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THE POETIC ACHIEVEMENT OF DELMORE SCHWARTZ.

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THE POETIC ACHIEVEMENT OF DELMORE SCHWARTZ

by

LILA LEE VALENTI

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June 8, 1973  
date

Allen Mandelbaum  
Chairman of Examining Committee

June 12, 1973  
date

SR Wein  
Executive Officer

Allen Mandelbaum  
Supervisory Committee



## Abstract

### THE POETIC ACHIEVEMENT OF DELMORE SCHWARTZ

by

Lila Lee Valenti

Adviser: Professor Allen Mandelbaum

Although there have been many brief essays on works of Delmore Schwartz, there has been no comprehensive study of his general poetic contribution. With the aid of unpublished materials (letters, journals, drafts) provided by Dwight Macdonald, this dissertation traces Schwartz's poetic development from his apprenticeship years to his death, and undertakes an evaluation of his poetic achievement.

Part I discusses the thematic, stylistic, structural, and rhetorical constituents of Schwartz's art, and the literary influences he assimilated in creating a singular voice. All those elements were evident in his earliest published work. Critical expectations resulting from this work were unusually high; yet Schwartz, in his fascination with beginnings, felt a recurrent need to create new forms, inevitably

hindering critics who brought to his subsequent writings evolutionary concepts of artistic progress.

Part II is concerned with Schwartz's early, unpublished poetry and his first published volume, In Dreams Begin Responsibilities. The adolescent manuscripts reveal precosity, particularly in their display of a poetic control comparable to that of the first published works. Some examples of those early poems are included in an appendix. In Dreams Begin Responsibilities presents an ambitious range of genres from short story through lyrics to poetic drama, forms which Schwartz mastered characteristically after only one or two fledgling attempts. In this section some of the most successful lyrics are analyzed at length to explore the nature of Schwartz's intellect, wit, and poetic virtuosity.

Schwartz's middle period, the topic of Part III, includes some minor works and two notable projects, Genesis: Book I, and Vaudeville for a Princess. In Genesis the poet explores, in depth, the intricate ramifications of the self's attempt to understand itself and its place in history and society. This framework enables Schwartz to draw upon techniques of irony, self-referential, historical, social and intellectual witticisms, while reflecting what he calls the "morbid pedestrianism" of everyday life. Genesis: Book II, an unfinished

continuation, is briefly considered. Vaudeville for a Princess, whose poems were written during and after World War II, is the outcome of Schwartz's inconclusive and self-mocking search for a new and appropriate poetic stance in a changing world.

After a long poetic paralysis, Schwartz began again with new subjects and new styles. Part IV, mainly concerned with Summer Knowledge, examines the poet's attempt to abandon his old, self-conscious, ironic mode, and to find the ground and rhetoric for a new, organic affirmation. To this end, Schwartz turns to seasonal and cyclic imagery, and to long, flowing, alliterative lines for a joyous celebration of life and art. Although new poetic influences can be seen in this poetry, Schwartz does not manage to fashion from them and from the new rhetoric a truly effective voice. That Schwartz was aware of this failure is evident in the uncollected poems of his final years. In these last poems he acknowledges his previous elation as deceptive, and abandons his earlier conviction in poetry as ultimate value.

During the 1950's, he worked on a long poem, Narcissus or a History of Love. Brief passages from Narcissus were published; the entire typescript is included in an appendix.

Part V deals with Schwartz's use of the Narcissus myth to focus upon his own position and career as poet. Since many of the major themes and techniques of his previous work, such as self-consciousness, self-love, mirror imagery and self-reflexive reference, are recapitulated in Narcissus, this long poem provides a perspective from which the achievements and limitations of Schwartz's poetic work may be considered.

## PREFACE

Although there are numerous short critical articles on the various works of Delmore Schwartz, there is no comprehensive study of his poetry. The purpose of this paper is to make that study--to examine the nature and development of the poetry, its influences, its relation to its time and the work of other poets, and to evaluate the total achievement.

Delmore Schwartz was a prolific writer, publishing five volumes of poetry, two volumes of short stories, a translation of Rimbaud, and over one hundred essays, book and film reviews. And there was no lack of critical reaction. During his lifetime many critical articles appeared in response to each of his books. At Schwartz's death a number of personal appreciations attested to his conversational wit and his impact on others. In the years since his death definitive studies of his life, his fiction, and his poetry became possible, and are presently in various stages--some completed, some in progress, and some yet to be attempted. Morton Seiff is working on a biography, which, hopefully, will correct some of the misinformation that has accumulated

surrounding Schwartz's life. The 1970 publication of Schwartz's Selected Essays by Donald Dike and David Zucker firmly established his reputation as a critic. These well-chosen essays, ranging from 1938 to 1962, reveal the extent of Schwartz's critical insight and confirm his position at the leading edge of many of the intellectual movements of his time. In the field of fiction no comprehensive study seems to be forthcoming, but perhaps none is warranted, for the two volumes of short stories elicited some excellent critical essays in the past. What remains to be done is a general assessment of Schwartz's achievement in poetry--the subject of this paper.

This study will deal with the poetry and its contexts from the thirties to the sixties. The career of W.H. Auden through these same years will provide some fruitful parallels and counterpoints. Since Schwartz was an articulate critic, his extensive writings on poetry will be used to illuminate both his attitudes and his practice. Two issues that concerned Schwartz throughout his life warrant special treatment: one involves the influence of cultural, intellectual and artistic antecedents, both recent and ancient, on the individual; the other is the problematic relation of poetry, ideas and belief.

My investigation has been greatly facilitated by having access to Delmore Schwartz's papers. The papers, containing notes, drafts, manuscripts, journals and letters, were apparently abandoned by Schwartz late in 1959, and were generally thought to be lost. Dwight Macdonald, literary executor, recovered the collection about a year after Schwartz's death. Mr. Macdonald made an attempt to order them, but found the task overwhelming for they were voluminous and in incredible disorder. Because of my interest in Schwartz and my willingness to undertake the task, he turned the collection over to me for sorting and cataloging, and for critical use. For the purposes of this study the papers have proved invaluable: the many drafts and revisions of poems reveal Schwartz's methods of composition; the many poems left unfinished or unpublished support the idea of Schwartz's judicial self-criticism, for what is left unpublished is, in general, left deservedly so. A great deal of insight is gained into Schwartz's general vision by his habit of "recording" life: he wrote endlessly, copying snatches of conversation, bits from newspapers, witticisms, felicitous phrases, passing feelings, quotations. It is almost as though life had no significance until it was noted somewhere--in a journal, on a book jacket, the back of an old manuscript--anywhere handy, as long as it was recorded.

Any of these snatches could prove useful to him; many of them did and appear in some form in a poem or story. Thus the papers will prove useful for any future studies on Schwartz. A descriptive catalog of the collection is included in an appendix.

Thanks are due to Dwight Macdonald for permission to quote from Schwartz's unpublished writings, to Mrs. T.S. Eliot to quote from her husband's unpublished letters, and to W.H. Auden and Allen Tate to quote from their unpublished letters to Schwartz.



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## PART I. THE NATURE OF THE POETRY: TEXT AND CONTEXT

### Introduction:

#### Beginning Again and Again

In 1938 with his first volume of poems, In Dreams Begin Responsibilities, Delmore Schwartz entered upon the poetic scene in full command of his medium as had one of his heroes, Rimbaud. Dudley Fitts expressed the general astonishment: "It is hard to believe that this is a first book, the work of a very young man."<sup>1</sup> George Marion O'Donnell, in a review for Poetry, responded similarly: "Delmore Schwartz's In Dreams Begin Responsibilities is one of those rare first books that oblige an immediate recognition of their genuineness as poetry. Indeed no first book of this decade in American poetry has been more authoritative or more significant than this one."<sup>2</sup>

In general, critical acclaim was immediate and widespread. Babette Deutsch felt that Schwartz exhibited

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<sup>1</sup>"Balanced Instrument," Saturday Review of Literature, April 23, 1939, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>"Delmore Schwartz's Achievement," Poetry, LIV, 11 (May 1939), 105.

". . . a sensibility and an intelligence rare in his generation."<sup>3</sup> Allen Tate was even more enthusiastic; in a letter to Schwartz he wrote: ". . . your poetic style is beyond any doubt the first real innovation that we've had since Eliot and Pound."<sup>4</sup>

In Dreams Begin Responsibilities was a tremendous success; yet, the very fact of its success caused conflicting feelings in the critics. First, expectations for Schwartz's poetic future were set unbearably high. Writing in 1943, F.O. Matthiessen looks back on those expectations and the burden they placed upon the young poet:

Five years ago Delmore Schwartz's first book, In Dreams Begin Responsibilities, was greeted with more critical acclaim than has come to any other American poet of his generation, the generation since Auden. As a result Schwartz was placed in the hardest position for a young writer to sustain in a spotlighted age, a beginning poet with a reputation to live up to.<sup>5</sup>

Yet there was another, opposing reaction; many critics, aware of the problems resulting from too much acclaim,

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<sup>3</sup>"Useful Entertainment," New York Herald Tribune, March 5, 1939, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup>Unpublished letter dated January 5, 1939.

<sup>5</sup>"A New York Childhood," Partisan Review, X (May-June 1943), 292.

attempted to counteract them by withholding praise. The review of George Marion O'Donnell quoted previously, a review which calls the poetry "genuine" and "authoritative," ends with a note of caution:

One final word: In spite of Mr. Schwartz's exciting virtues as a poet, it would be unwise to deify him too early in his career. The premature deification of Mr. W.H. Auden, with all its unfortunate effects upon recent British poetry, should warn us against such a procedure. The most we should assert--but we should assert this without qualification--is that Delmore Schwartz has made an admirable beginning.<sup>6</sup>

This attitude of withholding praise in the belief that it would aid Schwartz's poetic development persisted through most of his career. As late as 1955, Wallace Stevens, acting as judge for the Harriet Monroe Poetry Prize, listed his choices in the following order: 1. Randall Jarrell, 2. Richard Eberhart, 3. Delmore Schwartz, 4. Howard Nemerov. In a letter to Elder Olson, Stevens explained:

Schwartz (whose name I have probably misspelled because I cannot find letters from him) seems to me to be the most gifted of all the younger men. But he, too, will make a better showing by and by, I think, and it is only because he does not seem to be entitled to the award presently that I have listed him under the other two.<sup>7</sup>

Neither the great expectations nor the withheld recognition for his actual achievement could have helped Schwartz.

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<sup>6</sup>O'Donnell, p. 108.

<sup>7</sup>Letters of Wallace Stevens, ed. Holly Stevens (New York, 1966), p. 875.

Nevertheless, in retrospect, it is possible to see that such attitudes did not, in themselves, hinder his poetic progress; or, if they did hinder him, at least they are not solely responsible for the problems of his subsequent development.

The usual assumption, one that is widely held, and which is, to some extent, a vestige of the nineteenth century mode of thinking in terms of progress, is that an artist's career consists of an evolutionary, progressive development from trifling early pieces to late mature works. This is not true of Delmore Schwartz. What was impossible for his contemporaries to see was that he would not progress in the usual sense. Schwartz himself seemed less concerned with development than with beginning, with

. . . . . the mystery of beginning  
Again and again,  
                    while History is unforgiven.

F.O. Matthiessen, in calling Schwartz a "beginning poet," and Mr. O'Donnell, in his assertion of Schwartz's "admirable beginning," were, perhaps, being more prophetic than they knew, for Schwartz was, above all, a poet of beginnings: in terms of his career, his beginning is his strongest; in terms of the structure of his poems, his openings are best; in terms of subject, his recurrent concern is with origins and with intellectual, artistic and racial sources. His predilection is revealed in titles such as Genesis: Book One, "The First Morning of the Second World," "In the Green Morning Now Once More,"

"Abraham and Orpheus Be with Me Now"; and in recurring images of early morning light, of early childhood scenes, and of the phoenix. A major mode in Schwartz's poetry is anamnesis, or recollection of origins. Schwartz employs this mode in ways which characterize two of his most important culture heroes, Plato and Freud--for anamnesis refers both to that aspect of Platonism in which one recollects the Ideas which the soul has known in a previous existence, and, in psychoanalysis, to the remembrance of childhood.

Freud (and Schwartz following him) emphasized the importance of beginnings in those earliest experiences which so greatly determine the rest of one's life. Plato, at the beginning of the West's intellectual history, himself, knew the mystery of beginnings, which he always rendered mythically. Plato says in the Laws: "The beginning is like a God, who while he lives among men, redeems all."<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, another, albeit minor influence on Schwartz, discounts the notion that origins are necessarily crude or backward: "The beginning is the strangest and mightiest. What comes afterward is not development but the flattening that results from mere spreading out; it is the inability to retain the beginning."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>VI, 775.

<sup>9</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. Ralph Manheim (Garden City, New York, 1961), p. 130.

Schwartz knew how difficult it was to retain the beginning--both in individual poems and in his career. What he attempted, and perhaps found even more difficult, was to create new beginnings. Typical of dozens of notes throughout his journals is one that reads, "The most difficult thing is to get started: once one has gotten started, it is much easier to get going." In a draft of an unfinished poem which begins with a desire "to summon Plato from the lights," and laments,

(I disappoint myself too many ways,  
Nor can with hopes deceive myself much more,  
--Much more? So I deceive myself once more . . .

ends with the refrain,

And when will I begin again?  
But when will I begin?

In that fragment Schwartz voices the doubt that plagued him most of his life, the possibility that in his hope for fresh starts, he deceived himself. Frederick Amory, writing in the Harvard Advocate in 1948, disregards both the doubt and the hope, treating the notion as a pessimistic certainty; Amory asserts of Schwartz: "His metaphysic is at once solemn and mature: In this our life there are no beginnings but only departures entitled beginnings, wreathed in the formal emotions thought to be appropriate and often forced."<sup>10</sup> Actually, Schwartz's "metaphysic" is not that simple, for the hope and

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<sup>10</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: The Development of a Short Life-Story," Harvard Advocate, CXXXII (November 1948), 20.



doubt create a constantly varying tension. Amory is right only to the extent that Schwartz recognized our self-deceptions with "departures entitled beginnings." In a draft for the unfinished Genesis: Book II he narrates one of many of these false beginnings in the life of his surrogate self Hershey Green:

Hershey made one of his infinite resolutions, such as he often made on New Year's, or his birthday, or any formal beginning,

He promised himself his reformation, his regeneration, his new life. He would study all day long, he would do all his school work perfectly, he would not fight with the boys on the block or become angry,

And everyone would see what a wonder boy he was, how gifted. The promise as always exhausted itself in the satisfaction and exaltation of being made, the pure delight of the thought of a fresh beginning.

But real beginnings, although difficult, were possible; Schwartz managed several fresh starts, if not in his life, at least in his poetry. In 1960 Anthony Hecht observed that Schwartz's poetic career:

. . . has been filled with sudden breaks and new starts that are rash and audacious and unbelievably risky. Yeats apart, I can think of no other poet of recent times, except Robert Lowell, who, after having found an idiom which he could manage with certainty and success, has had the courage of such radical innovation.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>"The Anguish of the Spirit and the Letter," Hudson Review, LXXIV (Autumn 1966), 595.

In this study we shall see how important origins, sources and new beginnings are in Schwartz's poetry and in his career. Before examining the poems themselves, there are general topics to be considered; these topics--poetry and belief, influences, dualities, humor and pathos, the concerns of the poetry, voice, structure, language and rhythm--comprise Part I. Part II deals with the early poetry: juvenilia and In Dreams Begin Responsibilities. Part III treats of the middle poems: the Rimbaud translation, Shenandoah, Genesis: Book One and Vaudeville for a Princess. Part IV is concerned with the late poems: Summer Knowledge and the late, uncollected poems. The Studies of Narcissus, a long poem of which only passages have been published, will be considered in the final section, one which attempts to summarize the entire poetic achievement.

## Poetry and Belief

It is generally agreed that Delmore Schwartz's later works do not achieve the consistently high level of his first volume of poems. Attempts have been made to explain why Schwartz did not accomplish more than he did, why such talent as was evident in the young poet did not develop into greatness. This study is more concerned with what Schwartz actually did achieve; nevertheless, an approach to that achievement may be possible through one explanation of his "failure."

In 1966 R.H. Deutsch wrote an article called "Poetry and Belief in Delmore Schwartz," a title which makes obvious reference to Schwartz's 1940 essay "Poetry and Belief in Thomas Hardy." Deutsch, in his article, sees Schwartz's failure as due to the lack of a structuring belief or a commitment to a limitation that could have "contained" his work. Deutsch argues that as Schwartz ". . . favored openness instead of art, he could not avail himself of the recourse taken by older poets such as Eliot, Yeats, Stevens, or poets a generation ahead such as Tate or Crane, or even of the salvation through 'limits' secured by poets of more recent vintage such as Lowell or Berryman."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Sewanee Review, LXXIV (Autumn 1966), 917.

Deutsch's statements stem from assumptions that are widely held in current literary criticism. The basic assumption is that a poet must order his vision upon a solid conceptual framework--an orderly intellectual scheme or a system of symbols. This assumption has gained credence through various means. One source is Yeats' autobiography--or, more precisely--a reading of the autobiography in which one accepts the fact that Yeats saved himself from the failures of his contemporaries of the nineties by creating his own system. Another source is Eliot's earlier critical pronouncements. In his 1920 essay on Blake, Eliot decreed that Blake failed because he lacked a "framework of accepted and traditional ideas."<sup>13</sup> Since then it has become a critical commonplace that the modern writer must provide himself with a limiting device which would give "shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."<sup>14</sup>

In the absence of a traditional framework of belief, the creation of a new system or of a limiting device would provide what Deutsch refers to as "salvation through 'limits.'" Deutsch thus criticizes Schwartz's lack of that limit which

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<sup>13</sup> "Blake," The Sacred Wood (New York, 1921), p. 143.

<sup>14</sup> "T.S.Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," Dial, LXXV, 5 (November 1923), 481.

would furnish a core for the poetry.

But limit, in terms of awareness of limitation, is, in a way, the core of Schwartz's poetry. In an author's note to Summer Knowledge he writes, "Every point of view, every kind of knowledge and every kind of experience is limited and ignorant." In 1953 he writes to a correspondent: "As for dogmas, they are ubiquitous as critics, and as inevitable. It is Dogmaism (sic) that I suspect and often feel to be the nihilism of opportunists who believe in nothing, not even the authenticity of honest opportunity."<sup>15</sup> The poems repeatedly reveal Schwartz's recognition of limits; he is especially aware of how much of reality is eliminated, distorted, rejected or ignored by viewing experience through a selected structure or pre-patterned order. Schwartz works against ideologies, abstractions and structures of typology and analogy that do not explain the irreducible; he works against doctrine and dogma that obscure reality by predetermining aspects of experience as either inherently meaningful, or as sentimental, gross or vulgar. Schwartz's oppressive epistemological claustrophobia extends to his sense of experience as filtered through temporal-spatial limits. Man's view of

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<sup>15</sup> Unpublished letter to Mr. Flint, dated February 11, 1953.

himself in history is as partial and inadequate as those closed systems which shut out the multitudinous variety of experience. The resulting pathos is that of modern man's inability to master his experiential or intellectual situation. And in the attempt to find a "home" in the present or to wrest order from the individual or cultural past, the seeker is overwhelmed by an "abundance and excess of memories."<sup>16</sup>

As we shall see when dealing with Schwartz's poetic techniques, the frustration of such limitation is countered by a creative thrust toward openness, and by various modes of inclusiveness; however, it is possible here to turn directly to his statements on the relation of poetry, ideas and belief--a subject on which he expressed quite explicit opinions on various occasions, both in reference to his own work and the works of others. Of his own work he writes:

The use of ideas (and of the didactic in certain passages) ought not to be misunderstood. Both are present as a means and as a framework to bring together and to represent perceptions. The intention, so far as it is known, is not to instruct, or persuade, but merely to present what has been seen.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Delmore Schwartz, "The Present State of Poetry," American Poetry at Mid-Century (Washington, 1958), p. 16.

<sup>17</sup>"Acknowledgments," In Dreams Begin Responsibilities, (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1938), n.p.

In an essay on "The Critical Method of R.P. Blackmur," Schwartz makes a more general statement about what he calls the "difficult question" of poetry and belief, asserting that ". . . beliefs in most poetry are only a means, a framework to help the poet represent the ragged, unwieldy facts of experience."<sup>18</sup>

Two years later in 1940 Schwartz wrote "Poetry and Belief in Thomas Hardy," a lengthy article that deals with the function of ideas and belief in the poetry of Hardy as well as in poetry in general. After noting two kinds of poetry which employ beliefs--that is, doctrinal poetry such as that of Lucretius which is written to state belief, and dramatic poetry in which belief is an aspect of the thoughts and emotions of the characters--Schwartz proceeds to explain a "prior way" in which beliefs enter into a poem and operate within the poem whether the poet knows it or not; for they inhabit the poet's mind at a level on which they are not opposed. Hardy, as a characteristic poet, "inherited a substratum of sensibility of a definite character and formed by definite beliefs. . . He inherited this sensibility from his fathers, just as he inherited the lineaments of his face, and he could as soon have changed one as the other."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Poetry, LIII (October 1938), 36.

<sup>19</sup>Southern Review, VI (Summer 1940), 68.

After analyzing several of Hardy's poems, Schwartz comes to a conclusion: "Hardy failed when he tried to make a direct statement of his beliefs; he succeeded when he used his beliefs to make significant the observations which concerned him."<sup>20</sup> Schwartz feels that something essential about the nature of poetry is here in question, and to explain it, he makes use of an Aristotelian concept:

The function of belief was to generalize his experience into something neither merely particular, which is the historian's concern; nor merely general, which is the philosopher's; but into symbols which possess the qualitative richness, as Mr. Ransom might say, of any particular thing and yet have that generality which makes them significant beyond their moment of existence, or the passing context in which they are located.<sup>21</sup>

It is worthwhile to quote at further length from this essay, not only for the content of Schwartz's ideas, but also to suggest the extent of his concern with the problem.

The subject of poetry is experience, not truth, even when the poet is writing about ideas. When the poet can get the whole experience of his sensibility into his poem, then there will be an adequate relationship between the details of his poem and the beliefs he asserts, whether they are true or not. For then he is getting the actuality of his experience into his poem, and it does not matter whether that actuality is illusory or not; just as the earth may be seen as flat. The

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<sup>20</sup> Schwartz, "Hardy," p. 73.

<sup>21</sup> Schwartz, "Hardy," p. 73.



functioning of his sensibility guarantees his asserted beliefs; it guarantees them as aspects of experience, though not as statements of truth. The philosophical poet, as well as any other kind, must meet this test. The details of his poem are neither dramatic, nor lyrical, but there is the same question of the relationship between his asserted ideas and the language, tone, attitude, and figures which constitute the rest of the poem.<sup>22</sup>

In this same essay Schwartz describes the "true philosophical poet" as "characterized by an understanding of ideas and an interest in them which absorbs his whole being."<sup>23</sup> To a great extent this definition fits Schwartz himself. Even if we did not know that he had a rigorous training in philosophy, it is evident from the scope and depth of his essentially philosophical literary essays that his "understanding of ideas and his interest in them" absorb most of his being. The problem at hand is exactly how these ideas operate in his poetry. Schwartz's concern as a philosophical poet is to bring the whole "substratum of sensibility" of his age to a conscious level. His poems reflect the multitude of ideas, emotions and beliefs that inhabit the minds of his generation "at a level on which they are not opposed." Perhaps something like this is intended by M.L. Rosenthal's remark: "It is something deeply familiar that he brings to the fore, something that weeps and snickers unworthily in the back

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<sup>22</sup>Schwartz, "Hardy," p. 77.

<sup>23</sup>Schwartz, "Hardy," p. 73.

alleys of modern hyper-consciousness."<sup>24</sup> However, one could certainly take issue with Mr. Rosenthal's phrasing, particularly the "snickers" and "back alleys."

Even R.H. Deutsch, in his criticism of Schwartz, admits that Schwartz successfully articulates the multiplicity of thoughts and feelings of his age. Yet, curiously enough, he twists the issue into the very basis of his censure: "Like the acutest seismograph, he registers the nuances of this modern awareness--yet approaches the artistic (as well as the philosophic) problem too directly, sacrificing subtlety, durability, and possibly truth."<sup>25</sup>

There is no reason to carp at this statement at any great length; let it suffice to point out some of its shortcomings. First, if Schwartz manages to register nuances, it seems that he has not, after all, sacrificed subtleties. Second, in accusing Schwartz of approaching an artistic problem too directly, Mr. Deutsch confuses directness with artlessness. Thirdly, although Mr. Deutsch makes use--or misuse--of Schwartz's concept (the failure of direct statement of belief in poetry) in one place, he fails to make use of another concept (the relation of poetry and truth) which

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<sup>24</sup>"Deep in the Unfriendly City," Nation, June 11, 1960, p. 515.

<sup>25</sup>"Poetry and Belief in Delmore Schwartz," p. 917.

could have clarified his thinking on the issue. Admittedly, it is difficult to ascertain exactly why any poet did not achieve more than he did; however, Mr. Deutsch offers no real insight into the problem by attacking the very "given" of Schwartz's poetry. And the "given," of course, concerns ideas and beliefs, as Schwartz makes explicit in a foreward to Genesis:

The author needs his beliefs and values to give significance to experience. . . . (T)he present is a time of much variety of belief. Everyone has not only his own point of view, but his own view of Life. No author can assume a community of ideas and values between himself and his audience. Hence he must bring in his ideas and values openly and clearly.<sup>26</sup>

With more detachment than in earlier writings, in a 1958 letter to John Crowe Ransom, Schwartz once again dealt with the problem:

The whole problem of the place of ideas--and of the "ideas of the age" in the writing of poetry is of course insoluble in any final sense, and the most one can expect is a lucid interval between the exposure and destruction of one set of abstractions and the emergence of a new set of enchanting concepts. And it is so difficult to remember how inadequate the old and used-up ideas of the past were while in a state of infatuation with a new set of ideas. But my feeling now is that any set of ideas ought to be regarded just as one regards a set of dishes: they are meant to be used and used up and all of them will be broken sooner or later by the inexhaustibility (sic) demands of "experience," which is itself of course an idea and only an idea to most writers of fiction in

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<sup>26</sup>Genesis: Book One, (New York, 1943), p. viii.

in America. And most critics. The real trouble, I imagine, is that one has to be so defensive about the intellect, about being an intellectual, and about eggheadism because modern poetry is so often attacked as being "cerebral."<sup>27</sup>

Exactly how Schwartz's ideas--and the "ideas of the age"--operate in the poetry will be the subject of the following sections.

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<sup>27</sup>Unpublished letter dated March 22, 1958

### Concerns

Delmore Schwartz's shifting use of the terms "dreams" and "responsibilities" reveals his concern with the range of possibilities for poetry. The title of Schwartz's first book is taken from Yeats' 1914 volume, Responsibilities, in which Yeats uses "In dreams begins responsibility" as an epigraph. In Summer Knowledge Schwartz reverses the phrase, titling the section of poems reprinted from his first volume "The Dreams Which Begin in Responsibilities." The juggling of these terms seems representative of modern poets' search for some kind of order between the artist's personal nexus of emotion and sensation and the objective world of ideas and action.

In the introduction to his translation of Rimbaud's Une Saison En Enfer, Schwartz traces the history of the poet whose vision is in conflict with the existing social order from Blake ("who was perhaps the first poet to feel the need for a new vision of life. . ."<sup>28</sup>) to the Romantics and Baudelaire. "After Rimbaud and until the present day, the need for a new vision becomes more intense and more ingenious of various fulfillments."<sup>29</sup> Schwartz is aware

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<sup>28</sup>A Season in Hell (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1939), p.vii.

<sup>29</sup>Schwartz, A Season in Hell, pp. ix-x.

of the artistic problems inherent in those various fulfillments: the pursuit of the dream with its rambling, self-indulgent and perhaps incoherent nature, or commitment to the "responsibilities" of the public world with its discursive rhetoric of the strident and the banal. The struggle for Schwartz turns upon the relation of formal control to the source of images and ideas, upon language and meaning as mediating the two worlds.

Poetry as "The Dream of Knowledge" (the title of another section of Summer Knowledge), with the possibility of emphasis on either term, allows Schwartz the suggestion of delusion--as in Bacon's "Poesie is a dream of learning"--and of direct truth--that is, of divine inspiration. "Dream," then, represents both our ills and our hopes.

Behind the poetry there seems a sensitive, intelligent, vulnerable animal nature whose nerve centers are in touch with the ideas and attitudes of his age. The personal, self-revelatory modes of the early and middle poetry enable Schwartz to express the brooding, self-conscious concerns of the modern world, particularly its anxiety and search for identity. In exploring anxiety Schwartz exploits his personal guilts and shames. In the search for identity he puts himself under the third degree; using the imperatives of Socrates and Freud to know thyself, he examines his motives, his morals and his indebtedness, attempting to understand himself as honestly as possible. Yet even the

poems which are obviously auto-biographical are distinguished by Schwartz's awareness of all the other guilt ridden lives, and by his ability to express the chaos and unrest of America before and after World War II.

"The age in which one exists is the air which one breathes," writes Schwartz in the introduction to A Season in Hell. "Rimbaud," he feels, "was left breathless by his age. . ."<sup>30</sup> Seventy years later Schwartz found himself breathing correspondingly stale air as he and other sensitive minds of the time attempted to cope with the chaos of their inherited categories, values, and intellectual conflicts. As Irving Howe points out, Auden breathed this same air:

In his limited way Schwartz was the poet of the historical moment quite as Auden was in England: two writers about as different as any two could be, yet each struggling, one with the courage of his chaos and the other with a yearning for new systems, to discover what could be made of "a diminishing thing."<sup>31</sup>

In a manner similar to Auden's, many of Schwartz's poems are deliberately--almost obsessively--imbedded in his own temporally localized situation; names and dates attach the poem to an extra-verbal, historical reality and seemingly guarantee its authenticity:

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<sup>30</sup>Schwartz, A Season in Hell, p. iii.

<sup>31</sup>Delmore Schwartz: A Personal Appreciation, New Republic (March 19, 1962), p. 26.

