

# Man-Gods and Martyrs



Der Sabbathabend in der Stadt, Jacob Steinhardt, 1920

The seething blackness of Aiud, Baia,  
Suceava, Sighet, and Pitesti  
Was not simply the absence of light  
But an antilight whose substance was the malice  
Of demons and the hatred and violence  
Of men. When Communism fell, it fled

And hid away in the lairs and crevices  
Deep within the barren rocks.

Thirty years  
Have passed, and man is once again a wolf  
To man. Fear of death and suffering  
From an unknown germ calls forth the hideous  
Darkness from its hidden pits, obeying  
Like a golem conjured by a grimoire's spell,  
Gathering, clabbering, twisting, coiling,  
Round men and women—who would save their flesh  
By injection of murdered children made—  
Who would gain freedom by refusing it  
To those whose consciences are uneasy—  
Who would prolong their lives by denying  
A livelihood to hesitant neighbors.

Lies and deceit pollute the thoughts in our heads;  
Anger and unkindness are our daily bread.  
Is this the apex of cosmic evolution—  
Cain killing Abel over and over again?  
Is this how the man-god will appear—  
By tormenting every unmasked speaker?  
Or will mercy visit us again  
Through the rising of another generation  
Of holy martyrs and confessors—  
Patterned after Paisie, Arsenie, George,  
Shepherds of Romania—God-bright guides  
Of the faithful remnant to Truth and Light,  
Mankind regenerated in a hillside hut  
By an elder's beaming smile and gentle tut?