slays his brother Abel
again.

VEGETARIAN SIGHT

I see
the sun go down
at a slaughterhouse as
my head, under a butcher's ax,
on sale.

HYMN TO DEAFNESS AND BLINDNESS **(twin Menke-sonnet for lovely Devra)**

Strike me God with deafness when I hear the laughter of a hick
which outgrieves the gloom of Ellenville, Hell-enville, Boreville.
Hail-Hail the hicks are here with mouths full of dull gags, with
highpitched voices over hicktown, with long tongues like
woodpeckers, brainpeckers, fit to be dolled with
dunce-caps, motleys, baubles — the fools' scepters.
Hicks — laughing jackasses, hillbillies
of honky-tonk. Barhoppers soar
like bearbugs, beerbugs, swim, drown
in a beer paradise.
You may be at rest
among gossip
folks, honking
like geese.

Strike
me God
with blindness
when shy, shined bump
kins gawk, gape, yawn, gloat,
stare openmouthed, ready
to chew you alive like cud.
Tonguesters, bubblers babble in flocks
like crows. Their words have horns to stab, all
borehearted words have claws, scratch each other,
as if burrowed under itch mites. O brother,
if you do not know where is the most yokelish
solitude on earth, come to Ellenville, Hell-enville,
Boreville, Hick-Haven, and cheer: hula-hula, hoop-hoop-hoop.

BEYOND THE ATOMIC WAR

BEYOND THE ATOMIC WAR

At the end of all
life on earth, only hangmen
will go to heaven,

will build gallows in
the Garden of Eden —
the Garden of Evil.

A chain gang of nine
hosts of angels with maimed wings
will be chased out of

seven heavens, will
be hanged on the only tree
of life — the tree of doom.

Hangmen will rule all
heavens. God will stare at each
noose, will hide in the
dark dreams of the condemned, in
fear of light, in fear of life.

DIRGE

Lazy clouds drizzle
darkness. Night and day fall and
rise to cheer the dead.

A wounded cherub
flies on a torn wing crying
to all dead: Help! Help!

END OF BATTLE

The moon is a shroud
for unburied, known and un
known soldiers: sleep, peace.

END

End of dawn and dusk.
I hear the earth bombed out of
its orbit, wails with
all cries since Genesis, since
Eve's first tear out of Eden.

BEYOND THE END

Still left will be the
spinning maiden Arachne
who turned into a
spider at the warp and woof
by the goddess Athena.

The spider will spin
bridal dreams for the new Eve.
A new Adam will
lure again out of her charm:
a world of Cains, kings, maggots.

PRINCE OF DARKNESS

All life
on earth returned
to prebirth. Still left is
Satan. Let us hail the Prince of
Darkness.

ENVOI

We shall all be unborn again.

All winds are kin of the unborn.

Ask my unwritten poems,
how life is in the land of the unborn.

God is a child of the unborn.

WEDDING IN PONAR

WEDDING IN PONAR
(twin haiku)

A wedding without
the bride, without the bridegroom.
The angel of death
is the master of
ceremonies. Satan is
the guest of honor.

*Ponar was a death center near Vilnius where
most Jews of Lithuania were shot by the Nazis.*

CRIES OF PONAR
(tanka-cinquain embrace)

Neither man, nor God
hears the cries of my people,
in Ponar. The winds
roam like flick-flock thoughts of the
doomed against the firing squads.

Only Satan hears
their prayers: O come Satan,
be our savior.
O fallen angel, find God:
in hideland, dead or alive.

If you
find him heaven
less — an endless void, dead
as the dream of Isaiah, prince
of peace;

dead as the little
child who led the lamb, wolf, kid,
leopard like lovers, —
O then let us bury him
among the whipped, mocked, gassed Jews.

If you
find God alive,
drive the Lord of sin out
of Eden into the hell of
Ponar.

Will my people ever
cease wailing in Ponar? All
nights are dreamless here.
Time is yearless as if no
one was ever born on earth.

Hear the prayers of
the dead: No, not Messiah,
lead us Satan to
the end of all cries, to the
splendor of a new heaven.

NEWS FROM HEAVEN

Where O where is God?
The dead bring news from heaven:
God died. The serpent
winds around the tree of life.
The doomed in Ponar curse their
creator, cry: good riddance!

Where O where is God?
He was not seen in Ponar
not heard in our graves.
Could it be, Lilith with all
her charms lured him off his throne?