While I ate a baked potato  
Six thousand miles apart,

In Brooklyn, in 1916,  
Aged two, irrational.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt  
Was an Arrow Collar ad.  
("The Ballad of the Children of the Czar")

More often, however, Schwartz is in the "field" of history and culture rather than limited by a single spatio-temporal situation. He achieves this wider perspective by one of two strategies: one produces a Platonic, the other an Existential stance. In the first type the persona feels, suffers, or participates in the attitudes of his time and place, and then, through a shifting device, a more universal outlook is achieved. Such a shift is accomplished from a world which is "blind, obscene, and poor" by Socrates' finger

Pointing to the sky's inexorable blue  
("Socrates' Ghost Must Haunt Me Now").

Or one moves from the oppression of modern urban life to the sense that something else is at least possible, from

. . . . . where death  
Has his loud picture in the subway ride.  
Where the sliding auto's catastrophe  
Is a gust past the curb . . . .

to:

Ease, warmth, light, the utter showing  
When in the white bed all things are made.  
("Sonnet: O City, City")



In these instances, while the here and now seems all there is, the eternal "leap up." But Schwartz also works in the opposite direction: while articulating a universal human situation, he introduces--subtly or abruptly--a socio-historical referent; thus making the existing social order the mediating context of all thought and feeling. This strategy is evident in "Tired and Unhappy, You Think of Houses," which turns from an archetypal day-dream of being "at home" back to the claustrophobic, mechanized present:

Where close in the subway rush, anonymous  
In the audience, well-dressed or mean,  
So many surround you, ringing your fate,  
Caught in an anger exact as a machine!

Schwartz is haunted by the problems of time:

Time moving, time dying,  
Time perpetually perishing!  
Time is farewell! Time is farewell!  
("Time's Dedication")

In an attempt to deal with being in time, and to find images to articulate modern hyper-conscious man's concern with time and history, Schwartz wrote many prose exercises. The following, typical one is undated:

#### Exercise: That Kind of Consciousness

To see the present as if it were past, head reversed upon the body's trunk, a historian's vision for the prophet. To see "before the war" as it will be after the war, but now, attentive thus, before

the war: blind as Tiresias, stony as Lot's white wife. Remorse instant upon the sin, as the striking of the match, the immediate flame, yellow and black a vine. All knowledge is history. What is needed for it? Knowledge already, memory of the past. To apply the forms of memory to our life as we live it, from minute to minute. In what scenes does this kind of consciousness show itself? The tennis star sees his raised arm, beginning to fall, in the newspaper photograph; the track runner views himself in imagination, before the starting gun, bursting against the tape, breathless, paralyzed at one moment of time by the camera; just as the hurdler sees himself standing sideways in air, his stick just released and falling the other way, forever placed in that aerial passage. What other scenes? A memory of the future: I remember the present: consciousness is memory: the present is memory: I go forwards backwards, a most solemn clown. We hold the present in the future as a past. What other scenes? The present is not seen, but lived-thru as remembered. "Come, we will go into the dining room," he said, and saying it, knew the departure in his words. I stand on top of time, as on the top of a building. Let the lover grasp middle-age at the moment of avowal, also let his middle-age at that time grasp himself as the lover. How is this done? Speak to yourself constantly. The result may be a lasting squint, a lasting deafness. I propose a certain squint: the father views his child in history.

Throughout the poems there is an attempt to understand the disparity between the stupidity, ugliness and banality of daily life and the truth and beauty of the intellectual life. Heinz Politzer's essay "The Two Worlds of Delmore

Schwartz<sup>32</sup> delineates each of these worlds--the private, daily life of the individual, and the world of the intellect. In an acute observation, John Hollander suggests the way in which these worlds interrelate: "There is an apocalyptic quality given to the treatment of the most gently private of personal events by virtue of the fact that they are always on the brink of the relentless current of the life of the mind."<sup>33</sup>

Nor is the life of the mind independent of those private and personal events. A binding circle is completed by the dependencies of the intellectual life which is constantly vexed by guilt and the consuming ego. Schwartz's "wound of consciousness" is his sense of individuality; but the ego's struggle to maintain that uniqueness against encroaching anonymity results in its devouring aspect as it consumes reality and turns everything into the self. Schwartz's genetic search for spiritual, artistic and intellectual sources is obsessive (although characteristic of the age). That search is complicated by the guilt consequent upon the

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<sup>32</sup>Commentary, X (December 1950), 561-568.

<sup>33</sup>"Poetry Chronicle," Partisan Review, XXVII (Spring 1960), 364.

necessary destruction of the very forces and personalities of the past that overwhelm the self with their art, their ideas. The guilt is so deep that it blocks vision, and yet it may be the center of one's very humanity. As both participant and witness, the effort of will required to carry on becomes at times unbearably exhausting.

### The Voice

Much of the acclaim for Delmore Schwartz's early poetry was centered on what critics deemed a new and distinctive voice, one that was "genuine," "authoritative," "innovative." This new voice was hailed both as unique and as representative of the modern urban intellectual. It is not surprising that the voice was seen as simultaneously unique and characteristic, for the notion of "voice" in modern poetry has both an individual and generic sense. This dual aspect is suggested in Auden's well-known passage from "The Poet and the City":

The characteristic style of "Modern poetry" is an intimate tone of voice, the speech of one person addressing one person, not a large audience; whenever a modern poet raises his voice he sounds phony. And its characteristic hero is neither the "Great Man" nor the romantic rebel, both doers of extraordinary deeds, but the man or woman in any walk of life who, despite all the impersonal pressures of modern society, manages to acquire and preserve a face of his own.<sup>34</sup>

And if that "characteristic hero" is unmistakably the poet himself, then the achievement of his poetry is that "despite all the impersonal pressures of modern society,"

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<sup>34</sup>The Dyer's Hand, (New York, 1962), p. 84

he has managed "to acquire and preserve" a voice of his own. Thus the modern personal poet has a characteristic tone of voice, and, characteristically, manages to maintain a unique voice. Delmore Schwartz's poetry exemplifies this dual aspect of the unique and generic voice; he deals with the struggle against anonymity, and, at the same time, achieves an authentic, idiosyncratic idiom to express this modern condition.

In common with most modern poets, Schwartz finds no general world picture, no stock of universally accepted ideas. Thus he elaborates upon his own experience, his own readings. He is unabashedly personal, yet, aware that he is spokesman for many others, he attains an intimacy with his readers, a community of the alienated. It seems contradictory that as Schwartz expresses the aloneness of the human condition, he generates a kind of communion with others who feel the aloneness. However, Schwartz not only accepts this contradiction as one of many against which it is useless to rebel, but he also puts it to work as the matrix of his poetry. Such contrivance results in what M.L. Rosenthal calls his "wryly humorous sense of tangled, painful complexities."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>"Deep in the Unfriendly City," p. 515

Schwartz's ability to manipulate those tangled complexities prompted one critic to refer to some of the lyrics as "terrifying philosophical poems,"<sup>36</sup> and that wry humor is one of the distinctions of Delmore's voice. The combination induced John Crowe Ransom to write to Schwartz: "You have a rare facility for nonsense when you are dead serious that makes for a tone I deeply like. . . . This tone is a wonderfully tonic change from the straightface horrors or despairs or outbursts or commonplaces which beset our modern writing and make it sour."<sup>37</sup>

This tone that Ransom praises is partly due to Schwartz's sensitivity to the competing sounds of his era, as well as to those of the past. George Marion O'Donnell considers it to be ". . . an original verse tone that modifies the English tradition while using it. This is the most significant aspect of his achievement for the new tone seems valid, even essential; indeed it is the one genuinely important modification to come out of the 1930's in America."<sup>38</sup> The components

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<sup>36</sup>R.H. Deutsch, "Delmore Schwartz: Middle Poems," Concerning Poetry, II, 2 (Fall 1969), 20.

<sup>37</sup>Unpublished letter dated only November 14.

<sup>38</sup>"Delmore Schwartz's Achievement," p. 107.

of this distinctive tone present an unusual combination: tough, wry, aggressive urban intellectuality, romantic warmth, a child-like sense of wonder, vulnerability, and a burdened consciousness whose anguish is at times unbearable.

Irving Howe describes Schwartz's prose style as ". . . mockingly reflective, verbally awkward, full of ironic apothegms and burlesque sententiousness, wavering between self-comfort and self-attack. . . the voice of doubt, yearning and modulation," most of which fittingly describes the verse as well. Speaking of both prose and verse, Mr. Howe adds: ". . . his tone was deflated as if it were looking over its shoulder to see whether it was being followed by rhetoric."<sup>39</sup> In this same vein M.L. Rosenthal notes ". . . the almost mocking simplicity of manner, the melancholy idealism that could parody itself so easily and turn into pessimism, the wit that could be all gaiety or turn acidly sardonic. . ."<sup>40</sup> Indeed Schwartz's ability to yoke simple lyric melancholy with sophisticated, ironic weariness is the source of many of his special effects.

Schwartz's distinctive tone seems a disorderly mixture

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<sup>39</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: A Personal Appreciation," p. 26

<sup>40</sup>"Delmore Schwartz," Poetry, CIX, 3 (December 1966), 182.



of wit, idealism, personal guilt and anxiety; nevertheless, the force, immediacy and command of themes is accomplished by a firm intellectual and poetic discipline. Among the critics who have lauded this control are David Daiches and John Hollander. David Daiches noted that Schwartz "keeps his surfaces hard and clear and neutralizes self-pity by wit."<sup>41</sup> John Hollander felt that Robert Lowell was the only other poet of his generation "to control just this sort of intense lyric power."<sup>42</sup> Schwartz's control is not, of course, infallible; nevertheless, as M.L. Rosenthal says, he manages to hold us "even in his failures with the honesty and contemporaneity of his voice."<sup>43</sup>

Schwartz could never have obtained his various tonal effects from the restriction of a single, fixed view-point; however, early in his career he mastered the necessary flexibility by using as models Shakespeare's multiple dramatic voices and some aspects of Eliot's flexibility of tone and stance. That the speaker of Schwartz's poems is almost invariably the poet himself seems a limitation, but actually

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<sup>41</sup>"Some Recent Poetry," Yale Review, XI (Winter 1951), 356.

<sup>42</sup>"Poetry Chronicle," Partisan Review, XXVII (Spring 1960), 364.

<sup>43</sup>"Deep in the Unfriendly City," p. 515.

the speaking self is also persona participating in the various obsessions of the age. Acting as recorder of the thoughts and feelings of his culture, he does so as part of that culture, thus acknowledging the limits of his experience and understanding. The various view-points, then, are neither presented as encompassing a totality of outlook, nor is there the extent of distancing from the subject that full irony demands. Such flexibility as Schwartz does exploit enables him to combine the cynical with the ideal, the grotesque with the beautiful, or the common with the extraordinary; but there is never a satire of general vulgarity without mockery of the vulgarity of self, nor of romantic narcissism without a touch of self-derision.

One of Schwartz's stances, that of clown, enables him to make use of the liberating element in humor, for seriousness can not take account of its own limitation. The psychic aspect of Schwartz's release is, like so much humor, double-edged: it points up the drab, meaningless oppression of existence, and it enables one to continue in that existence. Schwartz does not play fool all the time, for in such a role he would become corruptor, that is, one who in constantly revealing the chaos beneath all our order, perpetrates new meaninglessness. For Schwartz also has the desire to be

synthesizer, praiser of the unifying function of love, and of the possibility of the good, the true, and the beautiful. More often, however, he presents us not with a single view, but with bemused hesitancy before all these complexities.

### The Fathers

For most poets the question of influences on the work involves discoveries of sources, and then presentation of evidence for the manner in which ideas and techniques affect the poetry. With Delmore Schwartz most of this detective work is unnecessary because of Schwartz's explicit acknowledgement of his forefathers, culture heroes and mentors. These forefathers consist of artists, thinkers and writers who have contributed to the heritage of the West and to the formation of his own life, mind and art. The pantheon of masters whose styles and modes of vision enter into Schwartz's world range from philosophers and Biblical patriarchs to musicians, painters and poets, including both ancient and recent forebears. The many "ghosts" who inhabit the poet's sensibility comment on his life story in Genesis. In "Coriolanus and His Mother" four ghosts sit with the poet in a box interpreting a performance of Shakespeare's drama. In other poems he calls on his mentors: "Abraham and Orpheus Be with Me Now," "Socrates' Ghost Must Haunt Me Now," "Let Freud and Marx be wedding guests indeed!" Robert Lowell's poem

"To Delmore Schwartz" quotes:

. . . . "Let Joyce and Freud  
the Masters of Joy,  
be our guests here," you said. . . .<sup>44</sup>

The ghosts fall into three chronological groupings. First are the Ur-fathers, those fathers-of-fathers who originated a genetic line (Abraham), a mode of thought (Socrates-Plato), or art (Shakespeare). Following the Ur-fathers are those who came after, continuing the line or contributing new ideas. In this second group, the "grand-fathers," Schwartz traces his own genetic line from the Biblical patriarchs to his Russian-Jewish grandfathers, and an intellectual line from Aristotle to Kant, Hegel and Kierkegaard. Among the artists in this second group are Vivaldi, Mozart, Beethoven, Swift, Sterne, Flaubert, Dostoevski, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, James and Yeats. The third and last group are the most recent predecessors, the "fathers," including Schwartz's own literal father, the intellectual fathers Freud and Marx, and the poetic fathers Eliot, Joyce and Pound.

Schwartz regards the Ur-fathers with worshipful awe as the very source of his intellectual, racial and artistic identity. From his earliest works to his latest, these

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<sup>44</sup>Life Studies (New York, 1959), p. 53

secular gods maintain a lofty position as both immanent and transcendent divinities. The second group, the "grand-fathers," cause no psychological problems, but a great deal of artistic and intellectual confusion. In contrast to James Joyce and Thomas Wolfe who both lament a lack of spiritual fatherhood, Schwartz feels his age has a plethora of antecedents, an "excess and abundance" of forebears as of memory. In many of his works Schwartz pits one of these ghosts against another testing contradictory theories; he thus creates a dialectical drama with no resolutions, for no unifying vision emerges. The most recent forebears, the "fathers," are the most problematic, for the man who stands in the shadow of their art and their ideas feels himself to be still a child. In the need to become a father himself, the individual must confront his fathers, enacting over and over again the Freudian drama of patrimony and patricide.

Of all these dramas, the most truly Freudian occurs as the culmination of one's genealogical history. Schwartz is fascinated by the historical events that determine the lives of his ancestors:

O Nicholas! Alas! Alas!  
My grandfather coughed in your army,

Hid in a wine-stinking barrel,  
For three days in Bucharest

Then left for America  
to become a king himself.

The decisions of those ancestors ultimately determine so much of one's own life:

Child labor! The child must carry  
His fathers on his back.  
("The Ballad of the Children of the Czar")

These decisions result in the absurd facts of one's own existence--in Schwartz's case, finding himself alive in New York, in the twentieth century with a Jewish heritage, an irresponsible father and an insensitive mother. In Genesis Schwartz recounts--with what seems total recall--the childhood experiences that make the child "the illegitimate father of the man."

Finding his poetic origins in Shakespeare, Schwartz differs from most twentieth-century writers who claim their sources in Homer, Sophocles or Dante. But Schwartz is insistent in his choice of poetic UR-father; he once said the two greatest influences on his work were Shakespeare and the depression of 1929-1937.<sup>45</sup> We have already noted Schwartz's indebtedness to Shakespeare's variety and flexibility of voice. He also learned from the master's insight into character, richness of language, lyric sense

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<sup>45</sup>"Views of a Second Violinist," Partisan Review, XVI (December 1949), 1251.

and control of the sonnet. Schwartz pays endless homage to Shakespeare's genius in poetic tributes, quotations, imitations of lines, images and metaphors, and in re-writings of whole sonnets and plays. The fullest tribute is "Gold Morning, Sweet Prince," which begins:

What the sad and passionate gay player of Avon avowed  
With vivid exactness, eloquent variety is, as immense  
As the sea is . . . . .

The whole of Shakespeare's Coriolanus provides the background for "Coriolanus and His Mother." Schwartz begins poems with powerful Shakespearean lines:

How slow time moves when torment stops the clock!  
("The Conclusion")

He boldly rewrites one of Shakespeare's most successful sonnets, #73, as "The Winter Twilight, Glowing Black and Gold." The very writing of sonnets in the twentieth century seems to put the poet in touch with Shakespeare, and, not surprisingly, whenever Schwartz writes in rhymed iambic pentameter, Shakespearean echoes of image and rhythm abound:

Know time's exhaustion and the spirit's cost.  
("Sonnet: The Ghosts of James and Peirce in Harvard  
Yard")

Another important literary influence is that of the French Symbolists, from whom Schwartz felt that, in common with most modern poets, he learned intensity of language.



Schwartz drew, to some extent, from each of the major sources of this legacy. His main line of descent is, like Eliot's (and through Eliot), from Laforgue and Corbiere, the initiators of that dry, ironic, conversational tone that forms the mainstream of modern poetry. From the more Orphic stream, Rimbaud, as we have seen, proved to be a figure with whom Schwartz could easily identify. And to Baudelaire, whom he also translated,<sup>46</sup> Schwartz is indebted for his infernal vision of the city. Some of this infernal vision comes to Schwartz by way of Eliot; however, Eliot's urban oppression effectively combines Baudelaire and Dante, while Dante plays little or no part in Schwartz's vision. An opening such as "To live between terms" in "O City, City" partakes of Baudelaire's charged emptiness; But then Schwartz goes on to portray his own metropolitan pathos in an unrelenting world of crowds, streets, buildings:

. . . to live where death  
Has his loud picture in the subway ride,  
Being amid six million souls, their breath  
An empty song suppressed on every side,  
Where the sliding auto's catastrophe  
Is a gust past the curb, where numb and high  
The office building rises to its tyranny,  
Is our anguished diminution until we die.

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<sup>46</sup>A book was actually printed, but removed from circulation on the advice of several consultants for New Directions.

Schwartz, maturing as he did a full generation after the poetic revolution of 1909-1910, was easily able to assimilate the lessons of Yeats, Pound and Eliot. Writing on Pound in 1938, Schwartz discusses the Cantos as a "source of literary influence and a profound modification of poetic practice . . . ." <sup>47</sup> What he gained for his own poetry was some of Pound's new kinds of rhythms and energies, his forceful language, and, above all, the direct incorporation of contemporary speech.

What Schwartz admired most in Yeats was his ability to achieve specific effects: ". . . instead of dim images musically sounded, the precise word and the precise observation are used to get a specific emotion on the page. The poet's initial gift for versifying has become the power to get into verbal behavior, into meter and diction, the slightest shift in emotion, the least movement of attitude and tone." <sup>48</sup> Schwartz's early and middle lyrics and ballad-like forms are strongly influenced by those of Yeats, often echoing Yeatsian refrains.

The subject of T.S. Eliot's influence on succeeding

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<sup>47</sup>"Ezra Pound's Very Useful Labors," Poetry, LI (March 1938), p. 331.

<sup>48</sup>"The Poet as Poet," Partisan Review, VI (Spring 1939), 53.

poets is still a subject for critical discussion. Schwartz himself contributed to the subject in his essays "T.S. Eliot as the International Hero,"<sup>49</sup> and "The Literary Dictatorship of T.S. Eliot."<sup>50</sup> Schwartz also contributed a fruitful concept in his notion of the listening voice in Eliot's poetry in "T.S. Eliot's Voice and His Voices."<sup>51</sup> The early Eliot persona with his Prufrockian self-consciousness, his hesitations and questionings--by now such a familiar twentieth-century tone--plays a large role in Schwartz's early poems, as do Eliot's occasional rhymes, his lingering suspensions and thematic irresolutions.

Schwartz felt Eliot to be such an overwhelming force that he occasionally had to make a quip at his expense, such as calling Eliot ". . .an author who acquired an English accent after arriving at the age of reason."<sup>52</sup> Only late in Schwartz's career did he manage to throw off what he felt was an unduly limiting influence. Writing to Van Wyck Brooks in 1952, Schwartz explains his changed position:

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<sup>49</sup>Partisan Review, XII (Spring 1945), 199-206.

<sup>50</sup>Partisan Review, XVI (February 1949), 119-137.

<sup>51</sup>Poetry, LXXXV (December 1954; January 1955), 170-176, 232-242.

<sup>52</sup>"The Vocation of the Poet in the Modern World," Poetry, LXXVIII (July 1951), 225.

To try to be brief as possible about what my change of mind is and some of the reasons for it: I was unaware, although I should not have been, of the extent to which Henry James and T. S. Eliot were hideous snobs in their work. I would have (been) less unaware, had I not been living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and struggling with the unfortunate consequences of an unfortunate marriage. Since that time, I've returned to New York, moved to the country, and gotten married again, all of which has had the effect of making me see with some clarity how one-sided and distorted my own view of literature (and in particular, of the relationship of literature to life in America) had been in certain important respects. I still think that James and Eliot are great authors, but I feel now that the leading social attitudes in their work is (sic) vicious and destructive too often. I do not think the same is true of Joyce, however, for he seems to me to be fundamentally affirmative in a way that neither James and Eliot are (sic). If you happened to have seen any of the criticism I've published during the past four years--particularly my review of "Four Quartets" (the only unfavorable review) and "The Literary Dictatorship of T. S. Eliot" (in Partisan Review in 1949)-- the nature of the change of mind will be clear to you. What I think now, in short, is that although one cannot condemn a literary work because some of its elements are reactionary and despairing, one must nevertheless recognize and evaluate the effect of those elements upon the reader, no matter how eloquent and powerful the book may be. I did not recognize that this was one of the most important things you were doing until I read "The Confident Years" and perceived how much more fruitful as a creative writer I might have been, had I not suffered from too uncritical an admiration of Eliot in particular. For personal reasons which will be obvious to you as well as for principled one, I think, no authors more than James and Eliot would be likely to create so many feelings of self-distrust and conflict of mind in a person existing in my own social and literary situation.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Unpublished letter dated February 8, 1952.

We shall see the marked effect of this change in Schwartz's late poetry.

In the realm of the intellect the father of fathers is Plato, the delineator of the true, the good, and the beautiful. Schwartz feels the metaphysical pathos that Plato has explained as the soul's yearning after the Idea, for always to be in the world of becoming brings one to despair. There is a need for something more, something finished and complete, for the belief that:

All is not blind, obscene and poor.  
Socrates stands by me stockstill,  
Teaching hope to my flickering will,  
Pointing to the sky's inexorable blue  
--Old Noumenon, come true, come true!  
("Socrates Ghost Must Haunt Me Now")

Schwartz absorbed a great deal from Greek philosophy in general and from the Platonic dialogues in particular. When dealing with Schwartz's strategies and techniques we shall see how analogous his humor is to the original Socratic irony, and how his poetic structures parallel the maieutic artistry of the master's dialectic. But which is more relevant here is that Schwartz assimilated the whole Platonic metaphysic.

However, there is another, opposing intellectual force, one that negates hope and the very quest for ultimate

meaning: Existentialism. In a prose piece called "Existentialism: The Inside Story" in Vaudeville for a Princess, Schwartz claims to have studied Existentialism since 1935, that is, some time before Sartre was translated into English. In the essay Schwartz reformulates Heidegger's statement of the Existential dilemma, the fact that no one else can die for you, into: "Existentialism means that no one else can take a bath for you."<sup>54</sup> It is possible to react to this in just the way Kierkegaard did to a like statement in Plato: ". . . it sounds wholly like a jest, and yet it was an expression for the highest earnestness."<sup>55</sup> Kierkegaard explains the need for this this indirect form of communication:

The existing subject is external, but qua existing temporal. The elusiveness of the infinite now expresses itself through the possibility of death at any moment. All positive security is thus rendered suspect. If I am not aware of this in every moment, my positive confidence in life becomes mere childishness, in spite of its having become speculative, strutting superior in the systematic buskins. But if I do become conscious of it, this infinite thought is so infinite as to threaten to transform my existence into a vanishing nothing. Now how does the existing subject reflect this characteristic of his thinking existence?<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Vaudeville for a Princess (New York, 1950), p. 4

<sup>55</sup>Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. D. Swenson and W. Lowrie (Princeton, New Jersey, 1941), p. 81.

<sup>56</sup>Kierkegaard, p. 76.

Schwartz provides the answer to this question:

You must die your own death. But the same is true of taking a bath. And I prefer the bath as an example to death because, as Heidegger further observes, no one likes to think very much about death, except indigent undertakers perhaps. Death for most is a distant event, however unpleasant and inevitable.<sup>57</sup>

The same view prevails in Schwartz's 1946 essay on Camus, "The Meaningfulness of Absurdity." Schwartz's own sense of the absurd stems from the ordinary data of existence; Camus, he feels has neglected the absurdity of the quotidian. Discussing Caligula, Schwartz argues that Camus, by fastening on the monstrous, the extraordinary, and the accidental, actually suggests a lack of conviction in the absurdity of existence:

But surely the absurdity of existence, if it is in essence absurd, makes itself manifest in any kind of situation . . . If the world is one in which everything is given and nothing is ever explained, in which the very fact that man has the gift of reason and is thrown into a world of unreasoning things constitutes the absurdity of existence, then surely what is daily, usual, ordinary and never celebrated in newspaper headlines ought to be the subject-matter of the absurd or existential author.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Vaudeville for a Princess, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup>"The Meaningfulness of Absurdity," Partisan Review, XIII (Spring 1946), 247.

In his own poetry Schwartz makes manifest the absurdity of the quotidian; poem after poem expressed the ridiculousness of the "daily, usual, ordinary and never celebrated in newspaper headlines." The very ridiculousness of physical being is expressed in his heavy, clumsy, lumbering sense of bodily existence. This absurdity results in a physical bathos, the concomitant of metaphysical pathos. Together they depict the predicament of the existing individual who is a mixture of temporal and eternal, physical and spiritual.

Among the most important of Schwartz's intellectual heroes and demi-gods are Marx and Freud. In 1939, commenting on Auden's use of Freud and Marx, Schwartz wrote:

The conjunction of Freud and Marx is a very interesting one, and it is probably unavoidable for some poets in our time. But the use of their concepts appears to be foreign to Auden's whole drive, since he is not an intellectual poet in the full sense, and he lacks entirely a genuine interest in theory of any kind. Freud leads him to the brink where his true Muse lies; Marx reveals the interweaving of social process and personal life. But the direct use of their doctrines awaits the poet concerned with intellectual matters for their own sake.<sup>59</sup>

These remarks may be somewhat unfair to Auden, but they do

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<sup>59</sup>"The Two Audens," Kenyon Review, I (Winter 1939), 42-43.



suggest the ways in which Schwartz himself uses Freud and Marx. Freud and Marx appear in the poetry--usually paired--as ghosts, commentators, listening presences or as wedding guests. That they appear as a pair is a result of their conjunction being "a very interesting one," and that they are so ubiquitous is a gentle satire on their use being "probably unavoidable" for poets of the time. Besides their semi-humorous appearances, Schwartz also makes "direct use of their doctrines," for he is an intellectual poet in his own sense of the term. As a modern thinker Schwartz is concerned with man's inability to understand and control himself and his world, and his subjection to forces he can only partially comprehend. Marx and Freud provided answers to the question of what these forces are and to how much an individual is capable of shaping his own destiny and how much he is a product of the psychological and socio-historical conditions. In doing so, both Freud and Marx limited human freedom and taught us that determinism reaches further than we supposed. Freud asserted that nothing is arbitrary or undetermined in the psychic life. Marx, in his demonstration of how economic and class interests determine beliefs and actions, showed the limits, not only

of human freedom and rationality, but also the inadequacy of traditional moral wisdom.

In 1940 Auden expressed the feeling that ensued:

The shock of discovering through Freud and Marx that when we thought we were being perfectly responsible, logical, and loving we were nothing of the kind, has led us to believe that responsibility and logic and love are meaningless words; instead of bringing us to repentance, it has brought us to a nihilistic despair.<sup>60</sup>

At this point in his life, Auden turns to Christianity, which then provides a foundation for his analysis of psychic and social ills. The following year in a lengthy letter to Schwartz, Auden outlines the need for such a foundation, and urges Schwartz toward the Kierkegaardian leap onto the religious level. Schwartz, however, seemed more interested in the "tangled, painful complexities" themselves, in this case, that "interesting conjunction" of Freud and Marx.

Most Marxists felt that psychology was an expression of bourgeois society. While Marxists criticized Freud for neglecting the social determinants of neurosis, the Freudians believed that the Marxists displaced the cause of the ills. During the thirties the Marxists had the upper edge,

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<sup>60</sup>Commencement address, Smith, June 1940. Printed in Smith Alumnae Quarterly, August, 1940. Quoted in Monroe Spears, The Poetry of W.H.Auden (New York, 1963), p.144.

for Freud lacked the needed teleology; soul-searching was considered an unwarranted luxury in the midst of social ills. But even with Marxist teleology there remained the problem of the relation between historical inevitability and human effort. The Marxist future seems ordained, but men must act as though their efforts make a difference, as perhaps they do.

Both Marx and Freud turn back through history and memory explaining the present in terms of the past. Coming to terms with history and memory become an important aspect of modern poetry; for some poets it became the solution to present and future responsibility, as this statement of Allen Tate's suggests: "For by experiencing the past along with the present he, the poet, makes present the past, and masters it, and he is at the center of the experience out of which the future must come."<sup>61</sup> But Schwartz does not master the past; rather, in turning again and again to the past he finds that the illness and the cure seem strangely alike. Schwartz's feeling that he, as well as others of his generation suffered from an "abundance and excess of memory," parallels Freud's discovery that

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<sup>61</sup>On the Limits of Poetry (New York, 1948), p. xvi.

"Hysterical patients suffer principally from reminiscences."<sup>62</sup> For the individual existing in time there is no solution. The past remains a burden, the present oppressive, and the future, if determined, a meaningless repetition of the past; or, if undetermined, an awful responsibility:

I am overtaken by terror

Thinking of my father's fathers,  
And of my own will.

("The Ballad of the Children of the Czar.")

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<sup>62</sup>Freud, *Italicized conclusion to an 1893 paper on hysteria*. Quoted in Stanley Edgar Hyman, The Tangled Bank (New York, 1962), p. 302.

### Dualities

The works of Delmore Schwartz are characterized by a wide range of dualities: polarities, antitheses and contradictions seem to constitute his world and to generate the dialectical tensions of the poems. Besides the conflicting theories of his demi-gods and intellectual heroes, there are the opposing claims of the body and spirit, the child and the man, the ego and non-ego, the citizen and the state, dreams and responsibilities, the intellect and the sensibility.

In 1951 Heinz Politzer wrote an essay called "The Two Worlds of Delmore Schwartz," which begins by stating that:

An almost constant division runs through the works of Delmore Schwartz. There is the world of his own experience, as constituted by his biography, memories, and immediate feelings. This he has fixed in time and called childhood: He has also fixed it in space, in Brooklyn, where he was born in 1913. Beyond this sphere of real life, there lies the world of his education, full of the names of books, famous men, and of images taken from books: an abstract universe of the intelligence where he developed his consciousness.<sup>63</sup>

A possible approach to the nature and function of this, as well as other dualities, is once again through Auden,

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<sup>63</sup>Commentary, X (December 1950), p. 561

whose early poems are characterized by a division which is at least superficially similar to that of Schwartz. This division is the subject of Schwartz's 1939 essay "The Two Audens": ". . . no modern poet shows himself so obviously in two quickly discriminated parts, or at any rate two voices. The two voices are sometimes at war, sometimes reconciled and singing together, and sometimes one drowns out the other."<sup>64</sup> One of these voices, that of the entertainer, the propagandist, the satirist, Schwartz calls "the clever guy, the Noel Coward of literary Marxism . . . the Ego." The other voice, "a kind of Sibyl who utters images of the greatest import and power" from a kind of "psychoanalytic trance," he calls "the Id."<sup>65</sup> It was in this same essay that Schwartz declared that Auden was not an intellectual poet, and lacked a genuine interest in theory. At least Auden did not seem to enjoy coping with contradiction; he required the unifying foundation that Christian belief provided him. Schwartz, however, is "an intellectual poet," as Daniel Hoffman observes,

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<sup>64</sup>Kenyon Review, I (Winter 1939), 34.

<sup>65</sup>Schwartz, "The Two Audens," p. 35.

"a symbolist of philosophical contradictions."<sup>66</sup>

Schwartz has a genuine interest not only in the content of theory, but also in the activity of the mind structuring reality. Working through the interplay of feeling and idea, of philosophic concept and physical image, Schwartz establishes his poetic strategies through the dynamics of dialectic. "The poems," writes Anthony Hecht, "are constructed almost ritually in terms of polarities, and every thesis invites its antithesis."<sup>67</sup> Schwartz's "two worlds" become one process as he leaps from personal experiences into radiant universalities. The conflicting claims of desolate social reality and of a psychic reality rich in memory, or the disparity between the banality of daily life and the truth and beauty of intellectual existence, or even the opposition between childlike naivete and sophisticated adult cunning thus become sources of poetic power.

But Schwartz is not coldly detached from the dialectical process; if he seems, at times, a sceptical dialectician, at other times he is entertainer, clown, even occasionally

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<sup>66</sup>"Arrivals and Rebirths," Sewanee Review, LXVIII (Winter 1960), p. 135.

<sup>67</sup>"The Anguish of the Spirit and the Letter," p. 595.

the truly romantic lyricist. "The World Is a Wedding," Schwartz asserts. Anthony Hecht is only partially correct in stating that the polarities of the early poems are "always linked in a nagging, bitter, or ironic marriage. . ."<sup>68</sup> For Schwartz, as priest of Eros, also presides over the wedding of these polarities, celebrating the union. And although the marriages are "nagging, bitter, or ironic," between conflicts there are periodic acts of reconciliation in which he participates and once again celebrates. Nor is Schwartz detached from the fun or suffering resulting from the varying relations of two opposing forces. Between the joy of union and the pathos of absence, he participates in an array of emotions from the antic to the melancholy.

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<sup>68</sup>Hecht, p. 597



## Humor

Schwartz was well known for his keen sense of the ludicrous and his ability to express the sheer foolishness of existence. In conversational witticisms as well as in writing he was often the subject of his own humor. Late in life, when his paranoia had undermined almost all human relations, he is reported to have stated knowingly, but in dead-pan style, "People don't realize that even paranoids have real enemies!" This humor of self-reference pervades the poetry. Even the love poem "Prothalamion" begins with self-exposure:

Now I must betray myself.  
The feast of bondage and unity is near.

As David Daiches has remarked, "Delmore Schwartz is one of the few poets who know how to make a sense of guilt amusing."<sup>69</sup>

Schwartz found liberating release in deflating those whose ideas and art threatened to overwhelm. We have already noted the quip about Eliot's acquiring "an English accent after arriving at the age of reason." In "The Orchards of the Imagination," an essay which honors Stevens

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<sup>69</sup>"Some Recent Poetry," p. 356.

on his seventy-fifth birthday, Schwartz places Stevens solidly among the major poets of all times; yet he also manages a quip: "One must say, for example, that Stevens is certainly the best poet who has ever been the vice-president of an insurance company."<sup>70</sup> Schwartz's many jokes about Freud are perhaps even funnier, for in them Schwartz turns Freud's own explanation of humor back upon the master. One chapter of the unfinished novel A Child's Universal History is named "Master of Joy, Doctor of Light" for Freud. The humor works as a typical Freudian reversal: with almost Joycean gigantism, the deflation occurs through the excesses of inflation, which makes the passage worth quoting at length. The protagonist Bertholde Cannon, "part-time teacher and full-time author and uneasy critic," has just attended a concert when it

. . . occurred to him to think of the analysis of the mind and the heart, dark labyrinth of heroes and knaves.

This thought had occurred to him often before in other forms, particularly when he perceived how intelligent human beings were about everything except themselves. He included himself in this criticism, it must be admitted.

The thought recurred because at that moment in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony when the chorus shouts so eloquently the words of Schiller: Freude! Freude!,

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<sup>70</sup> New Republic, November 1, 1954, p. 16.

it seemed possible to Cannon that they were not only crying aloud the German word for joy, but they were also summoning from the dark earth, fertile with the dead, the great savant, master of joy and doctor of light, author of "Twice-Told Tales From The Vienna Woods," "The True Meaning Of Dreams Unknown To Joseph," "The Royal Highway To The Unconsciousness Of the Unconscious Mind," "The Family Romance And Dance," "The Primal Scene And The First Bean," "The Question All The Children Ask," "God Is An Anti-Semite," "Moses Was Not A Jew, But An Egyptian Bastard," "Wit Is A Broadway Hit," "The Credo Of The Libido," "Hitler Is Immortal," "Love Is A Four Letter Word," "The Sermon On Mount Venus," "Dostoevsky's Father Was The Czar," "The Incest And Breast Of Leonardo's Mama, Mona," "My Father Made Me Stubborn," "The Reclamation Of The Zuyder Zee, or Consciousness Is Preferable," "One Thousand And One Fights: A Short History Of The Pschoanalytic Movement," "Venus And Genius," "I Was Wrong Like Columbus," "The Community Hangover in Athens After The First Performance of Oedipus Rex," "Civilization Deprivation, Procreation, And Sublimation, Or Has History Been Worthwhile," "Love Is A Necessary Exaggeration," "The Perversity of Park's (And Clerks)," "The Pan-Sexuality Of Flora And Fauna," "The Fascination And Fixation Of Gertrude's Son," "Jesus As A Good Jewish Boy."

Such deflation of heroes enters the poetry more subtly as in the Kantian "Concerning the Synthetic Unity of Apperception." The intellectual slapstick of that quoted prose passage becomes the substance of some of the prose skits in Vaudeville, where, however, it is not always effective. It is more controlled in the poetry, emerging more as witticism:

Child labor! The child must carry  
His fathers on his back  
("The Ballad of the Children of the Czar")

Schwartz had an avowed fondness for puns, which he was aware of as a possible weakness. Yet sometimes it worked:

That nervous conscience amid the concessions in "Far Rockaway" has that rare power of the pun to both surprise and satisfy.

Literary imitation provides Schwartz with a full scope of humor. "I Did Not Know the Spoils of Joy" starts as Shakespearean song:

When that I was and a little tiny boy,  
With a hey ho, the wind and the rain.

With the echo of that lovely lyric resonating through the poem, the laugh at the end comes as a bitter one:

And yet this knowledge, like the Jews,  
Can make me glad that I exist!  
Although I must my self accuse  
Not when I win, but when I lose:  
Although this knowledge comes and goes,  
Although the wind and rain persist:  
How I am glad that I exist!  
With a hey ho, the stupid past,  
And a ho ho, and a ha ha and a hurrah at last.

In "A Dog Named Ego, the Snowflakes as Kisses," the literary parody of Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is subtle, at least until the last two lines, which more obviously parody Frost's ending:

And left me no recourse, far from my home,  
And left me no recourse, far from my home.

Schwartz found this poem fair game for burlesque; of the many versions in his unpublished writings, one starts:

Whose booze this is I think I know,  
I bought it several weeks ago  
It stands there stolid on the shelf  
And makes think of Crane and Poe,  
Reminding me that I am low.

Some of Schwartz's other literary imitations depend upon humorous structuring, upon disappointment of patterned expectation, and upon culmination in anti-climax. This we shall see when dealing with individual poems in later sections.

Schwartz occasionally makes use of direct social satire, as in the Vaudeville poems that open with the mock forensic "Dear Citizens." More often, however, the poems are comedy rather than satire--at least in the sense that satire arouses the desire to act, to get rid of contradictions and disparities, whereas comedy persuades us to accept contradiction as something against which it is useless to rebel. One of the purposes of comedy for Schwartz is to make a serious existence possible, for in allowing release, it enables us to put up with our responsibilities in a world that is mainly dull. Comedy becomes a weapon against deterministic thinking, and, after all, is the only proper reaction to an absurd world.

"The absurd," says Camus, "is lucid reason noting its limits."<sup>71</sup> Schwartz, with his uncommitted provisionality, never aspiring to conviction or authority, understands that seriousness fails to take into account its own limitations.

Some of Schwartz's humor fails. He constantly copied aphorisms, witticisms and "one-liners" into his notebooks and often made use of them in his works. But when a joke becomes the basis for a longer work, as it does in "Paris and Helen,"<sup>72</sup> the joke cannot bear the weight and the work collapses. When Schwartz is merely attempting to be funny, he is apt to fail. This is the case in some of the "skits" in Vaudeville where comic exaggeration results in mere foolishness and comic understatement falls into mere flatness. But this kind of failure is never present in Schwartz's particular blend of seriousness and humor, the ironic meeting of the spiritual and banal--the subject of the following section.

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<sup>71</sup>Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York, 1955), p. 36.

<sup>72</sup>In New Directions in Prose and Poetry, (New York, 1941)

## Dialectics and Structure

No discussion of either comedy or pathos in isolation approaches the real sources of Delmore Schwartz's poetic powers; in contrast, a study of Schwartz's particular blend of the two provides insight into the forms of his thought and into the structure of his verse.

Ransom, in noting Schwartz's "rare facility for nonsense while dead serious," isolates what is indeed a rare facility, but not a unique one; what Ransom refers to is Schwartz's Socratic irony. Such irony, where a higher significance is concealed beneath a humorous surface, stems from "the amazement of the thinking spirit at itself."<sup>73</sup> This ironic consciousness, as described by Friedrich Schlegel, reveals the natural form of thinking in the fully developed mind: the colloquy with the self. The form, the characteristic distinction of the Platonic dialogues, is generated from that consciousness which, while clearly perceiving "the secret contradictions which beset

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<sup>73</sup>Friedrich Schlegel, "The Philosophy of Language," in The Philosophy of Life and the Philosophy of Language, 1829. Reprinted in The Modern Tradition, ed. R. Ellmann and C. Feidelson (New York, 1965), p. 739.

the mind."<sup>74</sup> has nevertheless attained its own form of harmony. The irony is found in the internal structure of the Platonic dialogues: if superscription of names and forms of address and reply were removed, we could see the inner threads of thought and counter-thought, speech and counter-speech--the form, according to Schlegel, of the mind developed to full measure and proportion.<sup>75</sup> In another work Schlegel explains:

Socratic irony makes everything at once a joke and a serious matter, at once ingenuously open and deeply dissembled. It arises from a union of the art of life with the spirit of knowledge. . . . It comprises and evokes a sense of insoluble opposition between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and the simultaneous necessity of total communication.<sup>76</sup>

Kierkegaard also describes the fully developed consciousness--in his terms, the doubly reflective thinker--as one who is as sensitive to the comic as to the pathetic. What lies at the root of both the comic and the tragic

. . . is the discrepancy, the contradiction between the infinite and the finite, the eternal and that which becomes. A pathos which excludes the comic is therefore a misunderstanding, is not pathos at all. The

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<sup>74</sup>Schlegel, "The Philosophy of Language," p. 738.

<sup>75</sup>Schlegel, "The Philosophy of Language," p. 739.

<sup>76</sup>Lyceum of the Fine Arts, 1797, Fragment 108. Reprinted in The Modern Tradition, p. 739.



subjective existing thinker is as bifrontal as existence itself. When viewed from a direction looking toward the Idea, the apprehension of the discrepancy is pathos; when viewed with the Idea behind one, the apprehension is comic. When the subjective existing thinker turns his face toward the Idea his apprehension of the discrepancy is pathetic; when he turns his back to the Idea and lets this throw a light from behind over the same discrepancy, the apprehension is in terms of the comic. If I have not exhausted the comic to its entire depth, I do not have the pathos of the infinite; if I have the pathos of the infinite, I have at once also the comic.<sup>77</sup>

In this serio-comic stance of presenting truth and the human condition of estrangement from truth, Schwartz becomes poet-juggler: he must constantly juggle the comic and pathetic, for the more he portrays alienation, the less clear it becomes exactly what he is estranged from, and the more he portrays the ideals of truth, beauty and goodness, the less the actual conditions seem drab and joyless.

Schwartz's dialectical form, necessitated by this Janus-faced opposition of metaphysical pathos and absurdity, reflects his "wound of consciousness," his awareness of the negativity that pervades existence. Schwartz who claimed he would "always suffer from a frustrated desire to be a metaphysician,"<sup>78</sup> was undoubtedly conscious of his dialectical

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<sup>77</sup>Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 82-83.

<sup>78</sup>Note in journals dated August 20, 1949.

method. And to some extent, so were his critics. Daniel Hoffman observed that ". . . the violent pull of dialectical opposites gave conceptual grandeur to Mr. Schwartz's individual trials at unifying what all history had shattered."<sup>79</sup> R.H. Deutsch, discussing the "claims and counter-claims" of the poems in Part II ("The True, the Good and the Beautiful") of Vaudeville for a Princess, suggest their resemblance to the earlier poems in that ". . . they are iambic pentameter dialogues with himself, the old arguing out of the problem, the setting forth of first one side then the other so that the whole is finally illuminated."<sup>80</sup>

Oddly enough, Mr. Deutsch does not apply this insight to the structure of the poems; instead he criticizes their structural weakness: "There is no doubt that frequently the Schwartz poem comes in like a lion--and fails to maintain its initial strength."<sup>81</sup> M.L. Rosenthal made a similar assessment: "It is easy to see what has always been wrong with Delmore Schwartz's poetry. Briefly he has rarely been able to sustain a whole poem at the level of its opening."<sup>82</sup> Each of these statements, while intending to prescribe a structural weakness is also actually describing the classic

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<sup>79</sup>"Arrivals and Rebirths," p. 135.

<sup>80</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: Middle Poems," p.20.

<sup>81</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: Middle Poems," p.26.

<sup>82</sup>"Deep in the Unfriendly City," p. 515.

dialectical mode where a preliminary assertion is made, and is then questioned in the light of its subsequent complexity--that is, the very structural mode of most of Schwartz's poems. Granted that the use of any one structural mode does not guarantee good or bad poetry; in this case, however, each of these critics feel uncomfortable with their diagnosis, and each modifies his judgement of structural failure.

After stating that the poems come in like lions but fail to maintain their initial strength, Mr. Deutsch adds an odd notion: "That the failure is just as frequently good poetry regardless of the fact that it is not up to the opening is another matter."<sup>83</sup> Mr. Rosenthal also turns the failure into success: "The comparison may seem absurd, but I feel about many of his poems as I do about some of Shakespeare's sonnets that begin so grandly and then fall away by the roadside somewhere--they ride in triumph over their own incompleteness."<sup>84</sup> Such emanations of the original judgements point toward the possibility that weakness following initial strength should be treated more as

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<sup>83</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: Middle Poems," p. 26.

<sup>84</sup>"Deep in the Unfriendly City," p.515

a descriptive rather than an evaluative concept. Then such weakness seems expressively right for Schwartz, for only in such a structure would his epistemological and moral attitudes be brought to their proper conclusion. In other words, there would be an ideological integrity within the poems, which is not to say that the poems are equally good.

To clarify the confusion between ideological and poetic resolution, we can turn to that section of Barbara Herrnstein Smith's Poetic Closure in which she discusses closural failure. Such failure, where it really occurs, is defined by Mrs. Smith as arising primarily "from a deficient, defective, or spurious relation between the structure of a poem and its conclusion. The assumption in each instance was that some sort of adequate termination was possible but did not appear."<sup>85</sup> However, if closural weakness is part of the design of the poem, it will be the successful terminus of that poem--we would be dissatisfied with anything else. The design itself would generate what Mrs. Smith calls "anti-closure," which itself is expressive as the inevitable final gesture of the poem.<sup>86</sup>

Of the open-endedness of so much of modern poetry Mrs. Smith says:

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<sup>85</sup> Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End (Chicago, 1968), p. 224.

<sup>86</sup> Smith, p. 233.

We know too much and are sceptical of all that we know, feel and say. All traditions are equally viable partly because all are equally suspect. Where conviction is seen as self-delusion and all last words are lies, the only resolution may be in the affirmation of irresolution, and conclusiveness may be seen as not only less honest but less stable than inconclusiveness.<sup>87</sup>

For Schwartz, who prefaced Summer Knowledge by saying that "Every point of view, every kind of knowledge is limited and ignorant," one would expect such limitation to be reflected in the structure of his poems. Such a poet would avoid strong endings and secure the reader's sense of the poem's integrity by one of many alternative closural devices. In discussing individual poems in later sections we shall see how Schwartz avoided unwanted finality by metrical deviation, self-qualifying expressions, or allusions to unstable events, and how he achieves terminal suspension by refusal to comment or draw conclusions.

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<sup>87</sup>Smith, p. 241.

### Language and Rhythm

In "The Isolation of the Modern Poet" in Kenyon Review, Spring 1941, Schwartz expressed ". . . the extraordinary difficulty of employing poetic diction, meter, language and metaphor in the context of modern life."<sup>88</sup> To combat this difficulty Schwartz attempted to combine what he considered the clarity of Yeats and Frost with the ". . . marvelous refinements in the uses and powers of language which have occurred since the Symbolists first appeared."<sup>89</sup> The attempt at combining clarity and intensity is expressed again in a note to the reader in Genesis where Schwartz states that he seeks ". . . to regain for Poetry the width of reference of prose without losing what the Symbolists discovered."<sup>90</sup> To a great extent Schwartz accomplished this kind of linguistic inclusiveness. To do so, he obviously listened to the speech of various human beings around him, for he recorded that speech with great fidelity. He also assimilated the everyday world by the use of its ordinary, prosaic words. However, the choice of prosaic words and colloquial speech

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<sup>88</sup>Kenyon Review III (Spring 1941), 217.

<sup>89</sup>"Views of a Second Violinist," p. 1253.

<sup>90</sup>Genesis: Book One, p. lx.

is not randomly mimetic, but carefully chosen so that common words resonate from an intellectual source and phrasing bears a conceptual burden. Thus Schwartz commands the particular and the general in his combining of the immediate and the universal.

Schwartz's diction is generally mimetic of common middle-class speech with an occasional use of Yiddish intonation or phrasing. Deviation is used sparingly and usually carries great force. Some of these deviations concentrate in a single word or phrase the core of a total ideological system. But Schwartz does not always need unusual terms for ideational referents because of his amazing capacity to absorb concepts in common terms. Child-like wonder or naivete is sometimes expressed by simple terminology and simple paratactic structuring. As both recorder of common speech and commentator on that speech, Schwartz manages a delicate balance between the sensitive and the vulgar, the serious and the comic.

Irving Howe describes Schwartz's language as "composed of several speech layers":

. . . the sing-song, slightly pompous intonations of Jewish immigrants educated in night-schools, the self-conscious affectionate mockery of that speech by American-born sons, its abstraction into the jargon of city intellectuals, and finally the whole body of this language flattened into a prose of uneasiness, an anti-rhetoric.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: A Personal Appreciation," p.26.

Here Mr. Howe speaks of "flattening" as an intentional technique, that is, what Schwartz calls "deliberate flatness." However, any poet who uses that difficult and dangerous technique involving his staying close to natural, common American speech idioms, runs the risk of unwanted flatness. And there are failures: occasionally an entire lyric poem is dull; lengthy passages of Genesis are prosaic, perhaps even trite. Robert Krieger speaks of Schwartz "failing spectacularly in language" in some poems. Mr. Krieger feels that Schwartz's ". . . over-concern with American speech. . . often leads him into trouble"; in "straining to be unrhetorical. . . he forfeits the powers of music. . . Rhythms are prosaic; likewise language suffers because of this speech commitment."<sup>92</sup>

The question of Schwartz's "music" is a controversial one. Heinz Politzer agrees with Robert Krieger: "There is scarcely any music in his verse, and if now and then a strain or so is heard, it is almost as if he had lost control of himself, or his poetic unconscious had played him a trick."<sup>93</sup> In contrast, M.L. Rosenthal speaks of "many moments of pure music,"<sup>94</sup> and elsewhere he praises ". . . those memorable lines and stanzas that make such a sad,

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<sup>92</sup>"Speaking at Twilight, Singing in the Morning," Prairie Schooner, XXXIV, 2 (Summer, 1960), 124.

<sup>93</sup>"The Two Worlds of Delmore Schwartz," p. 562.

<sup>94</sup>"Deep in the Unfriendly City," p. 515.



isolated music . . . ." <sup>95</sup> Either there is a vast difference in the "ear" of these critics, or they are applying the term "music" in vastly different ways to the sonant and rhythmic properties of Schwartz's verse. Schwartz himself makes it clear that he never desired to write lines of sustained melody where sound obscures sense:

I have no wish to emulate Swinburne, but rather the 'morbid pedestrianism' of such poets as Donne and Hardy, Webster and Wordsworth. The diction of this deliberate flatness--and the heavy accent and the slowness--is an effort to declare the miraculous character of daily life and ordinary speech. <sup>96</sup>

To some extent that "deliberate flatness--and the heavy accent and the slowness" account for what Krieger and Politzer consider a lack of music. And there is also the matter of localized characteristics in that "daily life and ordinary speech": ". . . no one but a true New Yorker," wrote Irving Howe, "could appreciate the full comedy of their rhythms . . . ." <sup>97</sup> Moments of "pure music" do occur. Some of the sonnets and ballads approach the simple purity of Elizabethan song. "At a Solemn Musick," which introduces the new poems of Summer Knowledge, opens

Let the musicians begin,  
and goes on to state and orchestrate the themes of the late poetry, many of which are about music. The section called

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<sup>95</sup>"Delmore Schwartz," p. 181

<sup>96</sup>"To the Reader," Genesis: Book One, p. ix.

<sup>97</sup>"Delmore Schwartz; A Personal Appreciation," p. 26.

"Morning Bells" seems Mozartian. "Vivaldi" celebrates the power of music:

. . . this is what music is  
It has no meaning and is possessed by all meaning.

Most of Schwartz's early poetry is more dissonantly modern. Within these poems one of two kinds of rhythmic counterpoint operates. In the first kind Schwartz uses a pentameter base evoking the beauty of the whole tradition of English poetry, and against that base he plays shifting patterns that suggest the indecisions and distractions of modern man. This first form of rhythmic counterpoint is Schwartz's assimilation of the lessons of the modern masters; the second form is more particularly his own. In this second form a slow, four-footed meter which suggests heavy bodily rhythms provides a base against which Schwartz plays a pattern of the hesitant, shifting rhythms of thought. Occasionally abrupt shifting occurs from dream-like image to sharp colloquial phrasing.

As we look more closely at In Dreams Begin Responsibilities, Genesis, Vaudeville for a Princess and Summer Knowledge, we shall see how the hard, clear surface of the early poems with their brief lines and tautness of argument give way to the river-like flow of the long lines in the late poetry.

## PART II. EARLY WORKS

### Apprenticeship

It is fortunate that Delmore Schwartz saved so many of his papers, particularly those from his earlier years, for otherwise we would have no knowledge of his juvenilia or of his apprentice poems. The juvenile writings reveal his precociousness and his early determination to become a writer. Of more value for our present purposes, however, are the youthful poems found among his papers. These poems point toward a brief but thorough apprenticeship in assimilating literary influences and in achieving his own poetic voice. In general, the unpublished material confirms what seems evident from Schwartz's published works in various literary forms: his quick and thorough mastery of genres.

Schwartz seems to have started on his literary career at the age of twelve. Evidence of this early start is provided by the two issues he saved of The Poconola, "Published Fortnightly by the Campers of the Pocono Camp Club," dated August 7 and August 21, 1926. Delmore was editor of this summer camp newsletter, and he also seems to have been the main contributor. His reviews of the weekly "Saturday Show" are well-written and amusing. Often their humor stems

from his characteristic wit of self-reference: "Harry Davidson and Delmore Schwartz were very good in their respective parts, as were the other performers . . ."<sup>1</sup> In the other issue Delmore reports a camp exhibition; the prose is self-conscious in its syntactical complexity, yet the twelve year-old controls the rhythmic flow:

On Sunday, the 22nd of August, the campers of Pocono Camp Club presented an exhibition which was the result of weeks of labor on the part of the various clubs that were organized in camp. It presented one phase of the life of the boy at camp that is very rarely appreciated by the parent, and the exclamations of surprise and delight which came from these parents who attended the exhibition indicated that they were learning that camp is not a matter of athletics.<sup>2</sup>

In his unfinished Genesis: Book II, Schwartz describes some of those 1926 summer camp experiences, experiences which proved fateful to his career. Until that summer, he claimed, his ambition was to become a famous baseball player. He changed his mind, however, when he discovered that writing gained him immediate recognition, particularly among the camp "intellectuals." We may question Schwartz's explanation of his own motivation with its characteristic combination of irony and naivete; nevertheless, it is obvious that he did receive recognition for these precocious pieces.

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<sup>1</sup>"The Saturday Show," The Poconola, 2 (August 7, 1926), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>"Pocono Exhibit," The Poconola, 3 (August 21, 1926), p. 2.

The next literary endeavor known is Schwartz's contribution toward a high school anthology of poems.<sup>3</sup> Then, during his undergraduate years at New York University, he helped edit the magazine Mosaic; his contributions to Mosaic included an essay and two poems.<sup>4</sup>

By 1937 the twenty-three year-old Delmore Schwartz had published works in all of the genres he was ever to work in: poems, poetic drama, short stories, essays and reviews. His apprenticeship in each of the literary genres was amazingly brief and thorough: often, after a single attempt, he went on to write his best work in that form. The short story, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," now recognized as a classic among modern short stories, was written after only one other attempt, "The Commencement Day Address."<sup>5</sup> By 1937 he had written three essays: "The Stars of J.G. Macleod," printed in Mosaic, "Poetry as Imitation," the 1936 Bowdoin Prize Essay at Harvard, and "A Note on the Nature of Art," published in the Marxist Quarterly.<sup>6</sup> By the following year Schwartz

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<sup>3</sup>The Poet's Pack of George Washington High School (New York, 1932), 114.

<sup>4</sup>"The Stars of J.C. MacLeod," Mosaic, I (Spring 1935), 8-17; "Aubade" and an untitled sonnet, Mosaic, I (November-December 1934), 9.

<sup>5</sup>"The Commencement Day Address," New Directions in Prose and Poetry 1937, ed. James Laughlin IV (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1937), pp. 231-242.

<sup>6</sup>"A Note on the Nature of Art," Marxist Quarterly, I (January-March 1937), 77-98.

was writing essays such as "The Critical Method of R. P. Blackmur," and "Ernest Hemingway's Literary Situation" for the major literary journals.<sup>7</sup> There is a similar development in book reviews. In 1936 Schwartz reviewed Louis MacNeice's Poems:<sup>8</sup> after one more review in 1937<sup>9</sup> he was reviewing books by Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens and John Dos Passos.<sup>10</sup> These 1938 pieces, considered by Donald Dike and David Zucker to be among his best, were chosen to be reprinted for the posthumous Selected Essays.<sup>11</sup>

This apprenticeship period also included one verse play, a form Delmore Schwartz used throughout his writing career. This brief poetic drama, called "Choosing Company," was included in Alfred Kreymborg, Paul Rosenfeld and Lewis Mumford's

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<sup>7</sup>"The Critical Method of R.P. Blackmur," Poetry, LIII (October 1938), 28-39; "Ernest Hemingway's Literary Situation," Southern Review, III (Spring 1938), 769-782.

<sup>8</sup>"Adroitly Naive," Poetry, XLVIII (May 1936), 115-117.

<sup>9</sup>"Defective Sincerity," Poetry, L (July 1937), 233-236; review of Straight or Curly? by Clifford Dymont.

<sup>10</sup>"Ezra Pound's Very Useful Labors," Poetry, LI (March 1938), 324-339; review of The Fifth Decade of Cantos. "New Verse," Partisan Review, IV (February 1938), 49-52; review of The Man with the Blue Guitar and Other Poems. "John Dos Passos and the Whole Truth," Southern Review, IV (Autumn 1938), 351-367; review of U. S. A.

<sup>11</sup>Selected Essays of Delmore Schwartz, ed. Donald A. Dike and David H. Zucker (Chicago, 1970).

The New Caravan collection in 1936. This play, although undistinguished in verse and uninspired in plot, nevertheless utilizes elements that Schwartz put to effective use in his later dramatic poetry. It presents common American speech cadences and banal modern life patterns and, with an appropriate chorus (in "Choosing Company," a radio), comments upon these vulgarities. Here, as in later works, the juxtaposition of these strands provides Schwartz a means of dramatizing the play's ideational dimensions. Reviewing The New Caravan, William Phillips singled out "Choosing Company":

Despite its evident immaturity and its failure to carry much impact, it is one of the few pieces in the entire book to show a sensitiveness to the influences of modern literature--especially the device of combining the ribaldry of popular life with complex and subtle meanings.<sup>12</sup>

Schwartz's apprenticeship in lyric poetry can be studied in detail since there exists a sheaf of his youthful, undergraduate poems, consisting of a series of "Sonnets" and a series of "Songs."<sup>13</sup> All of these poems seem to have been written at about the same time. The original poems in typescript are undated, but some later pencilled revisions are dated 1934-1937. It is possible, however, to affix an approximate dating of 1933-1934 to the original writing of the poems. They pre-date the November-December 1934 issue of Mosaic, for among the "Songs" is "Aubade," printed in that issue. One

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<sup>12</sup>"Marking Time?" New Masses (December 26, 1963), p.23.