HAIKU

All dead beggars on
Beggar Alley beg crumbs of
life from a dead God.



WINTER SCENE

I see the trees of
Eden in a park of old
New York. God, dead, is
wrapped in shrouds of snowlight.
Angels come to bury him.

ON GREATNESS

To be alone like
God, before he said: there shall
be light, before he
created the bug and the
eagle, the graves and the stars.

RACE OF GHOULS

MOURNERS

Like Job
with a wreath of
boils, let us rend our clothes,
shave our heads, sit on a mourner's
low stool,

and dream of the end
of Job's grief, the end of the
super race of ghouls,
their throats filled with ashes of
our people: world, say amen.

RACE OF GHOULS

This
is not
a poem.
It is a curse,
no bomb can shatter,
no gas-chamber can choke,
against all the ghouls — the East
as the West, the same evil race
of ghouls, all true lovers of dead Jews.
No darkness frightens as the cruel daylight,
on the scorched alleys of my erased village:
Michalishek — dreamland of Lithuania.

Night
in, night
out, dream in,
dream out, I see
my aunt Beilke in
moonlit shrouds tell wondrous
tales. Beyond all beyonds, I
hear a voice calling: Rise deathless
Jews from Ponar, Auschwitz, Treblinka,
like David, father of Messiah, each
one with a stone in a sling, bring again and
again the head of a ghoul, in a shepherd's bag.

HALF MOON

I see the half moon
like the split head of
the angel of death.

All dead rise at a
new dawn. All coffins
return to their trees.

HITLER'S LAST ORDER

Satan,
I order you
and our arch brethren to
build gas chambers in heaven, turn
into

immortal gallows
the trees of Eden, to hang
the dead Jews again,
to behead all angels. God
in chains shall shout: Heil Hitler!

END OF SATAN

Satan entangled
in a giant cobweb, trapped
by his own spiders
struggles, in vain, to wing out
of his tomb. End of Satan.

AMEN, SELAH

Let us
bless the hands which
will hang the last hangman,
as if they were the hands of God:
Amen.

Let us
bless the ax which
will chop the last gallows
for the fires of a cozy hearth:
Selah.

MY EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY



HOW SAD

God was born mother
less, never had the joys of
a little child who
clasps hands in wonder as
it sees all heavens like toys.

MY EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY

No more
years left for
me before my
fare-ye-well to the
last star. Still mine
are some twilights to dream of
all my son's dawns beyond me. Mine
are the humble charms of my little
woman before I am a tale of tales
which the rivulet tells across the road of
our old forest house. I shall live longer in the
wonderworld of my remaining days than the dullard,
turtle, the hoarding fool, a hundred and one dreary Junes.
O so many splendrous hours before my unending end-end.

Simeon the son of Rabban Gamliel said: All my days I have grown up among the wise and I found nought better than silence. (Ethics of the Fathers, Chapter one/17.)

GREAT LESSON

Learn from
the sages
the wisdom of
silence. Learn from stones
that silence is gold. Learn
from the Zohar that silence
is the mother of light. Learn from
a firefly the rhythm of the spheres.

ON LEARNING TO HEAR

To hear the first cry of Adam and Eve when they were driven
out of Eden. To hear the rock which Moses hit, wailing
in the desert of Horeb. To hear Poe's raven croaking: nevermore,
to a spurned lover in love with self-doom who sees
the late sun fall like a crash of smashed mirrors.
To hear Lilith whine for love among the
eunuchs of heaven as she whirls nude
in a torch-dance through the endless
unknown. To hear the sin-starved
Satan bless the cursed. To
hear the first laughter
echo in the
last valley
of grief.

TROIM, MY DAUGHTER

I left you like
a waif, a bereaved
child when I joined the hungry
chorus of America:
"Brother, can you spare a dime?"

Your new strange dad was
a red-browed dullard with a
head like the crown of
boreland: sparkproof, he taught your
sparkling mother the ever
ever virtues of a bore:

A bore is timeless,
a pendulum on a hand
less clock, swinging to
and fro, fro and to. He lives
on the rainless cloud: Yokel.

Was he an old storm
or a young creeping thing? Did
he die? All bores are
deathless since dustdevils howl
harrow, since the oldest bore
on earth Methuselah died.