<sup>13</sup>Selected poems from the "Sonnets" and from the "Songs" are included in Appendix A.

of the poems seems to refer to European events of 1933 and 1934. That same poem, "Song, XVIII" obviously post-dates the publication of Yeats' Words for Music Perhaps, for its opening line echos Yeats'

Speech after long silence; it is right,  
by opening

Fog in stony December; it is well,

Yeats' first printing of Words for Music Perhaps was the hand-printed Cuala edition in 1932. Since it is unlikely that Schwartz saw that limited edition, we can surmise that he did not read "After Long Silence" until it appeared in Yeats' Collected Poems of 1933. The sum of this evidence limits the writing of the "Songs" and "Sonnets" to sometime during 1933-1934. Within this brief period Schwartz accomplished almost everything he would before the "mature" poems of In Dreams Begin Responsibilities. As we shall see, Schwartz published a few poems in 1937, but at that point there was no real advance from what he had already achieved in these apprentice poems.

Some of the "Songs" and "Sonnets" are unrealized or undistinguished, yet many are genuine poems, actually on a par with his published pieces. To a great extent Schwartz has found his characteristic images, rhythms, structures and expressive forms. The poems present those persistent themes of time and memory, the wound of consciousness and the limits of knowledge; the motifs of morning, blue sky, music, Plato



as father, the city. However, Schwartz has not yet learned to exploit the ironic complexities of self as subject, and only rarely does he attain that bitter-sweet tone of successfully combined seriousness and humor.

Let us turn first to the "Sonnets." Schwartz, who wrote sonnets all through his career, seemed to find the formal limits agreeable, and, in fact, obviously enjoyed placing himself in the company of the long line of English sonnet-eers. These early sonnets were intended as a traditional sonnet sequence, but since some of the sonnets are missing from among the papers, we cannot see the sequence as a whole. There is a heavy lexical and rhythmic debt to Shakespeare; yet here, as in his later sonnets, Schwartz uses the structure and rhyme patterns of the Italian form. The metrics are loose, modern iambic pentameter; line rhythms are, at times, clumsy, a mere filling out of meter. In these early sonnets Schwartz has not yet learned to transform that clumsiness into an expressive rhythmic device.

In typical Schwartzian manner, the first sonnet is the best of the sequence. The opening line effectively patterns nasals and sibilants:

This Muse is memory and nothing else.

Line eight,

The time's the sky's imponderable height,  
is one that could have been written at any time in his life,  
so characteristic is the slow weight of the four heavy stresses.

In good tradition, this opening sonnet is devoted to the form itself. Schwartz celebrates the convention and places himself within the historical line of sonneteers:

This Muse is memory and nothing else,  
It is but what has been, it is the past,  
Which comes in music charming, slow or fast,  
To urge my voice until it foams and spills  
The syntax of heaven, the grammar of night.

The octave continues toward crescendo:

The hum about my head can but increase,  
As time clouds floridly, blue piece by piece,  
The time's the sky's imponderable height.

The sestet works as decrescendo by accepting limits; nevertheless, the limits are somewhat overturned by a humorous irony which allows the ego its arch assertion:

And thus I tender, giving up my will  
To all my visitors doll-faced or dead,  
An acquiescent shrug or bow until  
The past has acted and the poem is said:  
By this ballet, of such humility,  
I show my learning and my charity.

The second sonnet experiments in rhythms and sound patterning:

Such armed felicities ravage the breast,  
The war and peace of joy will never cease,  
Delirious blood floods face in that unrest,

Here Schwartz employs lexical tension in reference to passions, and explains that "war and peace of joy"; in later poems he learns to turn such opposition into a structuring dialectical

form. This second sonnet explores a variety of images and techniques that Schwartz himself must have found ineffective, for he never made use of them again.

In contrast, the fourth sonnet abounds in references, allusions and poetic devices that Schwartz was to utilize throughout his career. The first of these characteristic modes is the inclusion of literary figures, those ghosts from the past whose very presence provides commentary on the present. Here the ghosts of Phedre and Heathcliff stand as witnesses to all those who suffer inordinate passions:

Phedre and Heathcliff stand in the door  
Grave and pathetic, as if cut in stone.

Another characteristic is that of his well-assimilated poetic borrowings. In this sonnet the last two lines

No, the park is ash where you walked before,  
Phedre and Heathcliff stand in the door!

sound a distant echo to Verlaine's Colloque Sentimental:

Dans le vieux parc solitaire et glace  
Deux spectres ont evoque le passe

This sonnet also reveals Schwartz's ability to concretize and dramatize philosophic generalities:

Knowing love absolute, its things which seem,  
Necessities of supernatural bloom.

The seventh sonnet is of particular interest, not only

for its dialectical structure, but also for its manipulation of thematic and formal musical elements. Although the sonnet opens with the assertion that "The self is unlike music," it immediately goes on to show that "They are alike." There follows a likening of the self to the playing of instruments, a likening of music to the range of emotional experience:

Note after note, of anger, love and pleasure.  
The flute gets spit, the cello's string is bitten  
By flexing finger, and the self is smitten  
By like things: kiss and cough: and in like measure.

With characteristic emphasis on physicality, the ironically equivalent "kiss and cough" seems to reduce all differences to likeness. The sestet, on the other hand, denies the likeness of self and music, the differences being exemplified thematically as well as rhythmically. For, as the poem asserts, "music moves to ends that all foresee," that is, to consonance and tonality. The poem, however, does the opposite:

While the self teeters on a tight-rope, free,  
Step after step, and ignorant of what  
Is safe, blue, right, cold, blind, soft, real and hot.

Thus, the poem ends with the unsureness of the self reflected in the dissonant meter of the last line, a line which recalls Milton's famous

Rocks, Caves, Lakes, Fens, Bogs, Dens, and shades of death.  
Milton's metrical dissonance moves on to consonance, but for

Schwartz the end is "unmusical," teetering with the ignorance and dissonance of the self.

In sonnet nine Schwartz finds his images of man's solitude in the lonely room so characteristic of his later poems--that closeness of the small room, the white bed and the cigarette butts which become fixtures of his poetic reality. In the nervous giggle of fear he acquires "much company"; thus in his solitary room he expresses the lonely fears of modern man.

In sonnet nine Schwartz "Asserts the theme" of so much of his work with the opening line:

The morning blooming on the windowpane.

It is the theme of the freshness of beginning, with its promise of newness, clarity, and more. Here, although the sestet presents images of undoing, darkness, and mystery to counterpoint the hope and promise of the opening, still, it seems, there are compensations: reading, music, and the wait for Spring. In the last line Schwartz attempts an affirmation, one of "fresh worlds untouched." The sonnet as a whole, however, remains unfocused and incompletely realized.

These sonnets, completed by the time Schwartz was twenty, reveal very few weaknesses such as line-fillers or distortions occasioned by the requirements of meter or rhyme. In general,

they are well-controlled and make positive use of the resonance the whole sonnet tradition carries with it. Some of Schwartz's characteristic images, themes and poetic strategies emerge, but rarely does he achieve his later ironic complexity of voice or structure in such a pre-determined form.

That philosophic, dialectic mode in which Schwartz is at his best seems to require a brief but formally undetermined space in which implications, suspensions, contradictions, wry twists and uncertainties can develop naturally. It is the "Songs" that provide that open-ended form so congenial to Schwartz's temperamental open-endedness. These "Songs," written at the same time as the sonnets, represent his apprenticeship to the lyric form he was to master a few years later in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities. In the "Songs" there are images from the oppressive city, the monotonous suburbs and from life's daily patterns and amusements; such banalities are, characteristically, set against the ideal. In these "Songs," however, the rhythms only occasionally have the "rightness" of the later poems--perhaps because the stance is still unsure and somewhat unfocussed. It is as if the self, that later becomes the only subject, is still waiting in the wings. Later, self-reference provides an overall ironic view; here, without that self-reference, humor occurs

only in isolated instances.

Numbering on the original typescripts of the "Songs" is confusing from what seems to have been several changes in the ordering. The selection of "Songs" included in the appendix to this study are numbered with what seems the latest of the altered numbers. There were twenty-seven or more of these "Songs," although, as in the "Sonnets," several are missing from among the papers.

Song VI opens with that positive sense of the infinite, the Ideal:

The blueness of the sky is overhead,  
Seen or unseen. . . . .

That image of radiant source, almost a Schwartzian signature, recurs in later works as "the sky's inexorable blue," "the sky's pure capital," and as the blue eye of God in "Dr. Bergen's Belief." In this poem the counterforce to that illimitable source enters immediately:

. . . . . The City's burden is  
A screen of mountains hiding from the birds  
The generous theater of the lovely will. . .

Schwartz seems to explain his metaphor:

And if I call your will a waiting bird  
As if a natural thing, I mean to show  
The hideous balances which wait for it  
Flying with anguished cliffs of air.

This apparent directness of explanation, however, is not to be accepted as authoritative assertion, for, as the remainder of the poem attests, the balances are not really hideous nor the breath really anguished. Actually, there are numerous imbalances, repeated risings and fallings, so cleverly put that the breath is more comic than anguished:

And from that dark must rise and fly again,  
And fall again, risking the death of the will,  
And fly again, to win warm good once more,  
For all must rise and fly, all must fulfill  
The incontestable game where good is won  
And all must lose again and once more fall

The uneven rhythms work against the underlying iambic pentameter as effectively as does the weight of the poem against its direct statement. The rhythmic patterning here is, in fact, as fully controlled as anything Schwartz was later to write.

This poem exhibits a distinctively Schwartzian structure, one which could not be developed within the sonnet form. The structure here consists of a Platonic opening that asserts a pure or ideal essence with great clarity and power. This method often provides the ideational force of Schwartz's so-called "strong openings." The Platonic opening then gives way, usually abruptly, to the things of this world, the world of Becoming. By a kind of dialectic peculiarly his own, Schwartz then wanders through this world of clutter



seeking clarification through an almost appetitive contact. To some critics this phase seems weak, a falling-off from the strong opening; yet this is the very structure of Schwartz's being--philosophically, poetically, and humanly. He sees the human spirit, particularly in this poem, as a rising and falling of emotions, perceptions and ideas, incessantly fluctuating between conflicting ends; in other poems the self oscillates between hope and fear, the beautiful and the ugly, the false and the true. In this case this middle phase, which, by design, is "weighty" and constitutes the main bulk of the poem, is followed by a re-assertion of the Platonic theme, now actually a cry of hope. Accordingly, Schwartz re-asserts:

The blueness of the sky is overhead,  
Seen or unseen. Love waits beneath,  
Known or unknown, ignored or understood.

The distance from the sky overhead seems greater now than at the beginning, yet somehow more acceptable through the understanding of what is in between.

Song VII is weighted, not only with the things of this world, but also with a multitude of literary references: Swift, Dante, Freud, Blake, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Wagner and Plato. These figures supply characters, substance and emotions for the poem, it is true, yet they also do something more significant: they supply resources of theory and sensibilities

unavailable to Schwartz as persona. This kind of literary naming, as well as that of including socio-historical referents, attaches the poems to an outside context, thus making them seem less self-contained, closed linguistic systems.

In Song VII, Plato, as usual, provides the blue backdrop of perfection, while the other figures inhabit the foreground of "slipshod circumstances." The poem opens:

Existence is nervous and sick, thought Swift,  
Ambient, inevitable! Dante, whether blind,  
Or in his dream, or by superior staring,  
Scarcely could tell the living from the dead,  
And God, it seems, once died: I have heard him coughing:

The coughing God, a motif underlying much of the poetry, is later used in "Someone Is Coughing Harshing As Before." The cough is repeated later in this poem as "the kiss and the cough," the same combination used in the previously discussed sonnets. Here it parallels the "worm i' the rose," for "Existence is a rose," or "a black ram tugging/ A pure white ewe.":  
"Tragic or romantic, such is the mixture."

Each of the three stanzas ends with the italicized line:

We who are in love know this.

Thus for Schwartz, as for Plato, Eros is the mediating force. In the previous song love was pictured as a rising and falling, the very image which Plato uses in the Phaedrus. However, as Schwartz knew, the final reality for Plato is not Eros, but

the forms--ideal and perfect. And so

Father Plato, the Platonic moonlight  
 Cannot straighten these slipshod circumstances,  
 Overlapping time, uneven life and death,  
 Both are laid bare in the justice of the sun,  
 The backyard's wash, the ivory bookends,  
 The kiss and the cough, the set of Dickens,

As in Song VI, this poem closes with lines which seem to echo the opening:

Existence is a rose, but it is unwell:  
We who are in love know this.

In neither of these songs, however, is the ending a simple re-assertion of the opening. Rather, Schwartz has developed a poetic form to express the struggle between our perceptions and ideals, our hopes and fears, our memories and forebodings. In the previous song the hideous balances and anguished breath gave way to the rather humorous rising and falling; in this poem an Audenesque urbanity introduces the "slipshod circumstances" that gain our attention and acceptance. Cross-currents introduce the very qualities that make man's life absurdly comic. Perhaps this is done somewhat blatantly in these few lines from Song VII:

. . . and I have seen,  
 From the open bathroom window, urinating,  
 The abstract moonlight and the perfect stars:  
We who are in love know this.

In general, however, Schwartz has found, in these songs, means to question the sources of our ideals--that is, whether they

stem from pure, disinterested reason, emotional impulses, or other obscure tendencies. Each poem presents the lure of the ideal, the surrender to the quotidian, and their conjunction at the point of their seemingly greatest disparity, thus investing each with the aura of the other. The ending, then, which seems to re-assert the opening, does so ironically, for Schwartz has developed a poetic structure that leads us through those very contradictions that the poem as a whole expresses.

The remainder of these early songs are of interest for their use of a variety of techniques, themes, and poetic borrowings.

Song VII opens with:

When suburbs' dripping sewers take  
Used condoms and burnt matches, Spring  
Makes Winter seem a dreamed mistake:

These lines seem to echo two of Hart Crane's images:

A burnt match skating in a urinal  
(The Bridge)

and

Scatter these well-meant idioms  
Into the smoky spring that fills  
The suburbs, where they will be lost.  
("Praise for an Urn")

This song is also notable for its shifting and intentionally unsure rhythms, rhythms that reinforce the

Shifts, turns, odd and even, lost and found,  
Drugged and sentient, obscurely  
Well and unwell: ambiguous the heart's sound  
Sounds, does it not,  
and unsurely.

Song XIII uses for the first time what becomes a common motif in the later poems, that of looking in the mirror. Later Schwartz explores several themes with that same motif: individuality, self-consciousness, and self-betrayal. Here, looking at the self in the "abstract mirror/Detached from care's dress," one sees one's own death:

So, the blood stopped,  
The eyes in peace, the breast cold,  
The hair stiff, the mouth in bands.

Yet the poem ends in the irony of simple, repetitive rhythms  
and rhymes:

It might not be true  
That whatever you do  
You take your life in your hands.

The final line effectively mimics the cliché that Schwartz uses again in the paired poems of In Dreams--"For the One Who Would Take His Life in His Hands," and "For the One Who Would Not Take His Life in His Hands."

Song XIV displays Schwartz's early control of iambic pentameter; the poem seems to develop its own rhythms, yet at the same time it exploits long poetic tradition by its closeness to the base iambic line. Rhymes here, as in most of the "Songs"

and "Sonnets," are used quite traditionally. In this song they are quietly unobtrusive, falling mainly on different parts of speech: shore/before, await/fate/innate.

Schwartz, ever the "New York boy," portrays the sea-shore, not as lonely stretches of sea, sky and sand, but as populated beaches and summer-resorts--Far Rockaway and Coney Island. In Song XIV the unusual "silent shore" of the first line soon gives way to the more typical scene with its boardwalk and gay carousel. However, the last two lines return us to the mood of the opening, and, unexpectedly, an assertion of alienation in terms of Jewishness:

We are of Zion: this exile is innate.

Song XVIII, which was mentioned earlier in connection with Yeats' "Speech After Long Silence," opens

Fog in stony December; it is well,  
The season's character being clear,

The first line is an obvious re-writing of Yeats' famous line; together the two lines also seem to echo Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady":

Among the smoke and fog of a December afternoon  
You have the scene arrange itself--as it will seem to do--

Schwartz, however, sets his poem more definitely in time and place than does either Yeats or Eliot. There is economic

and moral depression, suspicion of European events of 1933-1934, and the fear of coming war. And Schwartz presents us with specific backdrops as well as specific feelings in living through that cold, oppressive, socio-political, moral awareness. The poem ends with deep questioning:

Beady or smoky, much comfort is in fog,  
Russia and Germany are near and far,  
Dim in the subway, thunder and horror wait,  
And all turn in their sleep to question where they are.

Song XXV, in loose trimeter, offers, ironically, a program for life:

Take wife, get child, and show  
That love's wet fruits stay south

But at the end Schwartz archly suggests a Stevens-like move north:

Then, a governor in reason,  
And learned in all breath,  
Go north to study death.

In these early "Songs and "Sonnets," then, we see that Schwartz developed many of the images, themes, rhythms and strategies that work so well in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities. There is, however, a general objectivity which future poems overcome--when he finds, as he later writes in his journal, that his only subject is himself.

Schwartz, one of the founders and editors of Mosaic, selected two of his own poems for the first issue of the magazine, November-December 1934. He chose "Aubade" from among the "Songs" discussed previously, and the sonnet later titled "The Beautiful American Word, Sure," which may have been one of the "Sonnets" missing from that sequence. It is difficult to determine why Schwartz chose these from among all the poems written during the previous year; perhaps the choice was based as much on these two poems presenting interesting contrasts in form, imagery and attitude as it was on their excellence.

"Aubade" is a delicate lyric celebrating the pure moment of awakening. The short lines, which are, in actuality, each half of a pentameter line, afford varied rhythms and frequent rhyme. Rhymes are mainly feminine and range from exact (glisten/listen, attention's/dimensions) to varieties of off-rhyme (window/shadow, widen/hidden, magnifies/quiddities). Schwartz acknowledges the poem's Symbolist heritage in its epigraph, "Qu'il vienne, qu'il vienne," from Rimbaud.<sup>14</sup> That same heritage is also evident in the

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<sup>14</sup>That epigraph, correct in the typescript, is printed erroneously in Mosaic as "Qu'il vienne, pu'll vienne."



intensity of the following lines:

It is time for pure attention's  
White breakfast

Yet here Schwartz does more than merely reflect Symbolist influence; he assimilates that influence by combining physical image and philosophic concept in a manner which is peculiarly his own. As radiant source, that "White breakfast" will appear again in later poems as the "white bed" where "all things are made" ("Sonnet: O City, City"), "the sky's inexorable blue" ("Socrates' Ghost Must Haunt Me Now"), and the "sky's pure capital" ("In the Naked Bed, In Plato's Cave"). The appetitive aspect of "White breakfast" reappears in the sonnet following as "I drink the time," and in "I am to My Own Heart Merely a Serf" as "the unfed hope." In "Aubade," as in many later poems, the image is effected by an unusual reversal wherein the inanimate or abstract relates to the animate in this appetitive or devouring mode:

Time unheard moves and the heart of man is eaten  
("Far Rockaway")

and

The apple which has sewed the sunlight up  
("Out of the Watercolored Window When You Look")

"Aubade" is a poem of essential seeing. One gives oneself over to "pure attention," and "the eyes widen" to "Attend

the glisten," so that the active changes can enter from without:

The doors of morning open.  
 . . . . .  
 The sky deepens dimensions,  
 The sun, fat fist,  
 Punches the window  
 Nursing blue shadow.

The "shy quiddities/Marinely hidden," emerge as if from underseas, as happens again in "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave."

Schwartz omitted "Aubade" from In Dreams Begin Responsibilities, perhaps because he felt it was derivative or not in his characteristic voice. In its fragile beauty, however, it certainly deserves a place among his early achievements.

On the same page in Mosaic follows the sonnet which opens:

The beautiful American word, Sure,

This powerful line is one that critics often refer to in their contention that Schwartz cannot maintain a poem at the intensity of its beginning. Some of the impact of the line is achieved by contrast to the delicate effects of "Aubade," for the line is a brash one. Its brashness is, first and most obviously, lexical: "American" and "Sure" embodying national assurance. For its total effect, however, the line relies just as heavily on a kind of brash rhythmical organization, wherein its rhetorical rhythms:

The beautiful / American / word, / Sure,  
 operate at great tension from its metrical base:

The beau / tiful Amer / ican word, Sure,

And that rhythmic counterpoint is set off by the shift in  
 the second line to metrical-rhythmic consonance:

As one / would come into / a room and touch

There the metrical regularity might create a structural hiatus  
 were it not for the enjambling thrust into the third line:

The lamp's / button, / and the light bloom / with such

This line, unusual in its metrical inversion of the second  
 foot, also uses the enjambling thrust to line four:

Certainty where the darkness was before.

Thus Schwartz foregrounds "Certainty" and brings us back  
 semantically to the "Sure" of the first line. Through this  
 first quatrain the active energies and assurances of enter-  
 ing and pushing a button to create artificial light operate  
 in extreme contrast to the passive waiting and watching for  
 the "trembling of the veil" in "Aubade." In the following  
 lines, however, the energy of the opening seems to be sapped  
 by the confusions of uncertainty. Brash convictions, then,  
 are self-delusion. The sonnet ends with humility before  
 present uncertainties, yet also carries forward the susten-  
 ance of hope:

When morning shines the world will wear that face.  
 But what assures you present after here?  
 In dark accidents your sufficient grace.

"The Beautiful American Word, Sure" appears in In Dreams  
Begin Responsibilities with major revisions. Schwartz re-  
 vised his poems throughout his life, yet here, perhaps, is  
 the one case where revisions do not improve the original.  
 Throughout the latter version Schwartz replaces the indef-  
 inite "one" with "I," and the vague "you" with "she," thus  
 transforming the poem into what seems a traditional love  
 sonnet. The original version was more generally philosophic,  
 and thus the very vagueness of the pronomial references more  
 effectively counteracted those brash certainties of the open-  
 ing. The one improvement Schwartz did make in the later ver-  
 sion is the rhythmic emendation of the last line from

In dark accidents your sufficient grace.

to

In dark accidents the mind's sufficient grace.

Yet, oddly enough, the entire poem in its original version  
 better exemplifies this concept of "the mind's sufficient  
 grace" than does the later one. Here, as elsewhere, Schwartz  
 achieves his best effects, not by direct statement but by  
 overall poetic strategies. "The Beautiful American Word,  
 Sure" is, in neither version, a totally successful poem.

Nevertheless, it illustrates Schwartz's capacity for the kind of poetic reflection that questions semblances of feeling and appearances of reality, goes on to generate perplexity and uncertainty, and yet leaves open possibilities and hopes as yet unrealized.

Schwartz published no poems during the next two years, his years of graduate study in philosophy at Harvard. In 1937 he published five poems, poems which, as we shall see, represent no great advance from what he had accomplished in his undergraduate days.

The two sonnets that appeared in Poetry in February, 1937 are paired poems, as were "Aubade" and "The Beautiful American Word, Sure," Each of these sonnets, simply called "Two Poems," sets up a narrative situation as analogue for the poet's act of creating, and then explores the theme of creating in the face of death.

The first sonnet, which opens

You, my photographer, you most aware,  
uses the dramatic situation of the shipwreck of the Titanic. During the disaster, the photographer, with icy objectivity, is passionately involved in snapping his pictures. The last line re-states one which Eliot had already appropriated from

Baudelaire:

You hypocrite! My brother! We are a pair!

Thus first and last lines connect that recording of disaster to the poet who makes art of the self's disaster.

The second poem, opening:

Old man in the crystal morning after snow  
explores a similar theme. Sitting

By the window sad and watchful as a cat  
the poet watches an old man build a snowman, and comments on the similarity of the two:

do you know  
This fat cartoon, his eyes pocked in with coal  
Nears you each time your breath smokes the air,  
Lewdly grinning out of a private nightmare?  
He is the white cold shadow of your soul.

The sestet starts with the comic:

You build his comic head, you place his comic hat;  
Old age is not so serious, . . . .

Then, as old age, cold and creation are connected, it moves toward the tragic. The poet sees that he, too, builds "this poem of old age and snow," and he weeps:

. . . you are my snow man and I know  
I near you, you near him, all of us must die.

These sonnets, through the use of narrative metaphors, permit a somewhat objective look into the self. In each case the situation is looked upon and lived as abstract

concept, and thus as refuge from the unwieldy sense of life. In these poems the self is not yet revealed in its brooding, self-conscious exploitation of personal guilts and shames. Schwartz chose, justly, not to include these sonnets in In Dreams. The poems are somewhat unbalanced: one senses the solitariness of the spirit that ponders itself, but the collectivity of which that spirit is a part has not yet entered into ways of feeling and articulating itself.

For the 1937 volume of New Directions in Prose and Poetry James Laughlin chose three poems by Schwartz, and thus began a life-long relationship in which Laughlin was editor, sponsor and friend to the young poet. Of the three poems, "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer" is the slightest; it is of interest, however, as Schwartz's first use of the movies, a subject he was to return to again and again in poems, stories and essays. Actually, he was among the first of the intellectuals to treat movies seriously, to review them, and to deal with them as a significant cultural force in America.

The other two 1937 New Directions poems, "O Love, Sweet Animal" and "At This Moment of Time," are re-printed in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities. In "O Love, Sweet Animal" Schwartz tries his hand at an envoi, somewhat as an exercise in a genre to which he can now add his own stamp. The poem opens with a line that subtly diverges from the title, and

stands alone as having the only non-rhyming end sound.

O Love, dark animal,  
With your strangeness go  
Like any freak or clown:

Thus Schwartz sends neither Waller's "lovely rose" nor Pound's "dumb-born book," but dispatches love's physical embodiment to brush its "heavy fur/Against her." This sense of the physical animal, heavy and clownish, emerges elsewhere as the well-known Schwartzian "heavy bear."

In this envoi, some of the traditional, romantic associations of the form appear to be overturned by Schwartz; yet these associations run as undercurrents and surface near the end:

Tell her how you know  
Nothing can be taken  
Which has not been given:  
For you time is forgiven:

The traditional reference to time is here coupled, in typical Schwartzian manner, with forgiveness, and, finally, with knowledge:

Informed by hell and heaven  
You are not mistaken.

The polysyllabic rhymes of the last five lines contrast sharply with the many monosyllabic ones preceding, and slow the ending as it rises to levels of abstraction. Thus, in the frame of an envoi, Schwartz sends love, in its tragi-comic animal nature, to lead us to the abstractions generated by that nature:



knowledge, time, and forgiveness.

The ghost of sonnet structure lurks behind the last of these 1937 poems, "At This Moment of Time." The poem, divided into twelve and one-half and eight line parts, is heavy with syntactical suspensions and strong enjambments. It is as if Schwartz is breaking through the metrical and linear restrictions of the sonnet, yet is still working with a sense of the development of octave and resolving sestet. The tentative rhythms, pauses, shifts and uncertainties move against the themes of certainties as does the sudden flash of light against a dark background in those "clouds that darken midnight." The title, "At This Moment of Time," reveals that here Schwartz is working against that other thrust that seeks to arrest the flux of life, to fix it in stable forms, in the concepts and ideals that seem needed to maintain consistency and to wrest order from the flux. In "At This Moment of Time" Schwartz articulates a sense of life as mutable, variable, dependent upon circumstances, chance, and the times. Instead of the usual tension from the unresolved conflict of shadow and substance, the poem ends with a quiet acceptance that "we are/Unfinished," and the remembrance

. . . . that we who move  
Are moved by clouds that darken midnight.

What has here been treated as Schwartz's apprenticeship through the years 1933 to 1937 was not a gradual development of images, rhythms and themes; nor was there any long apprenticeship to forms or genres. Rather than gradually evolving as a poet, Schwartz made several startling break-throughs in assimilation of influences and achievement of voice and structure in those few years before In Dreams Begin Responsibilities appeared so forcefully upon the literary scene.

To settle on 1937 as the end of Schwartz's "apprenticeship," then, is to create an arbitrary division in his poetic career. It is artificial in one sense, for long before that date--perhaps as early as 1933--he had written a few individual lyrics that are perhaps as successful as any he was to later write. It is artificial in another sense, for there was no great change in the poems that he wrote in 1938 for Poetry, Partisan Review, New Republic, and New Directions in Prose and Poetry 1938. But it is a convenient division, because most of those 1938 poems appear in In Dreams, and are more appropriately treated there. It is, however, a real division in a more significant sense. Schwartz's publication of In Dreams Begin Responsibilities in 1938 does represent a new beginning. In Dreams is a notable achievement in the consistently high quality of the poems in that volume. And the reaction to that book marks the beginning of the more public career for a man who was now recognized as a successful poet.

### In Dreams Begin Responsibilities

In Dreams Begin Responsibilities consists of a story, a long poem "Coriolanus and His Mother," two groups of lyrics, and a verse play "Dr. Bergen's Belief." In all of these forms Schwartz displays mastery of language and rhythms, power of thought and feeling, a deep sense of the age and a personal vision.

The book's title suggests Schwartz's concern with the interaction of the private world of the individual and the public world of events and personalities. In his "Acknowledgments" he cites his source:

IN DREAMS BEGIN RESPONSIBILITIES: The title of this book is derived from the quotation which heads Responsibilities, a book of poems published by William Butler Yeats in 1914. There the quotation reads "In dreams begins responsibility," and is attributed to an "Old Play." Several other quotations are at second hand also.

That off-handed last sentence is rather an understatement from a writer who borrows, quotes, paraphrases, embeds and parodies as much as Schwartz does throughout this volume. Schwartz learned, perhaps from Eliot, how to do this to advantage; as John Napier notes, "Schwartz is one of the few poets able to borrow phrases or whole lines and turn them to his

purpose without pedantry or obscurity."<sup>15</sup> Schwartz's literary borrowings provide a nexus between his own words and the words of others.