Troim, my daughter, the
end is like a last kiss of
a life-long lover.
My days at sundown complain,

they are tired of light. Beyond
me who will hear the wind tell:

Once upon a time
there was a Menke. I will
be unborn again.
The unborn are infinite
as an unreached goal, as God.

See me chased out of
Eden among sin-eaters,
the fallen angels.
See me in your dreams as I
serenade you forever
and a day, in my poems.

CHEERS TO THE NEW YEAR'S EVE OF TWO THOUSAND

I see the cheering
crowds welcome home the year of
two thousand. Where O
otherwhere will I be? There
will be no danse macabre.

I will not return
to dust but to light, to you
my son. I will by
pass seven heavens to be
in your every turn and whim.

See me heavenless
as earth, deathless as our love.
Raise a cup of wine,
I will cheer world in, world out:
l'chaim, to life, my son.

HEERSHE – DOVID

my son,
I see every
falling leaf of autumn:
an immortal ghost of dust, God
and stars.

I hear
the last words of
your still unborn child: the
day ends, all days end, end, all stars
fall, fall.

We will
not vanish my
son, we will live in the
old tales which folks will tell at their
firesides.

THERE IS NO LAST DAY, MY SON

Even
my last day
on earth is all
wonder, my son, still
one more sundown left for
me in the same dreamworld as
the first which Adam saw as if
it were Genesis again. A lone
butterfly, one of God's poems, on my
window tells me how many ages in a
last hour. All last hours know how much light there is in
the darkness on the face of the deep. Dying is a
vision like the reflection of a bird over the dusk
lit stream, at our forest house. I see you, all Menke, in the
march of tomorrows. We shall meet undying, in our private sky.

ON THE EVE OF FOUR SCORE

Come O come kind death.
At four score, it seems too late
to live, too late to
die though my grave is patient
under the smoke-chased stars in
the dimals of New Jersey.

HARVEST DOLLS **(on aborted children)**

Children swept as with
a witch's broom into the
dark bags of nightmares,
suckle the breasts of Lilith,
mother of unborn children.

O never-never
children, left of you is God's
kiss, his word to start
with you a new Genesis,
beyond the last death on earth.

Only the unborn
will be born in God's image,
will say with him at
the end of joy, grief, rot, bloom:
let the first dawn rise again.

ON KNOWLEDGE

Learn from
a doomed fly to
pray in a cobweb, learn
from a whipped dog to howl against
the moon.

Learn to
see all light like
the blind, learn from darkness
to create a never-dying
daybreak.

MENE – MENE

Hymn to the hand which
Daniel saw writing doom
on the castle-wall
of King Belshazzar: mene
mene, tekel upharsin.

O hand of doom, write
my last wish and testament.
Throw all my poems
in the wind: some will wind like
shrouds around the first and last

Adam; some will fall
like Sodom apples, the fruit
of the cursed, some will
live in wondertales, will fly
world in, world out to reach the

dream where
angels still climb
the ladder which Jacob
saw on his way to his love, to
Haran.

AGES HENCE

My love of ages
hence, see the beginning and
the end of heaven
and earth, see the end of man,
beast, bird, God, when you pass

my ancient tombstone, sunk
under heavy moss, nameless,
long-forgotten, an
unborn poet from never
worlds who never lived or died.

NOCTURNAL

Any speck of dust knows:
in every newborn child
there is a first look
at the last sundown.

In the darkness of the blind
there is a hidden daybreak
which only the blind can see.

At a first handshake,
someone waves farewell.
Any speck of dust knows.

Envoi

My son,
I heard your first laughter.
Who will see your last tear?

HYMN TO A NEWBORN MOUSE

Hymn to the newborn
mouse, squeaking: Hello God! All
winds are merry, cheer
you with drums and dance. Child of
fear, am I your only friend?

Is God among all
your enemies? There is more
wonder in the first
live squeak of a baby mouse
than in all dead nightingales.

DAWN IN SAFAD

Safad*
at dawn is near
the land of Havilah
where God creates gold since the first
sunrise.

SUNDOWN

Holy
Ari** says: all
things at sundown are wounds
of you and me, of man, beast, king
and worm.

* *Safad – Cabala-town in Israel*

** *Holy Ari – famous Cabalist: 1534-1572*

SONNET TO THE WORM

Why
O why
is the worm
here, if not to
let us know, there is
as much nothingness in
everything as everything
in nothingness. Even the worm
has God's image like you and me, like
King Lear and the horsefly: all God's children.
The worm is our infinite pal on earth, our
redeemer of good and evil, of the true sword
and the false rainbow. See God's eternal hand leading
the worm, over and above the great beyond, to his throne.