Another nexus between the public and the private is achieved in the way that Schwartz both reflects his age, and, at the same time, projects his personal vision upon that age. One feels, behind all the pieces in In Dreams, the oppressiveness of the late thirties: ". . . war, depression, the long shadow of Marx and Freud on everything . . . the noisy and deadening life of the big cities . . ."<sup>16</sup> The actual appeal of the poems and stories, however, stems from the juncture of that desperate public world and the vitality of the individual in that world. Hayden Carruth explains:

His stories and poems had a romantic warmth that seemed more than appealing after the 'proletarian verse' of the deep Depression, and at the same time they were vigorous and fresh, products of a strong personal vision; they offered a sense of direction at the time when the defeat of human aspirations in Spain and the build-up for a new world war were creating anxiety and jaded sensibility everywhere.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>"Rooted and Rising," Voices, I, 173 (September-December 1960, 42).

<sup>16</sup>Robert Krieger, "Speaking at Twilight, Singing in the Morning," Prairie Schooner, XXXIV, 2 (Summer 1960), 124.

<sup>17</sup>"Delmore, 1913-1966," Texas Quarterly, (Summer 1967), 45.

In general, critics recognized Schwartz's talents as unusual, and agreed that story, poems and play displayed a rare combination that Richard Eberhart called a ". . . philosophic understanding and a hard-worked control over what is being said."<sup>18</sup> George Marion O'Donnell, reviewing In Dreams for Poetry, also praised that rare combination of talents:

. . . Schwartz differs from most of his contemporaries in having a genuinely creative attitude of mind that enables him always to project and to resolve the tensions of his poetry in terms of real experience. He rejects the easy solutions offered by ideologies; his use of ideas is always dramatic rather than didactic; he takes the hard way--to a solution in terms of poetry.<sup>19</sup>

Dudley Fitts singled out in the young poet:

. . . a rare sensitivity of perception, an urgent humanity, and such an honesty of expression as is rare when the manners of poetry ape the sliding faithless manners of international diplomacy. It is hard to believe that this is a first book, the work of a very young man.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>New York Times, November 5, 1950, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup>"Delmore Schwartz's Achievement," Poetry, LIV (May 1939), 107.

<sup>20</sup>"Balanced Instrument," Saturday Review of Literature, April 29, 1939, p. 29.

Our main concern in this study is the poetry; however, the title story, which would deserve our attention if only for its intrinsic worth, is of value here in so obviously revealing the hand of the poet. As the first piece in the book, it introduces, perhaps purposively, the tone, images, rhythms and techniques that also characterize the poetry in the volume.

"In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" was originally submitted to Partisan Review when Dwight Macdonald, Philip Rahv and William Phillips were in the process of taking over the journal. Macdonald was entranced by the story, became acquainted with Schwartz, and invited him to be co-editor. "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" was printed in the first issue of Partisan Review under the new editorship in December, 1937.

The story uses one of our culture's ready-made forms of fantasy, the dark, cave-like movie theater with its flickering images and fluid, reversible time-flow. The story opens: "I think it is the year 1909. I feel as if I were in a moving picture theater. . . ." The characters on the screen, petty and obstinate, are the protagonist's mother and father. In torment he sits watching the unalterable events which will lead to their disastrous marriage and his own birth. He cries out for them not to marry: "What are they doing? Don't they know what they are doing?" The story ends as the usher escorts

the tortured, shouting viewer from the theater. The usher's cliché-ridden speech, as recorded by the dreamer, reflects multi-leveled irony; the speech is patterned into a crescendo of hysteria which breaks through the dream into the cold morning light.

--But the usher has seized my arm and is dragging me away, and as he does so, he says: "What are you doing? Don't you know that you can't do whatever you want to do? Why should a young man like you, with your whole life before you, get hysterical like this? Why don't you think of what you're doing? You can't act like this even if other people aren't around! You will be sorry if you do not do what you should do, you can't carry on like this, it is not right, you will find that out soon enough, everything you do matters too much," and he said that dragging me through the lobby of the theater into the cold light, and I woke up into the bleak winter morning of my 21st birthday, the windowsill shining with its lip of snow.

The story is expressive of the modern child-man, isolated in his dreams and self-pitying fantasies, returning in Freudian manner to his earliest traumas. The Freudian return is a central experience in Schwartz's works; it is what makes him later quip, "The child is the illegitimate father of the man." Again and again Schwartz will confront the past--both as memory and as history--as determiner of the present; or, as he says in "Coriolanus and His Mother":

The past is always present, present as past.

Schwartz's fertility of imagination is evident in his use of the dream-movie idiom which combines an unreal present and an imagined past so that both seem equally illusory, yet equally inescapable. His idea of using one's memory as projected on a screen is an example of his characteristically private disclosure in a public form.

In his "Acknowledgment" Schwartz notes:

When the story which begins this book was published in a magazine, I was told by several readers that it was autobiographical. What can a writer reply but that no happening related there has ever occurred?

In light of that denial it is amusing to note some personal aspects of the story that are revealed in two pages found among Schwartz's papers. These typescripts, numbered 1 and 11, are the first and last pages of an earlier draft of the story. Schwartz had evidently given the story to his mother to read, for her comments are scribbled on the back of the last page:

Dear Delmore-If there is another word besides wonderful I don't know -- I dont remember telling you all these so accurate. Please save this story and bring it home for me. There are moments in my life, that I think I believe all my struggles are worth while.

Mother

Your coat hangs on the door near closet.  
There are something things in the ice box --  
use the little knife, the big one is no good.



Her reaction, although intellectually insensitive is warm and kind. Delmore, in giving her the story, must, after all, have known that she would not understand its nuances, but would feel motherly pride in its creation. The personality revealed here is that of the mother as portrayed in Shenandoah, Genesis, and many of the short stories: shallow, tactless, unthinking, but never unkind. The note also confirms what is so evident in those semi-autobiographical works--Schwartz's total recall, not only of his own experience, but also all that was told to him as a child.

The ending of the story in that typescript is actually the first of three versions. By the time it was printed in Partisan Review in 1937, Schwartz had revised the ending. There was yet another revision of that ending for its inclusion as the title story of In Dreams Begin Responsibilities in 1938. Throughout the re-writings the thematic tensions remain unresolved, while in each subsequent revision Schwartz relies more and more on rhythmic, repetitive patterning for a resolution in poetic terms. In that final version of the story, texture and structure function in what Dwight Macdonald calls the ". . . unusual combination of expressive candor and

tight form that is characteristic of Delmore's poetry in general. . . ."<sup>21</sup>

In this story, Schwartz has found not only an expressive form, but also his only true subject matter. That subject is himself. Selfhood, for Schwartz, entails a predicament: on the one hand the self is rooted in unalterable history; yet, on the other hand, that same rooted self is the only source of one's creativity. Using himself as subject, Schwartz can personally lament the predicament, and, at the same time, put it to work as the very crux of his art, thus transcending it esthetically. Both the articulation of the predicament and its transcendence is expressed in a double-entendre in "Coriolanus and His Mother." Coriolanus is speaking, but the reference is, as usual, also to himself:

As if a man were author of himself,  
I will be author of myself alone.

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<sup>21</sup>"Delmore Schwartz (1913-1966)," The New Review of Books, September 8, 1966, p. 14.

"Coriolanus and His Mother"

Section Two of In Dreams Begin Responsibilities is called "Coriolanus and His Mother: The Dream of One Performance." Conrad Aiken called Schwartz's "Coriolanus" ". . . altogether the finest and profoundest long poem, narrative poem, which has come into English literature for a very long time. It is beautifully designed, rich in detail--magnificent."<sup>22</sup> In this long poem, as in the title story, the dream-scene is a theater; now, however, rather than a movie, we attend a stage performance of Shakespeare's "Coriolanus." The author portrays himself as a boy who sits in a box watching the performance with the ghosts of Aristotle, Freud, Beethoven and Marx. The ghosts--the boy's secular gods, intellectual and artistic fathers--provide commentary on the drama, each in terms of his own ideology. In an "Acknowledgement" Schwartz asks the reader not to misunderstand the incorporation of "ideas" into the work; however, one can see the function of those ideas in the relation of the verse acts and the prose entr'actes. It is the poet himself who takes the stage for these intermission entertainments. By putting on the masks of naive interpreter, Shakespearean fool or vaudeville

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<sup>22</sup>"Back to Poetry," The Atlantic, August 1940, p. 223.

comic, he locates the shortcomings of his masters' ideologies, which therefore frees him to go beyond his teachers to new perceptions. Thus he enacts a drama of his own patrimony and parricide. The poem ends on a note of irresolution, however, for the presence of another, unnamed and silent ghost suggests the mysteries that lie beyond present knowledge.

Not all critics agreed with Conrad Aiken on the merits of "Coriolanus and His Mother." Allen Tate, in a letter to James Laughlin which generally extolled the "subtlety and originality" of In Dreams, singled out "Coriolanus" for disapproval: "I wish he had chosen instead of Coriolanus some less arbitrary frame of reference; he doubtless will in his next work; and that will be the test of his real capacity."<sup>23</sup> Anthony Hecht, who praised many aspects of "Coriolanus," felt that it somehow lacked unity: "The final effect of the whole work, is not one of integration, however; there are too many centers of interest competing with one another."<sup>24</sup>

"Coriolanus" is, perhaps, not as "magnificent" as Conrad Aiken proclaims, although it is, as he also asserts, complex, profound, and carefully designed. It will be the contention

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<sup>23</sup>Unpublished letter, dated January 5, 1939.

<sup>24</sup>"The Anguish of the Spirit and the Letter," Hudson Review, XII (Winter 1959-1960), 597.

here that the poem's "frame of reference," Coriolanus, is not really a frame, but a point of reference, and not arbitrary in any way. It will be seen that the actual frame of reference is large and complex; it will also be seen that the many "centers of interest" are expressively right in the complex, multi-layered unity of the work. Furthermore, it is possible to approach the poem through the actual functioning of these aspects that Tate and Hecht saw as shortcomings.

When Allen Tate refers to Coriolanus as an arbitrary frame of reference, it is difficult to ascertain whether he is referring to the historical figure as delineated by Plutarch or the entire Shakespearean play. Schwartz, however, with his usual ingenuity, employs the character himself and the complete play, as well as the implications of both in a contemporary context. The character Coriolanus, in his extremes of vanity, pride, weakness, love, hate, courage and cowardice provides Schwartz himself with a shadow-mask; the character's certainties and vacillations, his self-concern, his shifting emotions as seen within the polis and in exile provide an ironic alter-ego for the author. Shakespeare's play serves as background in much the same manner as other Shakespearean dramas do for Auden's "The Sea and the Mirror"

and Louis MacNeice's "Hamlet." Shakespeare's "Coriolanus," with its political, moral and psychological matrices, offers Schwartz rich possibilities for his own drama of social satire and psychic therapy--and is thus far from arbitrary as a choice.

Against the Shakespearean background, Schwartz's masters expatiate on the various themes in terms of their own teachings. The tragic action on stage, the variety of ideological commentary and the intermission entertainment all combine to create a sense of multiplicity expressive of the modern, unintegrated, knowledgeable sensibility. In this respect, too, as M.L. Rosenthal notes, Schwartz resembles Auden:

In the ideology-centered milieu of the thirties and early forties in which Schwartz grew up, a knowledgeable involvement with ideas until one felt tugged this way by Marx, that way by Freud and hither and thither by the concitation of still other devils from Aristotle to Augustine to John Crowe Ransom seemed worth any five simple emotions (See Auden's The Orators or, in this book, Schwartz's "Coriolanus and His Mother"). This was not mere affectation, but the spiritual life of a generation drunk with the excitement of worlds of thought in conflict.<sup>25</sup>

Thus while the multiplicity may be seen as "too many centers of interest" lacking integration, Schwartz in this way reflects the modern condition.

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<sup>25</sup>"Deep in the Unfriendly City," Nation, June 11, 1960, p.515.

The work is integrated, however, and, as one might expect from an author as philosophically oriented as Delmore Schwartz, the integration involves a complex inter-relation of self and world which occurs on a larger scale than anything thus far discussed. This complex unity, which permeates all levels of the work requires a closer examination of outer form and inner functioning. The outer form will reveal the work's relation to the world outside itself and the inner functioning will reveal the center of that world--which is, not surprisingly--the self that is creating the work.

Thus far we have treated the multiplicity of the work, particularly in the juxtaposition of drama, commentary, entertainment, and "worlds of thought in conflict." The juggling of these elements accounts for the comic irony in "Coriolanus," but not for its strange, underlying pathos: ". . . the balance of tragic action with comic commentary is often deftly handled and the particular rich kind of comedy employed here has, at its best, a puzzling substratum of pathos."<sup>26</sup> The "substratum of pathos" that puzzles Anthony Hecht is actually generated by the outer form of the work, its theater-dream idiom. This

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<sup>26</sup>Hecht, p. 597.

idiom, as we shall see, also connects the work to a larger frame of reference--to the major insights from philosophy, psychology and poetry of the preceding century.

In an earlier section of this paper we dealt with a generalized pathos, there delineated as "metaphysical pathos." In the title story of In Dreams the movie-dream idiom dramatized this pathos in terms of the life of the individual. In "Coriolanus" the theater-dream idiom expresses not only the predicament of the individual life, and not merely the psychio-social problems of the late thirties, but also a central dilemma of modern man: his knowledge of responsibility for his own fate, and the longing for something beyond such knowledge and control. Thomas Mann, in an attempt to correlate the insights of Schopenhauer and Freud, explains this unwanted knowledge in a strikingly similar metaphor: ". . . each of us being the secret theatre-manager of our own dreams, so also in reality . . . our fate may be the product of our inmost selves, of our wills, and we are actually ourselves bringing about what seems to be happening to us."<sup>27</sup> The pathos of the dilemma

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<sup>27</sup>"Freud and the Future" (1936), as reprinted in The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature, ed. Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, Jr. (New York, 1965), p. 672.



was expressed in the same metaphor by Baudelaire:

Mais mon coeur, que jamais ne visite l'estase  
Est un theatre ou l'attend  
Toujours, toujours en vain, l'Etre aux aile de gaze.

J.M. Cohen finds, in Baudelaire's figure of the empty theater of the soul, the central thrust of modern poetry:

All modern poetry, whatever its programme, has been conscious that this Being is most often absent from the poet's heart, has been aware that the theater of his soul is frequently empty, and has suspected that it is perhaps inhabited by ghosts. Each poet has sought to call on the stage some significant forms capable of flooring the giant Satan of self-doubt, self-disgust, indifference or horror that possesses modern man, standing always between him and that ecstasy which, like Baudelaire, he so much desires; and each, in so far as he is a true poet, has to some extent, succeeded in his purpose.<sup>28</sup>

"Coriolanus" was written thirty years before J.M. Cohen's analysis; yet, with what seems an allegorical extension of this theme, Schwartz locates himself in this mainstream of modern poetry. In "Coriolanus" the theater of the soul is literally inhabited by ghosts. And Schwartz's method of "flooring the giant Satan of self-doubt, self-disgust, indifference or horror," is that of Dante with his Satan: he grapples on his hair and turns his head where he had his feet before. Schwartz does so by packing that empty theater with those very Satanic fragments of the self; he is present, not

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Poetry of This Age: 1908-1965, (New York, 1968), p. 34.

only as "theatre-manager" of the dream, but also as protagonist, viewer, explicator, commentator, instructor, satirist, wit, buffoon and entertainer. The mocking metaphor of the experience itself with its too-much knowledge and its self-deflation combined with the structuring symmetry of the poetic act is thus turned into a tragi-comic victory. That "empty" theater is now ironically filled with "significant forms" of self.

Schwartz, with his heavily genetic orientation, is conscious of all his antecedents, so that "Coriolanus" operates within a larger context than the concerns of modern philosophy, psychology and poetry. Schwartz selects a Shakespearean play as background, thus dramatizing his awareness of poetry as an act of memory. "Coriolanus" is a late play of the master, first printed in the Folio of 1623. It has great freedom of verse with many hypermetrical lines, and therefore provides a workable model for Schwartz's modern, flexible iambic pentameter line, a line that Schwartz often divides for rhetorical emphasis and rhythmic variety.

The opening lines are illustrative of Schwartz's general effects in his assimilation of Shakespeare and of his modern poetic masters:

Theatre, the place to stare, rustle of programs,  
 Many have come, are being seated. The house  
 Is full, the audience is distinguished,  
 And in a box-seat sit five ghosts, and one,  
 A boy with muffled voice full of emotion.  
 The lights dim, half-darkness now accents  
 The footlights' glitter before the curtain. The curtain  
 Rises on the heart of man,

Rome, Rome,  
 The history-ridden arena shown by  
 A temple painted on a canvas backdrop;  
 On fluted columns, fat and white, there rests  
 The pediment wherein a writhing frieze  
 of armed men strain to kill the other team  
 World without end, world without end of hatred.

In these introductory lines, as well as in later lines which represent a condensation of the original play, Schwartz obviously tones down the Shakespearean language; the result is a compromise--neither Elizabethan nor jazzy American idiom--which allows Marx to speak after Coriolanus without a jarring effect.<sup>29</sup>

Immediately following that introductory passage we enter the world of the play, which, like Shakespeare's "Coriolanus," opens with the mutinous energies of the hungry poor of Rome. No direct reference is made to the hungry poor of America in the thirties, nor is there topical political satire in the poem except in the indirect political commentary of Aristotle and Marx.

Another passage will serve to illustrate Schwartz's

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<sup>29</sup>Hecht, p. 597.

techniques: his manipulation of language from play to commentary, his interpretation of characters in the play, his use of the ghosts, his methods of condensation, and his multi-layered humor.

--And now, shuffling, diverting gaze,  
 Toga'd Menenius, canny patrician, comes,  
 Fat and untidy, dragging his robe along,  
 Good-humored extravert, rosy and robust,  
 And not too finicky:  
                                   "Listen!" he says,  
 Contemptuous yet soothing, knowing their will  
 And their necessity; divided from them  
 And so against them; requiring them  
 And therefore politic; consoling them  
 With the old Platonic metaphor in which  
 Consistent need, poor fear, and aching will,  
 Becomes an animal or organism  
 Wherein each organ must deny itself  
 That the great corpse may be well-fed.  
 "How metaphors may serve the ruling class,  
 Hypostasis itself shall soothe the poor!"  
 Sighs one great ghost beside me. . .

In this passage the lexical range (from "finicky" to hypostasis") is representative of an idiom that elsewhere accommodates such divergent terms as "aseity" and "fucked." In interpreting Shakespeare's characters, Schwartz is doing just what Shakespeare himself did: using Plutarch's descriptions and elaborating or dramatizing them to suit his own purposes in the play. Here Schwartz interprets Menenius as friendly, joking placator of the plebeians. Schwartz condenses Menenius's lengthy speech in the original wherein he attempts to convince the plebeians that the Senate is

necessary; he does so with what Schwartz calls "the old Platonic metaphor," the organic analogy in which the Senate serves the state as the stomach serves the body. Aristotle's comment is archly ironic. The comment is appropriately made by that ghost in that it concerns Plato, metaphor, rhetoric and politics; the irony is heightened in that the actual political rhetoric of the statement seems more appropriate to another ghost--the articulator of the class-struggle. The irony is further extended by a rhetoric that is neither Aristotelian nor Marxist, but idiosyncratically Schwartzian: the comment encapsulates and inverts the original political-organic metaphor in the pun that turns Aristotle's abstract "hypostasis" into concrete substance, that is, into food for the hungry. The juggling of abstract and concrete, particularly in this appetitive mode discussed earlier in relation to morning's "white breakfast" ("Aubade") and "the heart of man is eaten / Consummately at leisure" ("Far Rockaway"), is, by now, a recognizable Schwartzian strategem. By such devices are we made aware that the ideas of Shakespeare, Aristotle, Freud and Marx are being presented through the interpreting voice of Delmore Schwartz.

Realizing that all voices within the acts are the multiple

poetic voices of the author, we accept as natural the transition from act to intermission set-piece wherein the author speaks in a literal prose voice. Nevertheless, the transitions from poetry to prose are artfully contrived in terms of style, theme and structure. The intermissions are presented as entertainment, as relaxation from the intellectual complexity of the drama; yet each prose piece functions at an ideational level as abstract and complex, and in some ways more complex, than the acts themselves. The topic of the entr'acte seems to emerge from the concluding action of the previous act, and from the comments that concluding action elicits from the ghosts; actually, the prose interludes pick up themes from the entire act, inter-relate them, and provide additional perceptions which ultimately display the limitations of each ideology. Thus in the guise of fool, Schwartz attempts to go beyond his masters to new and greater understanding, and yet, with that same guise, does he deny any greater noetic authority of his own.

In the concluding lines of Act One and the subsequent intermission piece we can examine the techniques of inter-relation, levels of self-conscious awareness, density of reference and theme, and, incidentally, note the presence of motifs that occur throughout Schwartz's work. Caius Marcius, the



The curtain falls. The orchestra begins,  
 Bomb! Bomb! Bomb! Beethoven sobs.  
 He too beside me in the crowded box,  
 And slumped in his cliché, chin to his breast:  
 Bomb! Bomb! Bomb! What awe and care!  
 Then sweetly, thinly, fluted the melody  
 Of the soul in private pitying itself,  
 Tenderly touching every grouch and sore.

Beethoven's presence has been less evident than the other ghosts with their articulate theorization. He is present as artist who, like the author, created an interpretation in his heroic-tragic "Coriolanus" music.

--And then the music ceases. The bright lights flood Theatre, audience, our straining gaze, and now, Amazed as never before, myself I see Enter between the curtains' folds, appear As many titter and some clap hands in glee, A sad young clown in gown of domino, X-ray, cartoon, Picasso's freak in blue, From the box-seat I see myself on show.

The author puts himself on stage after Shakespeare's Act One, but within Schwartz's Act One, thus easing the transition from multiple-voiced poetic drama to direct prose address. The transition is further effected by the opening of the prose piece, called "Pleasure" : "I come, I said, to be useful and to entertain." Referring to his presence, he here begins a soliloquy which is obviously also an informal essay, a lecture, and the intellectual buffoonery of a compulsive talker.

In the piece itself Schwartz clownishly presents a theme



(reminiscent of Kafka's parable of the doorkeeper in The Trial) wherein all truths seem equally viable and therefore equally suspect. Yet the title "Pleasure" is not totally belied, because such intellectual despair is pitted against the actual joys of existence in a dialectical mode resembling the structuring of Schwartz's lyric poetry. But any further analysis of the piece, Schwartz implies, is unnecessary, fruitless, even ridiculous; for he himself, in an immediately following commentary overturns all previous pronouncements. Act Two, called "His Soaring Insolence, the Common Muck,"<sup>30</sup> opens with this comment:

Absurd and precarious my presence there,  
 Looped by the spotlight in assured discourse,  
 Harangue, imperative, prayer and wish,  
 True story and confession, who knows what?  
 Double, absorbed, monstrous, amazed, ashamed,  
 With much relief myself I see retire  
 And as the curtain rises on ACT TWO  
 Regain my sense of place, sharpened anew.

Schwartz himself has pre-empted all analysis of the prose essay by doing so himself before, during and after the piece; the stance is explained in so multi-faceted a manner that to further explain makes one more ridiculous than the explainer.

The other prose essays--"Justice," "There Was a City,"

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<sup>30</sup> Schwartz creates such titles by combining phrases from the original play.

"Choose," and "He Is a Person"--abound in self-reference, and equally, in the justification of self-reference, and in the ironic confession that the speaker is not sure of justification itself, for "It is very difficult to be sure of anything." ("There Was a City,"). The "brown pony named Ego" ("Justice") turns every story into autobiography. "There Was a City," a tale with historical, political, economic and moral dimensions is simultaneously a parable of the author:

In this city there was a boy who lived a personal life in which at every given opportunity he judged, that is to say, evaluated the kind of being and the ways of life which surrounded him. Such judging was natural to him, made him lonely, sprang from his desire to know what he might enact, possess and attain when he was permitted to choose, if he were permitted to do so.

In the story, the boy makes a choice for his future, and in this act is contained the future of the city, but we are not told what that literal choice is. The ending seems one of unlimited possibilities:

His new center of feeling, though derived from the city, made it necessary for him to murder the captain of the ship in order that he might proceed in the ways of his own origination. Let us depart from him, even as he departs from the city on his voyage toward himself himself and the future. See him! He stands at the prow, observing the glittering possibilities of the waters as the ship moves forward in time. He is in love. I am in love with him!

The protagonist of the fable is sailing into new and uncharted waters, and also--in the murder and in the voyage--re-enacting what has occurred before; he is self-determined, yet limited by history, human potentials, by desires and by choices.

In the Act that follows Schwartz makes it clear that:

His utterance

Jejune and lyrical, is mine, my own.  
 He tells my secrecy, my private mind,  
 My very heart in accents crude and broad,  
 And I am gratified to have it known  
 (Let it be known, I think, that is my pleasure,  
 Let it be fully known, if it is true,  
 Of every mind with technique mine alone  
 Sleeps such a dream, endures this brutal night),  
 But shamed by his voluble nakedness.

Those combined emotions ("I am in love with him! . . . But shamed by his voluble nakedness") are the essence of his protagonist: Schwartz-Coriolanus-Narcissus. Earlier in the poem the author referred to Coriolanus as "our undrowned Narcissus/ Our self-regardant lion"; now in the essay "Choose," which marks the peripety of the drama, he focuses on Coriolanus in exile. Unsupported by mother, state, admirers, warriors or enemies, knowing not where to go, having "attained to the emptiness for which he had striven," he stops at water, kneels, and sees his own face there.

He sees his face, his thick lips, curly hair, flaring nostrils, broad forehead. His haunted eyes regard themselves, round lakes full of a kind of sweat. They still get pleasure from their own unmoved look. . . . It is the moment of vision and decision. Staring upon that face which is his own, he sees his own life, and the lives rejected and the choices chosen, and the immediacy of anger and pleasure, and the abstracted stare of memory, and the strangeness, to himself, of his own face, the most peculiar of flowers.

In that description of Coriolanus-Narcissus-Schwartz we see the same image as the haunting-haunted, doubly-reflected, shadowed portrait found on the cover of the New Directions Selected Poems: Summer Knowledge.<sup>31</sup> In that long-shadowed, doubly reflected portrait, the poet, Janus-faced, looks backward into memory and history and forward into the possibilities of the future; but in the abstracted stare, sees only the present self. Here, then, in Coriolanus-Narcissus-Schwartz is that which provides the underlying pathos of "Coriolanus and His Mother." Schwartz as Narcissus is actually the inner core of most of Schwartz's early work. Only in his late poems will there be a change--or perhaps only an addition--for in Summer Knowledge Narcissus will see, as well as his own watery image, the rippling reflections of summer. Late in his career, Schwartz wrote a long poem called "Narcissus," only parts of which have been published.<sup>32</sup> In the prelude to that poem, the poet explains:

Narcissus, speaking in the first person--or at times in the third person (in retrospect) describes his passion and the various forms of misunderstanding which others have committed regarding his behavior.

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<sup>31</sup>Cover designed by David Ford from a photograph by Polly Forbes-Johnson.

<sup>32</sup>The entire poem, including this preface, appears in an appendix to this study. Published passages from the work are "The Mind Is an Ancient and Famous Capital," "The Fear and Dread of the Mind of the Others," and "The River Was the Emblem of All Beauty: All," in Summer Knowledge; "Passages from the Studies of Narcissus," Chicago Review, XII (Summer 1959), 121-123.

Others. . . thought Narcissus was moved by self-love and looked in the river only to see his own beloved face. They forgot that his father was the river-god. . . . the truth was that he was entirely dissatisfied with the image of his own face. . . But the river itself was the most beautiful of all the beings he had ever beheld.

Schwartz understood, at least at that late date, that poetic creation is narcissistic, and that narcissism, in the sense of this passage, is the beginning of understanding, the basis for cosmic narcissism.

"Coriolanus and His Mother," in its complex design and multi-layered ironies, is a profound poem. In its rich, comic outer-trappings and its haunting narcissistic core, it stands as an achievement in that most difficult form of modern literature, the long poem.

## Poems of Experiment and Imitation

Section III of In Dreams consists of thirty-five short lyric poems. These are Schwartz's best-known, most-reprinted works, and justly so; in them he achieves a rare mastery of craft in a variety of forms--sonnets, ballads, tight lyrics and brief dramatic narratives. The section is aptly titled "Poems of Experiment and Imitation," for the poems represent a creative synthesis of tradition and innovation. Schwartz has assimilated influences from Shakespeare, Blake, the French Symbolists and the moderns--particularly Eliot, Yeats, Pound, Hart Crane and Auden. The experimental nature of the poems lies in Schwartz's resourceful blending of those influences with his own fertility of invention, profundity of thought and subtlety of feeling.

In response to a request for a statement on these poems, Allen Tate stressed their originality:

Schwartz's poetic style is the only genuine innovation we've had since Pound and Eliot came on the scene twenty-five years ago. In his verse there is a wholly new feeling for language and in the regular versification a new metrical system of great subtlety and originality.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Unpublished letter to James Laughlin, dated January 5, 1939.

The originality of voice, tone, rhythm and structure discussed at length in Part I of this study emerges fully for the first time in these lyrics. That voice is characterized by its amazing blend of candor, weariness, mockery, melancholy, doubt, idealism, self-consciousness, child-like wonder and tough-minded intellectuality. The new tone, a wry lyricism, is achieved by a subdued musicality, subtle shifts of stance, and an instinct for the ludicrous. In some poems a sharp tension is generated by desolate social reality opposed to rich psychic reality, or by a sense of the unremitting hostility of the world opposed to a conviction in the necessity of love. These tensions that R.H. Deutsch calls "claims and counter-claims" often provide the dialectical structuring of the poem," . . . the old arguing out of the problem, the setting forth of first one side, then the other so that the whole is finally illuminated."<sup>34</sup>

Most of the critical acclaim for Schwartz's first volume focused on the achievement of these lyrics. Conrad Aiken singled out Dylan Thomas and Schwartz as the two most satisfactory lyric poets of the moment. After praising Thomas's linguistic brilliance, Aiken claimed that Schwartz,

. . . if a good deal drier, both linguistically and prosodically--at times almost imageless--is

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<sup>34</sup> "Delmore Schwartz: Middle Poems," Concerning Poetry, II, 2 (Fall 1969), 20.

in his different way just as brilliant. His plain statements are not so plain, by any means, as they look--they are cunningly weighed and weighted, there are degrees in his dryness, and his psychological procedure is impeccable. He can even be lyrical, when he wants to.<sup>35</sup>

The book jacket of In Dreams quotes statements from Louis MacNeice, R.P. Blackmur, Dudley Fitts, George Marion O'Donnell, John Wheelright, and F.O. Matthiessen on the lyrics. John Wheelright said:

The variety of forms, the compelling grace and power of thought (and I dare say profundity) should serve to attract readers to a way out through the problems which beset our lives today.

And Louis MacNeice:

Schwartz has a good ear and a delicate feeling for the use of words. He also has a well-trained mind, a fund of genuine feeling. He has written some moving and beautiful poetry.

Amidst the general acclaim for the lyrics, there was one dissenting voice, that of Babette Deutsch, who charged Schwartz with diffuseness:

. . . Mr. Schwartz is betrayed by a failure of concentration. His diffuseness is perhaps inevitable to a sensitive person pausing before a mirror which reflects his face against the background of this distracted twentieth-century scene. . . He shows himself open to more perceptions than he can properly control. They

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<sup>35</sup> "Back to Poetry," p. 223



crowd upon him so thickly that the effect, which should be one of richness and depth, is sometimes that of confusion.<sup>36</sup>

Most critics, however, saw neither confusion nor lack of control in Schwartz's wealth of perceptions. R.P. Blackmur treats this wealth as a strength:

. . . in the shorter poems, some whole and some in part, there is at its own level an inexhaustible quality in the perceptions which the associations of image and statement reveal.<sup>37</sup>

And Dudley Fitts praises above all the control, Schwartz's

. . . mastery of technique that is precisely suited to his poems' intention. . . . Almost without exception the short poems achieve the equilibrium between Thing Said and Way of Saying it that is the mark of the finest poetry.<sup>38</sup>

Writing in retrospect almost thirty years later, R.H. Deutsch re-evaluated the poems and their acclaim; his assessment, one which re-affirms the judgment of the earlier critics, is in agreement with the claims of this study: "On the whole, the poems warrant the praise given them. They are lean, tight, original, and sincere. . . ."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>"Useful Entertainment," New York Herald Tribune, March 5, 1939, p. 21.

<sup>37</sup>Book jacket of In Dreams Begin Responsibilities.

<sup>38</sup>"Balanced Instrument", p. 29.

<sup>39</sup>"Poetry and Belief in Delmore Schwartz," Sewanee Review, LXXIV (Autumn 1966), 918.

"Poems of Experiment and Imitation" is in two parts:

- a) The Repetitive Heart, eleven poems in imitation of the fugue form,

and

- b) Twenty-four Poems.

In an acknowledgment Schwartz refers to "The Repetitive Heart" as a suite:

This suite of poems called imitations of the fugue form might perhaps be more exactly called poems in a form suggested by the fugue, since the contrapuntal effect is of course impossible in language.

Schwartz's musical analogy is a loose one; neither the individual poems nor the section as a whole is strictly fugal--e.g. there is no build-up in definite stages into a complex form with a marked climax. There are, however, other aspects of the fugue present, since it is possible to view the poems as polyphonic compositions based on several themes with a semi-contrapuntal treatment, not only of themes, but also of images, phrases and rhythms. Themes concern loneliness, identity, guilt, love, time, history and the city; motifs and images that recur involve touch, animality, appetite, masks and mentors. Although rhythms range from slow, deliberate, clumsy bodily movement to light and song-like, these rhythms are manipulated into so personal a rhythmic style that patterns of recurrence of these rhythms operate as reiteration of themes to create the fugal quality of the section.

The first poem of "The Repetitive Heart" is "All of Us Always Turning Away for Solace." This poem states a major theme: the self's futile and fumbling attempt to escape itself. Behind the poem stands Freud's reality-pleasure principle. For Freud, when a being finds himself unable to accept the conditions in which he is caught, he thrusts out in any direction to find escape, often to find diversion in art or amusement. But the very pattern of art and amusements, when apprehended, leads back to the self, the only reality. Schwartz humorously converts the reality-pleasure principle into his own "bouncing ball principle." The bouncing ball--bounding, evasive, fumbled but returning and repetitive--structures theme, images, sound and rhythmic patterns in the poem. Images follow this organizing principle, starting from "the lonely room" of self, the attempted escape to the diversion of baseball diamond or gridiron where there are "seventy thousand applauding," and then, in the poem's last lines, the return to the self, that same repetitive heart:

--Follow the bouncing ball; and thus you follow,  
Fingering closely your breast on the left side,

The bouncing ball you turned from for solace.

The first line of the poem which repeats the title, was set off by itself; that last line, similarly set off, summarizes the return. Rhythmic patterning follows an analogous scheme. After the separate first line there follows a short section written metrically:

From the lonely room where the self must be honest,  
 All of us turning from being alone (at best  
 Boring) because what we want most is to be  
 Interested

Each of those full lines has five stresses, but a varying number of syllables; the effect is of an unsure surface resting on a predictable, repetitive substratum. This metric organization is abandoned in the following lines, those which represent the diversion or amusement. Here Schwartz uses a syntactical ordering, actually a highly repetitious anaphoric design:

                                play billiards, poking a ball  
 On the table, play baseball, batting a ball  
 On the diamond, play football, kicking a ball  
 On the gridiron,  
                                 seventy thousand applauding.

This rhythmic change-up comically undercuts the poem's statement, for the rhythms of "being alone (at best/Boring)" were interestingly contrapuntal; the lines describing "what we want most," that is, "to be/Interested," are intentionally monotonous in their flat, unvaried anaphoric reiteration. "This amuses, this indeed is our solace," the poet states, ironically. Repeating the instructions from the old movie sing-in (another of our group amusements) the poet exhorts us to:

                        Follow the bouncing ball! O, fellow, follow  
 Perhaps the poet is suggesting that we envision that bouncing ball to cue our reading of his words on the page as it did for the words on the movie-screen. But if we really follow the

underlying bouncing ball principle, we feel the return to the self, and to that complex rhythm which is of much greater interest--

See what is here and clear, one thing repeated  
Bouncing, evasive, caught and uncaught, fumbled

--lines which, on another level, provide a kind of internal gloss for the entire poem. Sound patterning is as cleverly organized as this rhythmic structuring. In the opening lines, which express loneliness and the self's need for solace, Schwartz clusters patterns of s's and l's. The section portraying active amusement repeats initial p's and b's almost without variation; this repetition also picks up an echo of the earlier "at best/Boring)." A series of initial f's and medial l's (follow, fellow, follow, fumbled, follow, follow) then exhort us to follow the fumbling return. In that return, all the patterned sounds are recapitulated:

The bouncing ball you turned from for solace.  
(    b                b   l                f        f    s l s )

This initial lyric embodies a theme that recurs throughout the section, e.g., the repetitive heart, its clumsy dominance, our fumbling attempts at evasion, and the return to its rule. As new themes are stated, echoes from earlier poems will enter, sounding against new themes in a richly diversified series of tonic, rhythmic, and structural variations.

In the next poem, "Will You Perhaps Consent To Be," the repetitive heart turns to the outside, this time in a gentle

and lyric mode:

Will you perhaps consent to be  
My many-branched, small and dearest tree?

With a tenderness not undercut by his usual dry, intellectual irony, the poet combines realms:

My mind's continuing and unreleasing wind  
Touches this single of your flowers, faith in me

No down-dragging "heavy bear" enters to "perplex and affront." Patterns of recurrence are relatively simple, mainly the song-like repetition of the above quoted lines with minor variations. There is, however, an echo of "All of Us Always Turning Away for Solace" in a movement away and a return; the wind which

Lusts for Paris, Crete and Pergamus,  
Is suddenly off for Paris and Chicago

and then requests a return:

--May I perhaps return to you  
Wet with an Attic dust and chill from Norway  
My dear, so-many branched smallest tree?

Next, in "All Clowns Are Masked and All Personae," we recognize the more usual voice of this poet in his role of juggler of words and ideas. The tone is semi-flippant as he assumes a mock authoritative stance, a stance which provides that formalized distance used so effectively in "Coriolanus and His Mother." Here the poet speaks seriously within a light framework; the argument itself is not ironic, but the voice is. The mode, then, is the fool speaking truth; the theme, choice. As usual, Schwartz manages to dramatize ideas,

juggling particulars and universals, expressing tragedy by the everyday and the comic by the seemingly ideal. As masked clown, one who is infinitely vulnerable but never defeated, Schwartz helps us to laugh at our apparent hopelessness, and by so doing, may possibly lead us out of it. The mask is both for the clown and for the poet behind the poem. With this second mask the poet can present the intellectual attitudes that enlarge the scope of life; then, if he falls prey to complications of the inner life that fears the hidden shames, he can hide behind the personality that expresses itself in exalted ideas.

We choose ourselves, says Schwartz:

All clowns are masked and all personae  
Flow from choices; sad and gay, wise  
Moody and humorous are chosen faces

Then comes the denial:

And yet not so! For all are circumstances  
Given, like a tendency  
To colds or like blond hair and wealth,  
Or war and peace or gifts for mathematics,  
Fall from the sky, rise from the ground, stick to us  
In time surround us: Socrates is mortal.

For choice is limited by the past--by how we previously lived and even by conditions beyond our private memory--and then by our limited future, our mortality. But the very recognition of that limit, of mortality, makes choice possible:

Decide to take a trip, read books of travel,  
Go quickly! Even Socrates is mortal

Within these limits there is free choice, but only when one really chooses from his essence:

And he who chooses chooses what is given.

The given now takes on positive meaning; this is the case whether or not one is intellectually aware of Choice:

He who chooses is ignorant of Choice

Then, suddenly transcending limits, the poet urges us to choose love, to choose life, to choose the future:

--Choose love, for love is full of children,  
Full of choices, children choosing  
Botany, mathematics, law and love,  
So full of choices! So full of children!  
And the past is immortal, the future is inexhaustible!

The stance in this poem permits the poet, as persona, to view from the outside a continuum that runs from theory to life force; it enables him to manipulate sharp, bold contradictions of anger and excitement, the banal and the ideal, pessimism and hope, and to do so with great mobility of thought, perception and feeling.

"Calmly We Walk through this April's Day" (originally "For Rhoda") is one of Schwartz's better-known poems. John Hollander has stated that it is the poem of Schwartz's that always excited him the most; as Hollander explains, "It concludes in generalities and abstractions set aflame by the concrete experiences that led to their recognition."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>"Poetry Chronicle," Partisan Review, XXVII (Spring 1960), 366.



Time in this poem becomes a felt immediacy as the poet concretizes the experience of walking calmly through the present, and, simultaneously, makes one aware of the dizzying movement of time's devouring flames.

Calmly we walk through this April's day  
Metropolitan poetry here and there,  
In the park sit pauper and rentier,  
The screaming children, the motor-car  
Fugitive about us, running away

What is the self amid this blaze?

The great globe reels in the solar fire

The quotidian business of life is seen as heightened reality against a cosmic background, that is, the continual movement of the world order.

At the beginning of Western history this cosmic process was similarly expressed by Heraclitus: "This world order, the same for all, no god made or any man, but it always was and is and will be an ever-lasting fire."<sup>41</sup> Like Heraclitus, Schwartz sees the perpetual motion of the cosmos in terms of fire:

Avid its rush, that reeling blaze!

Heraclitus sees the process of becoming through a warring of

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<sup>41</sup>Heraclitus, Fragment 32.

opposites (Schwartz's "pauper and rentier," "worker and millionaire," "trivial and unique," living and dead, past and present). The individual finds himself part of the flux ("What am I now that I was then"). But in the vast conflagration ("(How all things flash! How all things flare!)") the whole forever consumes and renews itself ("consume, consume," "Restored all life from infancy").

In more recent times Yeats uses fire in this central role. With fire Yeats distinguishes between the ceaseless movement of things that are subject to time, and the fire which lies behind them and consumes them:

Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,  
And be the singing masters of my soul.  
Consume my heart away; . . .  
("Sailing to Byzantium")

Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,  
Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,  
. . .  
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.  
("Byzantium")

There are echoes from Yeats throughout Schwartz's poem, particularly in the final refrain:

Time is the school in which we learn,  
Time is the fire in which we burn.

That final refrain, however, is closer to two lines from Thomas

Hardy, a poet Schwartz studied at length:<sup>42</sup>

A senseless school where we must give  
Our lives that we may learn to live!  
("A Young Man's Epigram on Existence")

Schwartz so structures this poem that we feel the experiences blaze into generalities as we follow the process of his mind catching fire. The peripatetic opening sets up an associational progression. The poet moves through the present, in ignorance of what will happen, and, seemingly, of how the poem will end. The scene about him, also in movement--

The screaming children, the motor-car  
Fugitive about us, running away,

--leads, through mediative association, to thoughts of distance, and thus to those who are gone:

Many great dears are taken away

There is a natural transition from the past to speculation on the future:

What will become of you and me

The thought is here interrupted by an unfinished generalization; speculation and generalization are completed alternately:

(This is the school in which we learn . . .)  
Besides the photo and the memory?  
(. . . that time is the fire in which we burn.)

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<sup>42</sup>Vide Schwartz's "Poetry and Belief in Thomas Hardy," Southern Review, VI, 1 (Summer 1940), 64-77.

Again in the second section the generalization is brought in by association (from "children" to "school"), and is separated by a line in between. In the third section the poem builds to a dizzying crescendo:

Each minute bursts in the burning room,  
The great globe reels in the solar fire,  
Spinning the trivial and unique away.

As the trivial and unique are burned away, the two halves of the refrain are brought together, startlingly, for although they were present before, their contradiction was not evident:

Time is the school in which we learn,  
Time is the fire in which we burn.

But Schwartz has led us, both poetically and philosophically, to a level on which contradiction is accounted for as part of the scheme of things. At the end the poet manages to bring together those warring opposites because they were already present throughout the poem: behind the seemingly associative development lie those opposites that represent the logos of the poem as well as that of the universe. The logos is revealed by a poetic process completed by the sonorities of the last two lines. In those lines the parallels of rhythms, rhyme and syntax gain a sonic equivalence that over-rides any disparity of meanings; poetic integration is thus achieved by forceful, epigrammatic closure. The poem's ending, carefully

prepared for and boldly stated, provides contrary evidence for those critics who complain of Schwartz's "weak endings." Actually, Schwartz has, in this brief poem, made quite a journey. Calmly walking through Eliot's Wasteland ("April," "Metropolitan poetry"), and traversing the Quartets (memory, time), he arrives at the Logos--a journey that took Eliot most of a life-time.

The next poem opens with the categorical statement:

Dogs are Shakespearean, children are strangers.

The tone of this opening, forceful and authoritative, is obtained by a direct replacement metaphor, one in which the resemblance is established through formal, syntactical arrangement. Christine Brooke-Rose, in A Grammar of Metaphor, lists this as the third of five main types of noun metaphor:

The Copula: a direct statement that A is B, which is authoritative in tone, and even didactic. It is so direct that it can be used for highly original metaphors or paradoxical equations, and seems wasted on the trivial.<sup>43</sup>

Miss Brooke-Rose explains the range of its effects:

The disadvantage is obviousness. It cannot be repeated too often in one poem or passage, except intentionally as part of a rhetorical effect (e.g. in a litany). On the other hand, the very directness is authoritative in tone, a categoric

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<sup>43</sup>A Grammar of Metaphor (London, 1965), p. 24.

statement by the poet, which we do not feel inclined to question, however odd the metaphor. It allows for originality and paradox, and sounds gratuitous with banal metaphors.<sup>44</sup>

Schwartz's equation is odd and paradoxical, and it is repeated for rhetorical effect, but not for that of litany; it is intentionally gratuitous to show up the banality, perhaps even the absurdity of categorical explanations of animals and children, and then by extension, of life:

Let Freud and Wordsworth discuss the child,  
Angels and Platonists shall judge the dog

Schwartz contrasts explanations of life with felt life:

The dog in humble inquiry along the ground,  
The child who credits dreams and fears the dark,  
Know more and less than you: they know full well  
Nor dream nor childhood answer questions well

In the last section the poet explains that "more and less":

This which we live behind our unseen faces,  
Is neither dream nor childhood, neither  
Myth nor landscape, final nor finished,  
For we are incomplete and know no future

Only then, and in a true Schwartzian return, does the poet affirm, and, at the same time, lament, the equation:

And we are howling or dancing out our souls  
In beating syllables before the curtain:  
We are Shakespearean, we are strangers.

In "Do the Others Speak of Me Mockingly, Maliciously," the poet is unabashedly personal, portraying his self-consciousness

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<sup>44</sup>Brooke-Rose, p. 105.

and weaknesses with detachment. The poems of "The Repetitive Heart" have been called "terrifyingly philosophic"; this one, in light of Schwartz's later debilitating paranoia, might be more accurately called "terrifyingly psychological."

Do they whisper behind my back? Do they speak  
Of my clumsiness? Do they laugh at me,  
Mimicking my gestures, retailing my shame?

The intellect attempts to cope with the psyche, the self with other:

I know the reason why, I too have done this,  
For wit's sake, to amuse, because their being weighed  
Too grossly for a time, to be superior

Our needs extend to other; in lines with an Elizabethan ring,  
reminiscent of Marlowe's

Is it not passing fair to be a king  
And ride in triumph through Persepolis  
(Tamberlaine)

Schwartz exclaims,

What an unheard-of thing it is in fine,  
To love another and equally be loved!

but adds,

What sadness and what joy! How cruel it is  
That pride and wit distort the heart of man

The poem ends with the pathos of the unanswered question,  
"What can we do?"; for even with our knowledge we cannot  
reconcile our weaknesses and needs:





Then, as in "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave," one must resume the struggle, the daily servitude to existence.

In the next poem, seeking deliverance from the city's oppression, love's exhaustion and time's endless circling, the poet implores, "Abraham and Orpheus, Be With Me Now." Caught in the weary tedium of the meaningless, repetitive present, the poet cries out for the strength and certainties of those beginnings which are embodied in the pair of Hebraic and Hellenic Ur-fathers of faith, love and art:

As you knew too, who lifted up the knife,  
As you, musician in the after-life,  
Drowning in the shadow all love always bears,  
As every solid thing must shadow in the light:  
I ask your learned presence, I care and fear,  
Abraham and Orpheus, be near, be near.

The poems of "The Repetitive Heart" are, by and large, structured in three parts. Within this three-part structure two principles operate as counterpoint: first, there is the dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis; second, there is the "bouncing ball principle." On one level, that of awareness or acceptance, the final section of each poem represents a synthesis. On another level, that of continued concrete existence, there is no real synthesis, but only suffering, evasion and return, e.g. the bouncing ball of the repetitive heart. In some poems, such as "Calmly We Walk through This

April's Day," a synthesis prevails. "Abraham and Orpheus," on the other hand, is predominantly a lament of recurrence with no transcendence of the repetitive present. Here the three-part structure reinforces the weight of wearying recurrence with its enclosing, circling return; each stanza begins and ends with the same line (or a minor variation), and stanza three returns to the beginning, not with the strength the poet desires, but with the incantational repetition of its original plea, "Abraham and Orpheus, be with me now."

"The Heavy Bear Who Goes With Me," along with "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave," is probably Schwartz's best-known poem. A great deal has been written on the poem, notably Sister M. Hilda Bonham's "Delmore Schwartz: An Idea of the World," and Jay Halio's "Delmore Schwartz's Felt Abstractions." Since most aspects of the poem have been treated at length in these critiques, it seems necessary only to add a few comments here. In a detailed analysis of the poem, Sister Bonham anatomizes the theme of "the body's drag on the spirit."<sup>46</sup> The effect of weight, she maintains, is achieved by the poem's main and pervasive metaphor--the body as a heavy bear. Jay Halio, while crediting Sister Bonham with an excellent analysis,

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<sup>46</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: An Idea of the World," Renaissance, XIII (Spring 1961), 132.

disagrees that the weightiness is effected by the poem's dominant metaphor: "Closer scrutiny, in fact, reveals that the imagery of touch and especially what we shall have to call kinesthetic imagery--the sense of physical strain or movement in the poem--is directly responsible for this sense of weightiness."<sup>47</sup> But there is yet another force--besides dominant metaphor and kinesthetic imagery--at work to achieve weightiness: rhythmic organization in terms of meter, pace, line autonomy and antipodic symmetry. A heavy, percussive, "four-footed" line suggests the Anglo-Saxon alliterative line in its weighted, balanced rhythm, mid-caesura and variations on the Anglo-Saxon alliterative pattern:

Stumbles, flounders, and strives to be fed

and

With whom I would walk without him near

Many lines achieve the weighted stability of antipodic symmetry:

Cra<sup>z</sup>y fac<sup>t</sup>o<sup>t</sup>um, dis<sup>h</sup>ev<sup>e</sup>lling all (line 7)

Trem<sup>b</sup>les and sh<sup>o</sup>ws the dar<sup>k</sup>ness be<sup>n</sup>ea<sup>t</sup>h (line 15)

Dr<sup>e</sup>ssed in his dr<sup>e</sup>ss-s<sup>u</sup>it, bul<sup>g</sup>ing his pa<sup>n</sup>ts (line 17)

Trem<sup>b</sup>les to thi<sup>n</sup>k that his quiv<sup>e</sup>ring me<sup>a</sup>t (line 18)

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<sup>47</sup>Halio, pp. 806-807.

This slow-paced, weighted, rhythmically balanced line functions as a norm so that its effect carries over to lines that vary only slightly from perfect symmetry. Also, within the lines (in those quoted and throughout the poem) lumbering dactyls provide the metrical texture of clumsy, physical existence.

Thus far we have been dealing with rhythmic techniques that reinforce what Sister Bonham and Jay Halio have already treated, that is, the weightiness, the heavy drag of the body. What has been neglected is the presence of a counter-force to that clumsy weightedness. As we would expect from our analysis of other poems in this section, that counter-force is present, here as a lightness of tone and technique which is played against the weightiness. Although the main thrust is the heavy bear's aggressive, brutish, competitive appetites ("The heavy beating brutish one. . . Boxes his brother in the hate-ridden city"), there is also a playful, almost affectionate acceptance of that "strutting show-off" who "Howls in his sleep for a world of sugar." In spite of the general clumsiness of animal existence portrayed, Schwartz manages to attach the poem to the English lyric tradition by calling that physical self "A stupid clown of the spirit's motive." With this line, which picks up echoes from Shakespeare (particularly Shakespeare's treatment of a similar theme in "Th'expense of

spirit in a waste of shame"), Schwartz incorporates from that lyric tradition some of its grace and resonance.

"A Dog Named Ego, the Snowflakes as Kisses" has also received its share of critical attention. Stanley Poss, in an article called "Low Skies, Some Clearing, Early Frost," treats the poem as a Freudian gloss on Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening":

The scenes, one rural, one urban, are otherwise virtually identical in each poem: it is, of course, snowing on "the darkest evening of the year" in Frost; in Schwartz, it is a snowy evening in December. Frost's speaker and his horse and the snow are paralleled by Schwartz's "I," by the dog named Ego, and by the talkative snowflakes. . . . It is quite orthodox Freud. The poem depends on the assumption that the Superego mediates between the Ego's reaction to the outside world (typically, an acknowledgment of responsibility toward society), and the impulsive, pleasure-seeking drives of the anarchic Id, instinctively bent on self-gratification. In "A Dog Named Ego" Schwartz rewrites Frost's poem so as to make explicit and dramatic the relationships among these three principal components of the psychic apparatus.<sup>48</sup>

It is obvious that Schwartz had the Frost poem in mind, not only for the thematic parallels noted by Stanley Poss, but also for parallels of poetic technique, which, as we shall see, amount to a gentle parody of Frost's style. Schwartz's

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<sup>48</sup>The New England Quarterly (September 1968), 438-439.

familiarity with "Stopping by Woods" is evident in the varied use he made of it. In lectures and essays he often referred to it approvingly or used it to illustrate a particular poetic effect. At another extreme, he found it fair game for straightforward satire and wrote numerous burlesques such as the one noted previously in this study ("Stopping Dead from the Neck UP," which opens "Whose booze this is I think I know"). "A Dog Named Ego," neither homage nor outright satire, lies somewhere in between; it takes the poem seriously, but, with shades of irony, directs attention to theme, techniques and structure. Schwartz's poem comments on Frost's unvaried rhythms, his monotonously end-stopped lines, and his regular rhyme scheme. Keeping Frost's four-stressed line, Schwartz playfully mocks its metrical regularity by creating his own base line with the sing-song rhythms of a nursery rhyme. This base line,

There where I walked toward seven o'clock  
like the nursery rhyme

This is the cat that swallowed the rat  
sometimes begins with initial unstressed syllable

And left me no recourse, far from my home

And this is the boy that . . . .

Frost's fixed, interlocking rhyme scheme is progressively undermined by Schwartz's diminishing pattern of occasional off-rhyme. Multiple ironies--thematic, formal and semantic--occur in the

closing lines. Ego is barking and running as the snowflakes call,

Leading him further and farther away,  
While night collapsed amid the falling,  
And left me no recourse, far from my home  
And left me no recourse, far from my home.

Schwartz's repeated line satirizes Frost's ending mainly by means of a multi-layered pun on the word "recourse" which exploits all associative meanings of the word. Frost's only recourse, the one which he must resort to, is to be recursive; that is, he must resort to repetition, which is shown by Schwartz's example to be false closure. Frost is really 'far from home' thematically and structurally, and gets 'home' only by reiteration, by an over-used convention of poetic closure. With no natural, integral resolution, the poem would "collapse amid the falling"; all Frost can provide is recurrence to achieve the feeling of poetic finality. Another touch of humor is added to the satire with the realization that Schwartz himself has been occupied with recurrence and return in the poems of "The Repetitive Heart."

The section closes with "Time's Dedication." In the first stanza the repetitive heart is represented by a series in rhythmic and syntactic parallel:

My heart beating, my blood running,  
 The light brimming,  
 My mind moving, the ground turning,  
 My eyes blinking, the air flowing

Those pounding, fast-moving participial units are gradually  
 slowed down:

Time perpetually perishing!  
 Time is farewell! Time is farewell!

Abide with me: do not go away

Then, with a series of negations ("not as the dead," "not as the statue," "not as the rock"), the poem, at its center, literally comes to a stand-still ("stand still with me"). The turn is made by negating the negations: "We cannot stand still." The last stanza acts as coda for the poem and for the entire section--resolving tensions, combining particulars and universals, and uniting claims and counter-claims in a process which transcends opposites and puts us in tune with cosmic process. "Deliberately, with care and circumspection," the temporal and eternal are brought together as comedy and pathos join hands. Not by oneself alone, but lovingly, with another, "Our pace equal, our motion one," then "we will be well,"

Walking together on the receding road,  
 Like Chaplin and his orphan sister,  
 Moving together through time to all good.

The second part of "Poems of Experiment and Imitation" is called simply "Twenty-four Poems." Half of these poems



had been published previously. Three of these ("The Beautiful American Word, Sure," 1934; "O Love, Sweet Animal," 1937; "At This Moment of Time," 1937) date from the "apprenticeship" period and were discussed earlier in this study. Nine were printed in various periodicals during the year 1938; the remaining poems also seem to have been written during that same year.

By not imposing any thematic or formal unity on this section (as he had done in "The Repetitive Heart"), Schwartz was able to include a great variety of lyric forms and a wide diversity of subjects. Nevertheless, since Schwartz's poetic range was not limitless, there is repetition as well as variety in the section: many of the concerns, images and techniques of earlier poems re-appear in these poems, and, actually, are repeated in various forms and guises within the section. One consequence of Schwartz's not working within a structure, as he did in "poems in imitation of the fugue form," is that each poem must stand on its own without gaining support from an overall framework. Although the general level of achievement is high, the value of individual poems varies. Our treatment of these poems will vary accordingly. Some are not wholly focussed or merely repeat what has been done more successfully elsewhere;

in this study such poems will be accorded brief notice. Schwartz wrote some of the poems as pairs ("For the One Who Would Not Take Man's Life in His Hands," and "For the One Who Would Take Man's Life in His Hands"), and others relate to one another in such a way that they are best treated as pairs ("Father and Son" and "A Young Child and His Pregnant Mother"). The best poems of this section display the unity, density and control that characterizes great poetry. They warrant lengthy analysis, not only for their intrinsic worth, but also because the inter-relation of concern, image and strategy thus revealed is applicable, to a great extent to other, lesser poems.

Throughout his career Schwartz had a fear of repeating himself; nevertheless, he did. What becomes increasingly evident in his poetry from this point on is that his strengths and weaknesses are inextricably intertwined. Even here in the lyrics of In Dreams Begin Responsibilities, at the height of his poetic powers, Schwartz finds truly expressive forms, and having found what works, uses those forms again and again. Schwartz is aware of the difficulty of finding new modes and new beginnings, for it forms the substance of individual poems ("The Ballad of the Children of the Czar" and "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave") and creates the "order" of "The Repetitive Heart." Yet starting here, and increasingly so in later

works, repetition represents simply that: the inability to find new poetic beginnings. The consequences for this study are obvious. From this point on, a selective treatment of Schwartz's poems represents an attempt to deal with his real achievements, and, in our own way, to avoid unnecessary repetition.

The first two poems of the section, "The Ballad of the Children of the Czar" and "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave," are, perhaps, the most successful of all of Schwartz's poems. Although, as we shall see, these poems differ greatly in form, tone and technique, both are concerned with the individual under the domination of history. "The Ballad of the Children of the Czar" deals with a bondage which is initiated long before one's birth; in being born the individual merely enters into the ongoing mechanism of history. "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave" treats that process in microcosm; in the birth of each new day one re-enters that network of events over which he has no control. In each case the conscious, temporally and spatially located individual feels his unique individuality disappear into mass history. Yet in each case, that self, the single consciousness, is what contains the knowledge of the multiplicity of factors that form history, and therefore it is that same self that bears the only possibility of freeing

itself from that tyranny which the oppressive weight of the past imposes. Thus, although the memory of the past and the anticipation of the future structures these poems (as it structures the individual life), what we feel most strongly in each poem is the conscious present; the unique perceptions and feelings of that consciousness in its particular Becoming provide the substance of identity for the individual, and the substance of that unique utterance which is the poem.

What will become evident in these two poems, and what is one of Schwartz's greatest strengths, is his assimilation of ideologies and his ability to enter into a construct with full comprehension and appreciation of its validity; he is simultaneously aware of what it feels like inside, and what is left over and contradictory. Each of these poems represents a "found order" through total poetic use of various systems of thought and of attitudes toward these systems.