Envoi
(cinquain)

O learn
from the worm to
return to dust. Learn from
dust, to welcome the worm — ruler
of man.

AUTUMN REVERIES

I see each falling
leaf rise again in the wind
to show you and me
and the dying moth, at dusk,
how endless the end may be.

I see God lonely
in naked autumn, without
the dove and the beast,
beyond the last life on earth,
yearning, in vain, for our sins.

STRAY THOUGHT

God does not know he
created heaven and earth,
the rose or bedbug.
God was never born and lives
ever, ever, forever.

PEACE

All
roads lead
to the land
of nowhere: peace.
Where O where is the
land of nowhere? Ask Eve,
the mother of all Cains, all
graves on earth. Ask any robin
with song on its wings who never reached
Spring. Ask death, sterile as an angel who
learned from dust to twin the slave and the king, the
rainbow and the flea. Only the unborn will out
live all who were and will be born, will outdeath all who
will die in castles, in lovers' arms or on the gallows.

RIVKE

Rivke,
the tiniest
life is an hour or two
with God, Eden, hell: a star-lit
fate-map.

Our love
is endless as
time but the grass on our
graves knows, even time ticks to its
end, end.

TWO LOVERS
(for Rivke)

Two lovers — mere souls,
escaped from Eden
on one figleaf like
an elf's rowboat on
the river of Pishon.

Two souls — one prayer:
kind winds, rush us back
to the good old earth,
to tears, laughter, sin, love.

EPITAPH

Rivke, come to my
grave in your bride-dress
with a cup of wine.
O hear, beyond me,
the wind, the songsmith
sing to you my lost,
unwritten poems.

GODLY EARTH

No heaven is as
Godly as the earth,
no world as great as
the only life of
you or me, the ant
or the camel-bird.

DESTINED DAY

Like Moses I know when my last sundown will splendor.
I will die in this old forest house on the day
which I destined, reach the dream where I meet my
love Paragoolt, the queen of unborn brides,
in the land of nowhere where no one
ever lived or died, all bypassed
the dust of which heavens
are made. Every star will
be our home, each cloud —
our bride-bed: Hi,
Paragoolt,
Hi – Ho!

OATH

My son,
I swear by
my two hundred
and forty eight bones,
by my life and death, we
shall meet yonder and yonder
not as ghost to ghost in spooky
heavens but clicking wine glasses at
“Eagle and Child” pub, cheering: Ho-Ho-Ho!
L’chaim!

GOD O GOODLY PAL

Just a small step of
time to the next century,
God O goodly pal,
let me in to see a dawn
or two beyond my swansong.

O to be alive!
To be an outcast in the
dumps or all divine;
share the grief of a frightened
worm praying to dust for help.

To be a falling
star of the doomed. To be in
the cries of a nude
whore whipped in the market as
vile hordes roar hallelujah!

God, give
all the heavens
to the pious specters.
Curse me with the sins of the earth.
Amen.

CONTRASTS

1.

Mother Death

Death is
the truth of
all truths. Let us
hail mother death, the
mother of the earth who
lulls us all to sleep, the storm
as well as the mute. O listen
to the lullaby at each newborn
child: cheers, my little guest, browse awhile on
earth, you are mine from your first to your last cry.

2.

Mother Life

Living is the truth of all truths, the music
of the winds, the tenth planet, in and out
of orbit. Death is the lie of the
ages, fib of the nitwit. Our
first light will ever dawn, our
last dusk will outbirth all
nights, all deaths. We live
on as the re
turn of June,
as God.

PARAGOOLT

I see
mud-puddles in
late autumn, at sunset,
like mirrors where fallen angels
gather.

And I, death-proof at
the dying day clench in my
arms the girl I meet
in dreams whom I named without
rhyme or reason — Paragoolt.

My love Paragoolt
will walk out of my poems
to see how sad each
dawn on my grave will rise. She
will not leave the treasure hunt

of my yellowed, long
forgotten poems, in search of
words which conquer death.
Come Paragoolt, we shall love
forever and a moonbow!

"...you will swim in a sea of borscht,
climb the mountain of marzipan..."

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