In "The Ballad of the Children of the Czar" Schwartz manipulates deceptively simple forms, images and ideas. Through the use of the ballad form, images of children, bouncing balls and simple analogies, he also manipulates our reactions.

The poem opens:

The children of the Czar  
 Played with a bouncing ball

In one respect this opening represents a return to cultural

origins--to recollecting as a way of knowing, and of seeking the child in man. In another respect it is through children that one can most feel the tension between will and fate, between hope and sentence, for each society is bound by some contract whose terms none of its children ever have the chance to decide.<sup>49</sup>

The children are playing with a bouncing ball, and so is Schwartz:

It fell among the flowerbeds  
Or fled to the north gate.

Here the play of the ball--bounding, evasive and fumbled--functions much as it did in "All of Us Always Turning Away for Solace". As in the earlier poem, it operates as image, as sonic motif and as structural device; the "bouncing ball principle" organizes the work, but, as we shall later see, Schwartz extends the implications of the game further here than he did in the earlier poem.

The literal bouncing of the ball is emphasized in Schwartz's recorded reading of the poem<sup>50</sup> by an uneven, repetitive tapping sound. The sound motif is carried through

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<sup>49</sup>Stanley Burnshaw, The Seamless Web (New York, 1970), p. 138.

<sup>50</sup>The Spoken Arts Treasury of 100 Modern Poets, vol. XI, SA 1050. Library of Congress 78-750876.

the poem by varied reiterations of b's and p's ("bouncing ball," "baked potato," "pitiless, purposeless"). The principle is also applicable to Schwartz's rhythmic manipulations; against the simplicity of ballad rhythm with its regularity of three and four stress lines, Schwartz plays sophisticated variations of stress placement and total number of syllables per line. The resulting rhythm thus expresses both the regular and the variable aspects of life and of poem as child's play.

The first analogy seems a simple linking of attributes:

A daylight moon hung up  
In the Western sky, bald white.

Like Papa's face, said Sister,

But even in the childish likening of "Papa's face" to the "bald white" moon, the poet suggests a more complicated scheme of association, for the following line adds:

Hurling the white ball forth.

We accept the surface linking of attributes (ball, moon, Papa's face--all round and white) through the combination of child like point of view and simplicity of ballad genre. However, Schwartz's use of these analogical forms is actually based on a sophisticated poetic logic and what R.P. Blackmur calls "Irregular Metaphysics." In an article on Eliot, Blackmur analyzes modern poets' use of analogy:

Analogy is indeed the very name for our characteristic poetic logics. No doubt the attraction of analogy for us is in the fragmentation of faith and the diversity of logics and the divisiveness of our minds generally. . . . One should remember that the attraction of analogy for the medieval mind (to which we so much and so diversely resort) was just the opposite. To the medieval mind the unity of things was insistently present, and had to be interpreted; to us unity is what we only seek by all the machineries of desperation and longing, sometimes longing without hope; and the means of our search is by analogy or collateral form. . . . Collateral or analogical form is as near as we are likely to come to the organic.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, analogy, which provides a "found order" for modern life, here provides Schwartz with an ongoing order for his poem. Through association and juxtaposition he has created a form with practically unlimited extension--the poem as metaphor machine.

The analogy of the following lines makes the machinery obvious:

While I ate a baked potato  
Six thousand miles apart

Our recognition of the analogy ("baked potato" in its sound likeness, whiteness and roundness) also operates as part of the bouncing ball principle, for we are aware of how our responses are being juggled back and forth. As Barbara

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<sup>51</sup>"Irregular Metaphysics," T.S.Eliot, A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Hugh Kenner (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962), pp. 60-61.

Herrnstein Smith remarks of such surprised and fulfilled expectations, ". . . we are delighted, as it were, to see ourselves catch the ball each time."<sup>52</sup>

The elemental narrative structure of the ballad form and the ongoing analogical form provide a schema, not only for the poem, but also for life. The individual life enters into that flow at a specific time and place:

In Brooklyn, in 1916,  
Aged two, irrational.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt  
Was an Arrow Collar ad.

Schwartz was not alone in making such use of proper names and dates. Pound, who found history a treasure-hoard of images, initiated this type of documentation as a poetic technique. By the 1930's there was widespread poetic use of contemporary facts; modern poets, who could not rely on a common body of knowledge, found a fruitful source in the topical, the specific and the concrete. Auden, particularly in The Orators (1932) and Look, Stranger (1936), seems obsessed by names, places, dates, factual data, and, like Schwartz, often locates himself in time and place. Later, from the 1950's on, there was a spate of Homeric and Whitmanesque catalogues as records of

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<sup>52</sup>Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End (Chicago, 1968), p.168.



the time. Jerzy Peterkiewicz, in The Other Side of Silence: The Poet at the Limits of Language, attempts to explain that spate:

Nowadays the young poet's groping for experience is, of course, confused by the availability of facts, by instant and constant information through radio and television, by the speed of travel--no wonder catalogues of proper names occur in modern verse, sometimes as a mere echo of the world full of noises, sometimes as an attempt to push the rubble of news back into non-existence. Indigestion of vocabulary fed on geography, advertisements, names of products: it has to be relieved by howling the whole lot into the noise outside.<sup>53</sup>

Schwartz, although always concerned with quotidian fact, and onomastics (and thoroughly obsessed by his own name) never succumbs to the mode of those poets he referred to disparagingly in his 1958 Library of Congress lecture, "The Present State of Poetry," as the "San Francisco Howlers."<sup>54</sup> He was, perhaps, never tempted to howl "the whole lot into the noise outside," because, as Narcissus, he preferred the unique sound of his own poetic voice. Even in his dramatic forms Schwartz seems to play all the roles and to speak for all the ghosts, who enter, at most, as "kibitzers" or hecklers prodding him into continuing on in his own voice.

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<sup>53</sup>Peterkiewicz, The Other Side of Silence, (London, 1970), p. 9.

<sup>54</sup>"The Present State of Poetry," American Poetry at Mid-Century (Washington, D.C., 1958), p. 26.

In "Ballad of the Children of the Czar," howling is seen as a childish protest against the uncontrollable:

It (the baked potato) falls from the highchair down  
And I begin to howl.

And I see the ball roll under  
The iron gate which is locked.

Sister is screaming, brother is howling,  
The ball has evaded their will.

"Brooklyn," "1916," "Franklin D. Roosevelt," and "Arrow Collar ad" act, not as howl, but as components of the over-all linguistic and ideological strategy by which Schwartz manipulates our perceptions of poem and of life. By attaching the poem to a socio-historical context he has altered our response to the poem as a closed system of verbal interaction generated by its own principles (i.e., as automatic metaphor machine). The poem thus seems more than a linguistic artifact; it seems also a historical utterance within a pre-existent, extra-verbal reality. Without such a context, "The poem," as Barbara H. Smith suggests, "must carry its context on its own back. (Cp. stanza 3: The child must carry/His fathers on his back.) No clues to meaning are provided by the environment in which the poem is read or heard: there is nothing but the reader, his own experiences, and the particular linguistic structure before him."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Smith, p. 18

Schwartz has here found a point of intersection between historical and a-historical utterance, a convergence which releases linguistic energy. The energy here released, however, is not entirely from linguistic sources, for Schwartz has also found the borderline between abstract, impersonal history and personal memory. History, rid of its conjunctive temporal issues, does not deal with the intimate knowledge of situations whose consequences affect our lives. With the specificity of the self, "In Brooklyn, in 1916," comes the conjunction of abstract and concrete, of history and memory, of public and private life, of self and universe. Schwartz then puts that self back into historical perspective:

O Nicholas! Alas! Alas!  
My grandfather coughed in your army,

Hid in a wine-stinking barrel,  
For three days in Bucharest

Then left for America  
To become a king himself.

Thus far expectations of form and developing content provide the general base against which individual variations can be played--the combination expresses the recurrent pattern against which the individual life is played. But in excess of memory, suffering enters life from its earliest stages:

I am my father's father,  
You are your children's guilt.

In history's pity and terror  
The child is Aeneas again;

Troy is in the nursery,  
The rocking horse is on fire.

The very knowledge of the past thus reduces the self's ability to be a "self," for life seems stereotyped before one gets the chance to live it. ~~There~~ is no act or idea one can claim for himself, nor a means of expressing his originality, for the existing structures of understanding and modes of expression vitiate whatever energies are released by new social situations. For the poet, "Entering history with words is already a kind of self-surrender; being in history, or especially being an historical personage, is a way of being recognizable, of playing a part already characterized."<sup>56</sup> Poetry itself is a tradition whose antecedents carry heavy weight; with the mention of Troy and Aeneas, we see that the poet--as well as the child--carries his fathers on his back.

With images of the child-like world of simple play and "free association," Schwartz's own buffoonery and verbal play allow for the indulgence of a cultural pun:

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<sup>56</sup>Richard Poirier, The Performing Self (New York, 1971), pp. 7-8.

Child labor! The child must carry  
His fathers on his back.

Some modification of the original innocent, playful images of childhood has already been accomplished; the above lines act as a shifting device, preparing us for the following stanza in which the "play" is not innocent. The children fight

Over the bouncing ball  
  
And sister pinches brother  
And brother kicks her shins

The rules of the game and of the poem seem to have changed; the "bouncing ball principle" has been extended far beyond the organizing principle of "All of Us Always Turning Away for Solace." Perhaps our best recourse here is to Wittgenstein:

Doesn't the analogy between language and games throw light here. We can easily imagine people amusing themselves in a field by playing with a ball so as to start various existing games, but playing many without finishing them and in between throwing the ball aimlessly into the air, chasing one another with the ball and bombarding one another for a joke and so on. And now someone says: The whole time they are playing a ball-game and following definite rules at every throw.

And is there not also the case where we play and--make up the rules as we go along? And there is even one where we alter them--as we go along.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, 1953. As reprinted in Word, Self, Reality: The Rhetoric of Imagination, ed. James E. Miller, Jr. (New York, 1972), p.92.

Such a notion, by suggesting the endless variety of language uses and structures, reduces the tragic. Schwartz, in playing a similar game, does not change the world, but does affect our perceptions of life and poems.

In the following stanza,

The ground on which the ball bounces  
Is another bouncing ball.

Here there is no innocence, no children, no play, but only the nightmare repetition of meaningless cycling:

A pitiless, purposeless Thing,  
Arbitrary and unspent,

Made for no play, for no children,  
But chasing only itself.

Nevertheless, the poet, who includes in his recorded reading the intonations of a childish whine, here begins to build the poem into a crescendo of mock-serious inflation as he reads:

The innocent are overtaken,  
They are not innocent.

They are their father's fathers,  
The past is inevitable.

In the final stanza Schwartz returns to his two-year old irrational state; when his baked potato "falls from the high-chair down," one is reminded of Marx's maxim that history repeats itself--the first time as tragedy, the second as comedy. But the final lines turn this reminiscence into an evocation of personal and general terror:

Even a bouncing ball  
Is uncontrollable,

And is under the garden wall.  
I am overtaken by terror

Thinking of my father's fathers,  
And my own will.

Even in the innocence of childhood there is no refuge from archetypal victimization, from the terror and chaos of the adult, uncontrollable world. If a model of order and succession cannot be discovered, life is a nightmare; if it can, the question becomes another nightmare: can he change it? or is he bound by it? Yet the terror of these final lines is minimized--both by the humor that preceded it and the irony that underlies its very evocation.

Schwartz has developed an absurd vision of life wherein the traditional demarcations of tragic and comic, momentous and trivial, individual and universal are found to be arbitrary. Yet he also makes use of those traditional demarcations; rather than attempting to transcend the absurdity, he expressed that very absurdity in terms of the fate of the individual. The ballad's elemental nature suggests the universal aspects of the predicament; the particularly American aspect that of achieving democratic form--i.e., of maintaining one's own voice, will and fate, while remaining one of many. Schwartz's mixture of seriousness and humor is essential, for, as Howard

Nemerov remarks, "In general, to succeed at joking or at poetry, you have to be serious. . ."<sup>58</sup> In "The Ballad of the Children of the Czar," Schwartz succeeds at both. He shows us life as a game which one must play whether he knows the rules or not. And the poem is a game; but if the poet is clever enough, he can make up the rules, play all the positions, and change the rules at will. We, the readers, become spectators (as, in other of Schwartz's works, we become audience at performances). Then, since our own fate is not at stake, we can enjoy the game without even having to understand it all. So, when the ball is fumbled or someone slips, we laugh--neither knowing nor caring whether that too was part of the game, a strategy for our amusement.

"In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave" is remarkable for its density of reference, expressive form and control. In it, Schwartz incorporates philosophic ideas and assimilates images and techniques from various other poets, yet the resulting structure is uniquely his own--Schwartz at his most successful.

In contrast to the simple structure and analogical forms of "The Ballad of the Children of the Czar," with its images of children and bouncing balls, are the complex structure and

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<sup>58</sup>"Bottoms Dream." As reprinted in Reading about Language, ed. C.Laird and R. Gorrell (New York, 1971), p. 452.



sophisticated poetic strategies of "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave," with its adult, urban images and its density of intellectual reference. The "Ballad" treats the suffering of the individual in history with a large measure of comic irony; in "Plato's Cave" that suffering--expressing metaphysical pathos compounded by metropolitan pathos--is very real. In "Ballad," the "I" is specified ("In Brooklyn in 1916"). The suffering self of "Plato's Cave" is anonymous modern man; in his isolated, claustrophobic dwelling in a world of separate rooms, streets and city noises, he laments his spiritual alienation from the "sky's pure capital."

The spiritual and physical enclosure is felt immediately in the first line as the "in" of two prepositional phrases doubly encloses us. That first line, with its interlocking, complex interchange, its multiple embedding, its sonic, syntactical and rhythmic patterning, gives some indication of the density of the entire poem. Rhythmically and rhetorically the line pause occurs between parallel phrases; the extra syllable in the first half slows the second half in emphasis. There is a similarly uneven yet controlled linking of sound elements, e.g., the n-sound that is used twice in the first half-line occurs only once in the second half, while the long-a is used once in the first half and twice in the second half. The

repeated ed-sound (naked, bed) of the first half has no sonic equivalent in the second half; thus when it occurs twice in the second line (reflected, headlights) it operates as a tying device between lines. This sound tying acts in opposition to the chiasmus (naked, cave) at the beginning and end of the line, for such a symmetry would otherwise keep that first line sonically autonomous. That sound chiasmus within the line also subtly prepares us for the later chiasmus which carries great weight at a line end (So, so/ O son). Some of the linkage occurs semantically; "naked" as a modifier of "bed" is minimally acceptable, yet through association we transfer a divested or stripped quality to the human subject. This associative transference prepares us for an interchange technique that occurs throughout the poem. The interchange technique is the strategy by which objects gain their animated qualities (wind troubles curtains, trucks strain, morning melts the air and kindles the mirror) and eventually leads us to accept the night as ignorant and history as unforgivable. Twentieth-century associations of the word "naked" are obviously existential; these associations bring into the poem the sense that existence is negated by adherence to any abstract theory. But, if one accepts unstructured reality, then the universality and permanence of conceptual form becomes a linguistic illusion. This

the poet cannot accept. The poet's need for form, which necessitates a shaping design, becomes a poetic will to order, to intelligible form. In this poem (as in others of Schwartz), Plato supplies that form. Plato's theory of existence in the shifting, unsubstantial realm of Becoming implies that other realm of permanent universals, of conceptual form. The two realms interpenetrate in a manner Plato had difficulty in explaining;<sup>59</sup> Schwartz attempts that same interchange in the various poetic techniques noted above.

Various kinds of "interchange" also occur on conceptual levels. Through the universal aspect of Plato's myth of existence in the flickering, shadowy world, we accept that particular existence delineated in the poem as representative. In turn, we feel Plato's universality through the particular modern form of the city dweller's cave-like existence. There is yet another kind of interchange in which Schwartz seems to enter into a dialectic with Plato himself. In this dialectic Schwartz, while accepting Plato's myth, questions his hierarchical order. As the first half of the initial line is more concrete in reference and given weight by means of an extra syllable, so will the entire poem be weighted in concrete existence--in that room with its bed, walls, dresser and chair.

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<sup>59</sup>Plato, Parmenides, passim.

But, as Arthur Lovejoy has remarked, the proper business of a troglodyte is, after all, with the shadows in his cave.<sup>60</sup>

The shadows in Schwartz's cave are produced by modern artifacts:

Reflected headlights slowly slid the wall.

The sounds of the city enter in the next line:

Carpenters hammered under the shaded window.

The idea of carpenters working outside at night seems somewhat illogical; however, the line may be a kind of private joke on Plato's extended reference to beds, carpenters and artists in his explanation of appearance, reality, and art being an imitation thrice removed.<sup>61</sup> The reference to carpenters was, perhaps, more acceptable in an earlier version of the poem;<sup>62</sup> there the reference led to "the rumors/ Of building and movement," which was deleted in the later version.

In line four,

Wind troubled the window curtains all night long,

the "all night long" suggests the watchful, troubled night of the insomniac. Schwartz's own insomnia is well documented.

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<sup>60</sup>The Great Chain of Being (New York, 1960), p. 53.

<sup>61</sup>Plato, The Republic, X.

<sup>62</sup>Untitled, Poetry, LI, 4 (January 1938), 198.

Among his papers is a yellow sheet across which he has scrawled in large strokes, "I am the poet of insomnia." John Berryman, including Schwartz among The Dispossessed, focusses upon it:

Deep in the unfriendly city Delmore lies  
and cannot sleep, and cannot bring his mind  
and cannot bring those marvelous faculties  
To bear upon the day . . .<sup>63</sup>

The insomnia is personal, yet evokes a generic response; after all, as Hemingway puts it in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," "Many must have it." Gaston Bachelard refers to insomnia as "the philosopher's ailment."<sup>64</sup> In Schwartz's other poems, a morning awakening offers the possibility of illumination in the clarity of "early morning light." But the night of watchful waiting in "Plato's Cave" suggests, as it does in "Far Rockaway," that the "nervous conscience" of the "novelist tangential" is "a haunting, hunted moon," which finds no release, not even in sleep.

In the next lines of the poem the image of trucks straining uphill functions both as lifeless, mechanical force and as projection of metaphysical, upward striving:

A fleet of trucks strained uphill, grinding,  
Their freights covered, as usual.

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<sup>63</sup>"At Chinese Checkers," The Dispossessed (New York, 1948), p. 40.

<sup>64</sup>vide infra, page 186, footnote 69.

In the earlier version, the trucks' freights were "hooded by tarpaulin." The revised image with its less specific "covered" creates an associational aura for the later "ignorant night," as well as for the sense of history as freight.

The "again" of "The ceiling lightened again" reminds us of many other nights of waiting; it also prepares us for the forceful ending of the poem. The impact of that later "Again and again," depends on its being unexpected; yet its rightness depends on its being planned for by this earlier "again."

Schwartz ends the first section of the poem with a reminder of our world as copy:

. . . . the slanting diagram  
Slid slowly forth.

The earlier version read:

Slid slowly off. Hearing the milkman

The revision shows more sensitivity to the verb-preposition construction, (not only here, but also later where Schwartz changed the colloquial, "A car coughed, starting up," to the more effective pacing of "A car coughed, starting.>"). In the later version the break in the line creates a unit boundary dividing the first 7½ lines of night images from the next 7½ lines of early morning action.

I rose from bed, lit a cigarette,  
And walked to the window. . . .

The nature of these actions, as well as the lexical and syntactical simplicity of the lines, evokes a literary world of modern alienated men portrayed by such writers as Camus and Hemingway. Yet outside the rooms of such men rising from lonely beds and lighting cigarettes is still the "sky's pure capital." The retreat, turning "back to bed with exhausted eyes," is self-protective; to be fully conscious, to be aware of the world in all its sensory, emotional and cognitive impact, to see the ideal, is too much to bear.

In the third and longest section of the poem, the persona listens and watches in the early morning light. There is the sound, not of hooves' falls, but of "hooves' waterfalls"; that "plant" or "set-up" for underseas imagery provides Schwartz (as, we shall see later, it also did for Hart Crane in "Harbor Dawn") with archetypal imagery for emergence:

. . . . Morning, softly  
Melting the air, lifted the half-covered chair  
From underseas, kindled the looking-glass,  
Distinguished the dresser and the white wall.

Thus far, in the oppressive waiting, there has been no promise of anything new to be begotten. But now there is a begetting in the new day with its strangeness and promises of new beginnings.





The very mystery of beginning is undercut by "Again and again" --whose repetition seems so final in spite of its being an assertion of no possible finality. It satisfies our sense of poetic finality in such a way that the "left-over" half-line creates a feeling of continuance after poetic demands have been fulfilled. Temporal succession is accepted as irreversible, but the pattern has been questioned. In the inner consonance of "History" and "mystery" we see style commenting upon itself, just as "beginning" and "again" function as poetic versus anti-poetic drag. In the patterning of these final lines, the interchange has been completed; now the poem itself exists as collaboration between the world of repetition and disorder and that timeless world of Being.

But Schwartz has not accomplished this interchange simply by virtue of his ability to juggle words and ideas. Poetry itself contains the potential for such interchange; as such, the poem represents a collaboration between Schwartz and the existent realm of poetry. Schwartz thus collaborates with other poets and their pre-existent techniques of rhythms, imagery and idea.

Harvey Gross, in Sound and Form in Modern Poetry, refers to the prosody of "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave" as "quasi-metrical":

These lines are set to a highly varied but unmistakable blank-verse rhythm; they recall the energetic forward motion and sudden compressions of "Gerontion." . . . Behind Schwartz's lines stand the practice of Eliot and ultimately Browning and the Jacobean dramatists. . . 65

The poem echoes not only the rhythmic movement of "Gerontion," but also phrases:

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now  
History has many cunning passages. . . .

Schwartz also collaborates with Auden in situation, idea and imagery. In "Horae Canonae" Auden suggests the relation of the daily cycle to historical events. The first poem "Prime," deals with the moment of awakening, of re-assuming human nature, of re-entering history. When identity, volition and memory are assumed, the "lying, self-made city" once more becomes our responsibility.<sup>66</sup> Auden has also expressed the new begetting and the "unforgiving" in "All Over Again":

Unforgetting is not today's forgetting  
For yesterday, not bedrid scorning,  
But a new begetting  
An unforgiving morning.<sup>67</sup>

As a portrayal of city awakening, "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's

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<sup>65</sup>Sound and Form in Modern Poetry (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1968), p. 98.

<sup>66</sup>Monroe Spears, The Poetry of W.H. Auden: The Disenchanted Island (New York, 1963), p. 317.

<sup>67</sup>The Collected Poetry of W.H. Auden (New York, 1945), p.83.

"Cave" is closest in imagery and feeling to Hart Crane's "Harbor Dawn." In that awakening, sounds of the city enter the consciousness as "fog-insulated noises." As in Schwartz's poem, a truck lumbers past. Other outside noises enter: "A drunken stevedore's howl and thud below"; and, since Crane's is a waterfront room, "distant chiming buoys." In the period just before dawn when Schwartz's "winter sky's pure capital" turned him back to bed, Crane's

. . . . . sky,  
Cool feathery fold, suspends, distills  
This wavering slumber. . . . .

In the lines which follow, Crane writes:

. . . . . Slowly--  
Immemorially the window, the half-covered chair,  
Ask nothing but this sheath of pallid air.<sup>68</sup>

The parallel lines in "Plato's Cave" seem to identify this source, and, perhaps, thus pay homage to Crane:

. . . . . Morning, softly,  
Melting the air, lifted the half-covered chair  
From underseas, kindled the looking glass,  
Distinguished the dresser and the white wall.

It is possible to treat Schwartz's "collaboration" with other poets in quite a different way. Rather than pointing out similarities and influences, we can turn to Gaston Bachelard's phenomenology of the poetic imagery of reveries. In his Poetics

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<sup>68</sup>The Collected Poems of Hart Crane (New York, 1933), pp. 9-10.

of Space, he "day-dreams" a process of images from a city-dweller's sleepless night:

When insomnia, which is the philosopher's ailment is increased through irritation caused by city noises; or when late at night, the hum of automobiles and trucks rumbling through the Place Maubert causes me to curse my city-dweller's fate, I can recover my calm by living the metaphors of the ocean. We all know that the big city is a clamorous sea, and it has been said countless times that, in the heart of night in Paris, one hears the ceaseless murmurs of flood and tide. So I make a sincere image out of these hackneyed ones, an image that is as much my own as though I myself had invented it, in line with my gentle mania for always believing that I am the subject of what I am thinking.<sup>69</sup>

That passage of Bachelard's could equally describe the process of Schwartz's poetic creation of images in "Plato's Cave"--the insomnia, city noises, trucks, cars, water imagery, sense of self. Bachelard also treats images of furniture:

Every poet of furniture--even if he be a poet in a garret, and therefore has no furniture--knows that the inner space of an old wardrobe is deep. A wardrobe's inner space is also intimate space--space that is not open to just anybody.<sup>70</sup>

The furniture of Schwartz's poetic space (dresser, mirror, white walls) is his own, yet (particularly in that case of that "half-covered chair") also represents shared poetic furnishings. According to Bachelard's notions concerning images of dwelling and alienation, Schwartz's awakening bird would also be a shared

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<sup>69</sup> The Poetics of Space, Trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, 1964) p. 28.

<sup>70</sup> Bachelard, p. 78.

image--in this case, one of renewal, of calm well-being:

Our house, apprehended in its dream potentiality, becomes a nest in the world, and we shall live there in complete confidence if, in our dreams, we really participate in the sense of security of our first home. In order to experience this confidence, which is deeply graven in our sleep, there is no need to enumerate material reasons for confidence. The nest, quite as much as the oneiric house, and the oneiric house quite as much as the nest--if we ourselves are at the origin of our dreams--knows nothing of the hostility of the world. . . . The experience of the hostility of the world--and consequently our dreams of defense and aggressiveness--come much later. In its germinal form, therefore, all of life is a well-being. Being starts with well-being. When a philosopher considers a nest, he calms himself by meditating on the subject of his own being in the calm world-being. And if we were to translate the absolute naivete of his daydream into the metaphysical language of today, a dreamer might say that the world is the nest of mankind.<sup>71</sup>

There is a dual purpose in quoting Bachelard at such length. In the case of "Plato's Cave," the image of oneiric house or nest as original well-being functions much in the manner Bachelard elucidates, and is particularly effective in the Platonic context as recollection of Being. However, without such a metaphysical context, Bachelard's notion seems more psychological or biographical--i.e., it seems to depend more literally on the "sense of security of our first home," and is therefore questionable. And such is the case in Schwartz's "Tired and Unhappy, You Think of Houses." The poem begins:

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<sup>71</sup>Bachelard, pp. 103-104.

Tired and unhappy, you think of houses  
 Soft-carpeted and warm in the December evening,  
 While snow's white pieces fall past the window,  
 And the orange firelight leaps.

So, in its opening, the poem seems very much in the mode of daydreams of felicitous space, of warm, protected inhabiting --to which, as Bachelard explains, we flee in refuge from the overcrowded, care-laden city. And it continues in the same mode, for, as Bachelard notes, a poet ". . . has only to give a few touches to the spectacle of the family sitting-room, only to listen to the stove roaring in the evening stillness, while an icy wind blows against the house. . ." <sup>72</sup> Schwartz supplies those few touches:

A young girl sings

That song of Gluck where Orpheus pleads with Death;  
 Her elders watch, nodding their happiness  
 To see time fresh again in her self-conscious eyes:  
 The servants bring the coffee, the children retire,  
 Elder and younger yawn and go to bed,  
 The coals fade and glow, rosen and ashen

Such a day-dream provides the poet with images of warmth, security, intimacy, and, in this case, even a Yeatsian sense of comfort and ceremony, and therefore, temporary escape from the claustral city's anonymity and pressured, mechanical lifestyle. But, for the city-dweller, that dream is, after all,

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<sup>72</sup>Bachelard, p. 31.

only a temporary escape, and, as such, "banal."

It is time to shake yourself! and break this  
 Banal dream, and turn your head  
 Where the underground is charged, where the weight  
 Of the lean buildings is seen,  
 Where close in the subway rush, anonymous  
 In the audience, well-dressed or mean,  
 So many surround you, ringing your fate,  
 Caught in an anger exact as a machine!

Indulgence in the dream may be banal, but the poem itself is redeemed from banality by its contemptuous rejection of the dream. Bachelard, concentrating on the creation of images, views the poet as day-dreamer; Schwartz, concerned with the relation of dreams and responsibilities, sees not only the dream, but also the responsibility. Thus, as the oppressive, mechanical rhythms of life's reality re-assert themselves, the poem, too, becomes more a machine of responsibility. Images are of the weight of tall buildings, the closeness of the subway; and, in the final lines, with their rushed meters and regular rhymes, one sees that the fate of such a poem (like that of the city dweller) is to be "caught," perhaps with "anger," in a structure "exact as a machine."

Schwartz uses an even more "exact machine"--the sonnet--in "O City, City" to express living "between terms":

Where the sliding auto's catastrophe  
 Is a gust past the curb, where numb and high  
 The office building rises to its tyranny,  
 Is our anguished diminution until we die.

This poem reverses the order of "Tired and Unhappy, You Think of Houses," the octave expressing anguished temporal Becoming in terms of the city's tyranny, the sestet the longing for perfect knowing, authentic speaking, well-being, and finally, for eternal Being:

Whence, if ever, shall come the actuality  
Of a voice speaking the mind's knowing,  
The sunlight bright on the green windowshade,  
And the self articulate, affectionate, and flowing,  
Ease, warmth, light, the utter showing,  
When in the white bed all things are made.

Another poem in which Schwartz expresses this longing for "a place of different traffic" is "The Ballet of the Fifth Year." In this poem Schwartz achieves detachment from present contingency, not in the eternal, but in a release of the imagination, a mode more typical of the Romantics than of the Moderns. The poem opens with the consideration of sea gulls:

Where the sea gulls sleep or indeed where they fly  
Is a place of different traffic . . . . .

Throughout most of the poem, sea gulls, in their sleep and flight, present a form for the release of the creative imagination. Prior to that release the ego is present in its self-consciousness and intellectual needs; that ego is expressed in forms and images which we recognize as unmistakably the poet's own: his eyes should not close, but should

. . . burn like the street-light all night quietly,  
So that whatever is present will be known to me.



The very consideration of the gulls, however, "weakens the nerve/Of will"; the release of creative powers in the image of awakened gulls takes form in flight:

Nevertheless the gulls and the imagination  
Of where they sleep, which comes to creation  
In strict shape and color, from their dallying  
Their wings slowly, and suddenly rallying  
Over, up, down the arabesque of descent

This part of the poem and what follows is, as we shall see, "an old act enacted" in more than one way. First, in the mobility of flight, Schwartz articulates the very dynamics of imagination. The release is not only from personal ego, but also from poetic ego, for although the form of flight is generic, perhaps archetypal, the actual details seem a more definite sharing of poetic means: the sleep, awakening, and "dip and curve" of the gulls with Hart Crane's opening of "The Bridge"; the birds' "dallying" and "rallying" with Walt Whitman's "The Dalliance of Eagles"; the slow "arabesque of descent" with the ending of Wallace Stevens' "Sunday Morning." Secondly, in the released flow of imagination, a present image calls up an absent one, this time in the form of memory; the flight

Is an old act enacted, my fabulous intent  
When I skated, afraid of policemen, five years old,  
In the winter sunset, sorrowful and cold,  
Hardly attained to thought, but old enough to know  
Such grace, so self-contained, was the best escape to know.

The 'inviolable curve' of the poem is also "an old act enacted" in the tradition of the Romantics. In its drowsy opening, its flight, and its return to self it is not unlike Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale." In its return, which is not to present self but to childhood memory, its mode is particularly Wordsworthian. The child is portrayed as hovering between being and awareness of being, self in harmony with feeling, motion and environment, thus evoking "grace" in both physical and spiritual aspects.

To a degree the poem itself achieves both spiritual and formal grace: the former in its successful synthesis of poetic originality with poetic precedents; the latter in structure, sonic and rhythmic effects. The lines are mainly five stress ones with graceful alternation of two and three syllable feet. Schwartz achieves subtle sonic effects by rhyming adjacent lines in a full range of variations in masculine, feminine, rich, and identical rhymes.

Some of this structural and formal grace was lacking in an earlier version of the poem found among Schwartz's papers.<sup>73</sup> In each case, Schwartz's revision improves the poem. Rhythmic improvements issue mainly from deletion of syllables, such as the change from

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<sup>73</sup>On this version, a proof entitled "Poem," Schwartz has pencilled in some of the changes that appear in the printed version, including the new title.

Of where they sleep, which grows to realization  
to

Of where they sleep, which comes to creation  
One line, which was weak in the early version, is entirely  
rewritten:

Is something remembered, something which I meant  
becomes

Is an old act enacted, my fabulous intent  
This is an intense line in the printed version, for its first  
half unifies various aspects of the poem, and its second half  
prepares us for the hovering ending with its enigmatic label-  
ling of grace as "the best escape to know."

"Ballet of the Fifth Year" is an unusual poem in that  
"Such grace" is not, in Schwartz's other poems, "escape," but,  
rather, pure Platonic noumenal Being. Schwartz admits that he  
is haunted more by Socrates than by any of the other ghosts  
that obsess him.

Socrates stands by me stockstill,  
Teaching hope to my flickering will,  
Pointing to the sky's inexorable blue  
--Old Noumenon, come true, come true!

In this poem, "Socrates' Ghost Must Haunt Me Now," Schwartz  
humorously directs our perceptions toward "the heavy head and  
the fingertip" so that we more readily see the pointing finger  
than what the finger is pointing to.

Socrates' ghost is also present in the paired poems "For the One Who Would Take Man's Life in His Hands" and "For the One Who Would Not Take His Life in His Hands." The two poems seem to show the extremes, not only of taking and not taking one's life in one's hands, but also of love and hate:

Through hate we guard our love.

Socrates, of course, is the very model of a lover, having ascended to the highest reaches of loving, the love of knowledge. And for Socrates, knowledge is to be attained in a dialectical process, one of opposition and resolution and opposition; i.e., the process of love itself. Schwartz has Socrates express it thusly:

"What have I said?" asked Socrates,  
 "Affirmed extremes, cried yes and no,  
 Taken all parts, denied myself  
 Praised the caress, extolled the blow,  
 Soldier and lover quite deranged  
 Until their motions are exchanged.  
 What do all examples show?  
 What can any actor know?  
 The contradiction in every act,  
 The infinite task of the human heart."

Socrates, then, has taken Man's life in his hands because he has seen the truth; i.e., when you see the truth for yourself you automatically see it for all men. However, the converse can only apply to your own particular life, and thus the title of the second poem reads "His Life," as opposed to the first,

which reads "Man's Life." This does strange things to the existential dictum of living one's own life. To the existentialist, living one's own life must be in the singular, must be particularized. Yet, according to Schwartz, in so far as it is singular and particular it is not really one's own life, and, in fact, it means exactly the opposite--that we have not taken our own life in our hands. The not taking of one's life in one's own hands rest upon denial--the sword, the knife, hate--whereas the taking of man's life in one's hands is possible only through love.

Schwartz evinces great hope for love, not only as a metaphysical solution, but also as a psychological one: love, on a personal level, as a means of resolving internal conflicts. Both this hope, and, equally, a fear of love, is seen in the strangely moving "Prothalamion." In other of Schwartz's works, the concept of a wedding is Blakean, one that includes a union of opposing tensions, and a chance for a beginning. The significance of a wedding poem is thus expanded, particularly when one recalls Schwartz's short story "The World Is a Wedding." At the end of that story, Jacob says of the world:

It is a wedding, the most important kind of party, full of joy, fear, hope and ignorance. And at this party there are enough places and parts for everyone, and if no one can play every part, yet everyone can

come to the wedding feast, and anyone who does not know that he is at a wedding feast just does not see what is in front of him. He might as well be dead if he does not know that the world is a wedding."

Immediately following Jacob's speech, Laura provides the anti-thetic view, always lurking behind such certainties:

"You can't fool me," said Laura, "the world is a funeral."<sup>74</sup>

That dual view is evoked in "Prothalamion" as the poetic conventions of the title are sadly mocked by the opening:

Now I must betray myself,  
The feast of bondage and unity is near,  
And none engaged in that great piety  
When each bows to the other, kneels and takes  
Hand and hand, glance and glance, care and care,  
None may wear masks or enigmatic clothes,  
For weakness blinds the wounded face enough,  
In this sense see my shocking nakedness.

A solution to the contempt for the impoverished, haunted, ego, pre-occupied with its agonizing self-analysis, is to love another. But Schwartz, as an inheritor, not only of romantic yearnings for fulfillment in love, but also of the romantic concept of the unique individual, must first expose his personal eccentricities and idiosyncracies:

I gave a girl an apple when five years old,  
Saying, Will you be sorry when I am gone?  
Ravenous for such courtesies, my name  
Is fed like a raving fire, insatiate still.  
But do not be afraid.  
For I forget myself. I do indeed  
Before each genuine beauty, and I will  
Forget myself before your unknown heart.

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<sup>74</sup>Delmore Schwartz, The World Is a Wedding (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1948), p. 68.

Nevertheless, the insistence on that personality not being reduced to anonymity over-rides the significance of the love-object. The consequence, for Schwartz, is the raising of narcissism to an aesthetic and metaphysical level. Schwartz is disarming in his narcissism, for his ironic self-debasement is higher-spirited than that which we became used to through Eliot. What is revealed by Schwartz's ironic self-depreciation is a vulnerable tenderness--that which can only be expressed in the modern world through a mock-naïve stance. Yet with this stance, the poet needs a personality, a concrete fiction; so what seems autobiographical is actually part of the effort to define the self in the complexities of life and history. This confessional mode will provide Schwartz with a pattern for Genesis, his full-length study in self-definition.

Another poem that deals with the problem of love is "Concerning the Synthetic Unity of Apperception." Schwartz arranges this poem in couplets, suggesting, perhaps, the poetry of the age of reason; that age is also the age of Kant, whose weighty terminology is archly echoed in the title. In the poem "the king my uncle" seems a Kantian spokesman in putting all the emphasis on the realm of experience:

Sit in the sun and not among the dead,  
the dead being the realm of the spirit which the uncle dis-

misses as epiphenomenal:

The spirit's smoke and weak as smoke ascends.

Kant, too, had to dismiss the noumenal world, for it was beyond our knowing. This Kantian attitude leads, in our time, to the emphasis on beer and siestas.

In rhythm and tone the dialogue sounds a little like Lewis Carroll's parody "You are Old, Father William." And the uncle, like Father William, has only a worldly knowledge, challenged and confounded by youth:

"Uncle," I said, "I'm lonely. What is Love?"

This drove him quite insane. Now he must knit  
Time with apperception, bit by tiny bit.

Kant had distinguished a whole noumenal realm of "things-in-themselves" which were beyond man's knowledge; yet, because of man's make-up, this noumenal realm gave rise to things in time and space, a sensuous manifold. This noumenal realm also contained within it a rather special thing-in-itself, the transcendental ego, responsible for the unity in man's apperception. If we leave out love, as Kant did, we may endlessly satisfy ourselves with beer and siestas of the phenomenal realm. Love, of course, and as any Platonist knows, demands deeper realities; it must reach that noumenal realm, which would knit time (the form of the outer reality) with apperception (the form of the inner reality). This is essentially the Platonic enterprise,



and the Schwartzian one as well, for he too wants the "silky water" and "big brown bear," yet he is always asking, "What is love?"

Schwartz seems to have assimilated an amazing number of sources in this small poem with the large title for there are other influences present beyond the ones mentioned. In subject, archness of title, and in nodes of lexis and imagery, the poem resembles many of Stevens'. Its original impetus, however, is probably Webster, whom Schwartz quotes in an epigraph to Genesis:

What do the dead do, uncle? do they eat,  
Hear music, go a hunting, and be merry,  
As we that live?

(The White Devil)

"Concerning the Synthetic Unity of Apperception" is only one of many poems in which Schwartz effectively dramatizes--even concretizes--abstractions. Jay Halio, in "Delmore Schwartz's Felt Abstractions," observes that Schwartz handles the general problem of relating the abstract and concrete "most simply and directly" in "Father and Son":

The loveliest woman sweats, the animal stains  
The ideal which is with us like the sky . . .

Mr. Halio comments:

The central paradox of human existence, which earlier poets described as man's condition of being a little lower than the angels, a little higher than the

earthworm, is here presented as a conflict between an earthbound sensuality and a soaring spirituality, between the actuality of concrete, material existence and its muddying effect upon man's conception of pure idealism.<sup>75</sup>

"Far Rockaway" is a poem in which Schwartz moves easily back and forth between the abstract and concrete:

A socialist health takes hold of the adult,  
He is stripped of his class in the bathing-suit,  
He returns to the children digging at summer,  
A melon-like fruit.

The same easy movement is apparent in "In the Slight Ripple, The Mind Perceives the Heart." Here, time will not pause for "The senses drinking":

"No, night comes soon,  
"With its cold mountains, with desolation,  
                                unless Love build its city."

The last two poems of the section that we shall be concerned with are "By Circumstances Fed" and "The Sin of Hamlet." These poems deal with looking at the self in a mirror, not as Narcissus (so that, as in the poem just mentioned, 'in the slight ripple, the mind perceives the heart'), but as a seeing of the estranged self:

As, once in the drugstore,  
Between the salves and ointment,  
I suddenly saw, so strange there,  
Amid the sand and soda,  
Rich in all appointments,  
My own face in the mirror.

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<sup>75</sup>Halio, p. 805.

or of the grotesque and shameful self:

. . . . .the furtive  
Fugitive, looking backward, sees his  
Ghost in the mirror, his shameful eyes, his mouth diseased.

In these poems the confrontations--unplanned, unexpected--  
result in a heightened consciousness of the self as mortal.

That theme is important; however, there is reason--beyond  
theme--to deal with "The Sin of Hamlet" and "By Circumstances  
Fed," for each of these poems was completely revised by  
Schwartz at some time in his career. Schwartz constantly  
re-worked his poems, usually making minor, but valuable im-  
provements in the interest of euphony, clarity or significance.  
These two, however, were entirely re-written.

In the case of "The Sin of Hamlet" the re-writing took  
place between the poem's untitled publication in the January,  
1938 issue of Poetry magazine and its appearance later that  
year in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities. In Poetry it began:

The heart, a black grape gushing hidden streams,  
Streams hidden as the cold farms under sidewalks,  
Burdened with stones, such as the tallest buildings,  
Bursts, pops like firecrackers, pops and bursts,  
When a train chuffs from the station in full flowers,  
--Or, smoke being the type of dream, great dreams.

The heart would also go away in thunder,  
Admired by throngs, exploding rhetoric!

This, the major part of the poem, was discarded--not unwisely  
--by Schwartz. Its mixed imagery was undoubtedly intended

to be imitative of Symbolist synesthesia; yet, in its extreme combinations it is also reminiscent of the discordia concors of the Metaphysicals, and somewhat of a foretaste of contemporary rock-music's "psychedelic" juxtapositions (e.g., "Electric Prune," Strawberry Alarm-Clock"). That Schwartz partially intends this effect is evident from his crescendo of "exploding rhetoric"; nevertheless, although gushing and exploding are stated, neither happens poetically, and the lines fall flat.

The last four lines function as decrescendo:

But when it comes, escape is small, the door  
Creaks, the worms of fear spread veined, the furtive  
Fugitive, looking backward, sees his  
Ghost in the mirror, his shameful eyes, his mouth diseased.

Schwartz saw the potential of these lines, and sometime during the next few months he created from them a new poem with the title "The Sin of Hamlet," and with seven new lines to replace the original eight:

The horns in the harbor booming, vaguely,  
Fog, forgotten, yesterday, conclusion,  
Nostalgic, noising dim sorrow, calling  
To sleep is it? I think so, and childhood,  
Not the door opened and the stair descended,  
The voice answered, the choice announced, the  
Trigger touched in sharp declaration!

He has here created a more subtle, more ironic crescendo; the lines have a density of sound patterning and are resonant with

literary allusion. Allusions are to Shakespeare, Hart Crane, Eliot, and, less obviously, line seven makes an ironic comment on the kind of modern belief or fiction that Schwartz deplored for providing a false "affirmation of the isolated individual's heroism."<sup>76</sup> The poem now has an integrity that was completely lacking in the earlier version; the last four lines now work quietly against the first seven in the mode of a shortened sonnet.

The revision of "By Circumstances Fed" is neither as drastic as that of "The Sin of Hamlet," nor was it accomplished in as short a time; it took place, not in a matter of months, but sometime between 1938 and 1959. Below are the two versions of the poem, first as it appeared in In Dreams and second as it was revised for Summer Knowledge:

By circumstances fed  
Which divide attention  
Among so many dead,  
Even in the blooming sun,  
For this is not ended,  
Never having begun,  
And this is attended  
By a fire-like power,  
Converting every feature  
Into its own nature,  
As, once in the drugstore,  
Between the salves and ointments  
I suddenly saw, so strange there,  
Amid the sand and soda,  
Rich in all appointments,  
My own face in the mirror.

By circumstances fed  
Which divide attention  
Among the living and the dead,  
Under the blooms of the blossoming  
The gaze which is a tower towers  
Day and night, hour by hour  
Critical of all and of one,  
Dissatisfied with every flower  
With all that's been done or undone  
Converting every feature  
Into its own and unknown nature;  
So, one in the drugstore,  
Amid all the poppy, salve and oint  
I suddenly saw, estranged there,  
Beyond all disappointment,  
My own face in the mirror.

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<sup>76</sup> Delmore Schwartz, "The Fiction of Ernest Hemingway," 1955. Reprinted in Selected Essays, p. 265.

Schwartz maintains theme and structure while making severe textural changes. The only new literary echo (perhaps unintentional) is in line 3 which repeats the last words of Joyce's "The Dead." In general, individual lines are not tightened, as they were in most of Schwartz's earlier revisions, but are expanded in the mode of many Summer Knowledge poems by means of internal rhyme, repetition and variation: "blooms of the blossoming," "tower towers," "hour by hour," "known or unknown," "done or undone." The most interesting and effective revisions occur in the alterations and re-arrangements of the last lines. Schwartz deletes the rather empty "sand and soda," and "Rich in all appointments;" the new arrangement then emphasizes "all the poppy, salve and ointment"--all the sought salvation in escape and palliative. "Beyond all disappointment" works backward as sonic tie with "ointment," thus suggesting the worthlessness of all the remedies, and forward to "My own face in the mirror," bringing to a climax the clear, unadorned, unmasked vision of the self.

### Dr. Bergen's Belief

The last section of In Dreams Begin Responsibilities is the one-act play in verse and prose called "Dr. Bergen's Belief." This is probably the weakest piece in the book and apparently Schwartz realized this for he never reprinted it. Perhaps his main reason for including it was to have a complete range of genres: short story, long poem, short lyric poems and play. Though set as a domestic tragedy, "Dr. Bergen's Belief" is actually a problem play dealing primarily with modern man's search for belief. Through the failures of the doctor, his daughters, the young man and the psychiatrist, the search for salvation through knowledge, faith or love is seen, not only as futile, but also as destructive of life itself.

One of the problems generated by the work is the aesthetic question of Schwartz's unsuccessful use of ideas here in contrast to his successful incorporation of ideas in "Coriolanus and His Mother." Primarily, the play is about belief, belief that is certain, direct and intuitive. Such belief is, as we have seen, contrary to Schwartz's own position, and the whole rationale behind the play might be to display the horrors attendant upon such certainty when adhered to consistently. Certainty in things of this world rules out doubt and self-

consciousness; it probably also eliminates humor and irony. Since the author presents the play with straightforward objectivity--with no "ghosts," no literary allusions, without any of the incongruities of his "Jewish" short stories--the ideational level operates in a vacuum. In other words, in this play Schwartz has denied himself all the ingredients essential to his style. Without the self and its levels, and without any perspectives, Schwartz lacks his characteristic voice and resonance; everything is rather flat, except for the short introduction.

The play opens with Dr. Bergen rehearsing an iambic pentameter speech to a mirror. The mirror seems to be the only device Schwartz has left himself for reflection, and, accordingly, the speech concerns doubt, uncertainties, good breakfasts, the seashore and Santa Claus. But his purpose is to destroy these doubts with certainty: "I know the answer." His answer is a new religion based on the belief that the sky is God's blue eye watching us. This is quite a treacherous reversal of Schwartz's usual attitude toward that illimitable blue, "the sky's pure capital"; it is as if Schwartz had gigantized Fitzgerald's myopic Dr. T.J. Eckleberg.

The only character whose views at all resemble Schwartz's is Anthony. Anthony suffers unfulfilled love, for his loved



one, Dr. Bergen's daughter, has committed suicide. After Dr. Bergen's introductory speech to the mirror, Anthony's words open the play:

This is the house of the dead . . .

--Here they construct a system to make their lives  
Self-regarding, self-gratifying, self-conscious,  
Indulging their minds in the old foolishness,  
The vain vanity: to correct the heart of man,  
A mission, a justification, a declaration.  
--The true motive is private unhappiness.

Anthony has awareness, but he is sunk in misery; except for this short, revelatory speech, he has almost no further part in the play. We are left on our own; Schwartz is no longer there in his various guises and roles to enliven the scene and enrich our understanding.

Thus we are forced to listen to one-dimensional Dr. Bergen, whose

. . . main belief is that God's blue eye is the sky. It is God's organ of perception . . . when the whole world can be brought to an awareness of this fact, then human life will be transformed. . . . You must look at God's blue eye. . . then you will know what is good and what is evil. He calls this the intuitive understanding or inspiration.

Of course, as may be surmised, Dr. Bergen is the only one, so far, who possesses this intuitive power. The sense of horror is subtle and overwhelming.

Dr. Bergen has a complete program for his disciples,

couched as imperatives. The first is to become aware of yourself through writing:

Write before you sleep, at night, in a book which can be taken with you as the past is taken with you, as the past takes you. . . . To keep a diary is an act of prayer, duplicating in your own meager power the gaze of the deity's blue eye upon you.

If Schwartz is here indulging in self-mockery, he has left himself no way of alerting the reader; the passage reads as straight-forward characterization and Dr. Bergen is seen as a wooden prophet. Nor does the reader know if irony is intended when the second imperative demands frankness and sincerity, for by now Dr. Bergen seems not only wooden, but also hypocritical. A climax of disbelief is reached in the conclusion of the third imperative:

. . . your decision can be true only if you open your heart and give your mind to that being whose blue eye is actual in the arching, domed, and ineluctable scene which is infinite overhead, your decision before that being's blue eye,  
In whom "Justice," "Truth," "Beauty," are genuine and absolute.

The reader is left completely bewildered; if Plato is being parodied, there is no hint of the justice, truth or beauty of the parody; and, if he isn't, Dr. Bergen's use of Plato for his petty purpose seems unpleasant.

The play moves on inexorably toward death. Behind Dr. Bergen's belief there lurks, after all, serious doubt; the only remedy for this doubt is death. It is only in death that

we finally know. As Dr. Bergen asserts just before he leaps from the parapet:

I am faced by my own doubt. I have the will to know and nothing else. Death is the only satisfaction left to me. . . . I am faced with my own ignorance. But I am going to find out for myself once and for all!

(He jumps to his death, as several scream. Martha, running from among them, jumps up and also leaps from the parapet.)

Now Dr. Bergen and both of his daughters have killed themselves. The play is tragic, almost in a Greek sense, but Dr. Bergen is too small a figure to be heroic, and without humor or even recognizable irony, it is all senseless.

Anthony tells us what is wrong with Dr. Bergen's belief, and, inadvertently, what is wrong with the play:

Belief contrives  
A curious house, peculiar pyramid  
Which narrows as it must to nothingness.  
And on that tiny top we stand until  
The actual sand shifts as it must, betrays  
The desert of our lives, our broken sleep.

Anthony as Schwartz in a very fixed locale cannot sustain the play, and the play become that modern implausibility--if not impossibility--a morality play. The play is about the horrors of certainty, and unfortunately itself succumbs to the aesthetic correlative. In a negative way it substantiates the rightness of Schwartz's usual perspectival attitude--the self refracted, not in the single, stark mirror of a Dr. Bergen, but in the multi-faceted glass of a modern poet.

### PART III. THE MIDDLE YEARS

With the acclaim accorded In Dreams Begin Responsibilities, Delmore Schwartz found himself a "successful poet" at the beginning of a public career. Schwartz's public beginnings in 1938-1939, however, coincide with the end of an era: political, intellectual and literary trends represent radical shifts of focus and interest from those of the thirties. Developments in Russian politics, the Munich Pact in 1939, and the United States' entry into the war changed the social and political consciousness of the nation. By 1940 the literary dictatorship of T.S. Eliot had been long acknowledged; the event which established the tenor of the new decade's literary concerns was the publication of John Crowe Ransom's The New Criticism. The impact of New Criticism, together with the trend of writers taking teaching positions at universities, made the forties an age of theoretical and academic literary productivity. And the Jewish writer took on a new role. In the thirties Jewish authors seemed the espousers of liberal, left-wing causes; in the forties the portrait of the artist as Jew emerged as a viable metaphor for ". . . the dislocation of sensibility, the failure of nerve which was at the

psychological core of the forties. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Schwartz held an unmatched position at the forefront of all of these literary trends. He found himself in demand for lectures, readings and professorships; he was editorial consultant for New Directions and poetry editor of New Republic. As an editor and regular contributor to Partisan Review, he helped shape the New York intellectual-literary climate of the era. His articles, reviews and stories appeared regularly from the very first issue of Kenyon Review, the main outlet for the New Critics. When Schwartz suggested that the assumptions of New Criticism be made explicit, John Crowe Ransom complied by adding the chapter "Wanted: An Ontological Critic" to The New Criticism. The stories Schwartz wrote during the forties (subsequently collected as The World Is a Wedding, 1948), portrayed the desolate, dislocated, claustrophobic lives of New York middle-class intellectuals. It is perhaps here in these stories that one can best see Schwartz's continuity--a continuity which is rare among authors who wrote during both the thirties and the forties. Unlike other writers of the thirties, Schwartz's earlier work had not been

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<sup>1</sup>Jack Salzman, The Survival Years (New York, 1969), p. xv.

dominated as much by social issues as by the tension between the inner and public man, between cultural history and psychic obsessions; neither had he been so concerned with ideas as to neglect technique (a complaint against many writers of the thirties). In these respects his transition from the thirties to the forties is one he holds in common with Paul Goodman, Karl Shapiro and Isaac Rosenfeld. These men, all second generation Jews, were "ambivalently intellectual, but for all their anguish insolently at home with ideas and words."<sup>2</sup>

The early forties was a period of rapid changes and reversals, a difficult time for most poets. Eliot and Auden turned to religion, others to various introspective and autobiographical modes. Schwartz, too, seems to have found the changing times difficult and the search for new modes challenging. His transition into the new era, however, seems less abrupt than most of his contemporaries, perhaps because the poetic concerns and poetic voice he had established in the thirties defined, to a great extent, the more general styles and concerns of the early forties. Schwartz's concerns had always been with the inner private being, with the presentness of the past, with the forces at work shaping the individual.

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<sup>2</sup>As quoted by Salzman, p. xv.

Schwartz's poetic voice resonates with a blend of past and present voices. Arthur Mizener describes the characteristic poetic style of the forties as that very blend of many voices out of which the poet creates his own; Mizener credits Schwartz with first establishing that style:

The most interesting of these poets (Jarrell, Lowell, and other poets of the forties) is Delmore Schwartz, in whose work the period style was first established. Its harmonious blending of effects from such different poets as Pound, Eliot, Yeats and Auden. . . is a very considerable achievement. It allows Mr. Schwartz to create his own voice within the range of a familiar voice, as did the best of the Elizabethan sonneteers and of the eighteenth century couplet makers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Arthur Mizener, "American Poetry in the Twentieth Century," Arts at Mid-Century, ed. Robert Richman (New York, 1954), p. 255.

### A Season in Hell

Schwartz published one more book before the thirties were over, a translation of Rimbaud's Une Saison en Enfer. The introduction to this volume appeared in Poetry, December 1939 as an essay entitled "Rimbaud in Our Time," and has also been reprinted in the posthumous Selected Essays. We have discussed portions of this essay previously in connection with Schwartz's strong feelings of affiliation with Rimbaud and his indebtedness to the earlier poet for techniques of linguistic intensity. In the essay Schwartz also expresses--in rather forceful terms--what he feels is the importance of poets of all eras: "The poet above all is the one who feels the central lack in what men do, know, and believe, because he works in consciousness as in terms of words."<sup>4</sup> In modern times Rimbaud plays a special role in what Schwartz considers the breakdown of an adequate social order.

The history of poetry since Blake, from this important perspective, is the history of men who found the social orders into which they were born increasingly inadequate in every human respect and wholly deficient in satisfying the inevitable need of a whole view of life. Rimbaud knew this need and knew certain characteristic attempts at its

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<sup>4</sup>Schwartz, A Season in Hell (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1939, p. xii).



satisfaction with a sensitivity which is incomparable. The satisfaction is far from being in sight, even today, or rather today least of all. That is why "A Season in Hell" is a text which deserves our endless study.<sup>5</sup>

Schwartz's observation that Rimbaud seems "to have tried out the whole century to come in advance"<sup>6</sup> is echoed thirty years later by George Steiner:

With Rimbaud poetry demands and is accorded the freedom of the modern city--those privileges of indirection, of technical autonomy of inward reference and sub-surface rhetoric which almost define the twentieth-century style. Rimbaud left his thumbprint on language, on the name and nature of the modern poet, as Cezanne did on apples.<sup>7</sup>

In an acknowledgement Schwartz states that his aim in translation "has been to get an exact equivalent of Rimbaud's statement into the idiom and the meters of English. . ."<sup>8</sup> Actually, there are quite a few mistakes in translation (not very damaging, though) and much to take issue with. The translation is very literal and rather bland; there is little attempt to reproduce the specific poetic quality of the work, which Schwartz might have done by trying to capture the rhythm of the phrase and its import without reproducing the precise meaning of the phrase. As it is, even his attempted precision seems to defeat itself; an adequate reproduction might have resulted from an attempt to find precise English--English

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<sup>5</sup>A Season in Hell, p. xii.

<sup>6</sup>A Season in Hell, x.

<sup>7</sup>Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman (New York, 1967), p. 47.

<sup>8</sup>A Season in Hell, p. 99.

similar in its precision and cutting edge--more than in its dictionary meaning. At best it is a conscientious translation marred by errors and by dictionary equivalents which somehow dilute the meaning.<sup>9</sup>

That the book got published (at least in the form it did, evidently without the use of New Directions' literary consultants) seems testimony to the unquestioned faith that James Laughlin had in Delmore Schwartz. And Mr. Laughlin was not alone in that faith. Wallace Stevens, who had once written ". . . there is no one in whom I believe as much as I believe in Delmore Schwartz,"<sup>10</sup> responded to Philip Blair Rice's devastating review of the Rimbaud translation<sup>11</sup> with a confidence in Schwartz that was unbounded and uncritical:

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<sup>9</sup>Examples of errors:

Omission of an entire sentence: Philosophes, vous êtes de votre Occident, p. 82.

Questionable equivalents in cognates, idioms, tenses, reflexives:

J'attends Dieu avec gourmandise = I wait for God like a gourmand, pp. 12-13.

Ses délicatesses mystérieuses m'avaient séduite = His mysterious courtesies have seduced me, pp. 40-41.  
limbes = limbs, pp. 60-61.

convenables = convenient, pp. 78-79.

Questionable rhythmic equivalent (retention of article would aid in the rhythmic pattern): magnifique, la luxure = magnificent luxury, pp. 6-7.

<sup>10</sup>To Henry Church, December 27, 1940, Letters of Wallace Stevens, ed. Holly Stevens (New York, 1966), p. 382.

<sup>11</sup>"The Rimbaud Mystery Clarified," Poetry LVI (May 1940), 95-101.

Rice is perhaps a better man than Schwartz, but he is not a poet; his field is philosophy. Schwartz's studies have always been those of a young philosopher, but with increasing interest in poetry. . . . Schwartz's translation is considered to be sophomoric. Still it might be sophomoric from the point of view of translating from one language into another and yet contain things that matter.<sup>12</sup>

That same unquestioned faith in the poet led James Laughlin to publish Schwartz's "Paris and Helen, An Entertainment," in the New Directions in Prose and Poetry 1941 collection. Philip Rahv praises Bertold Brecht's "Mother Courage" and Schwartz's "Paris and Helen" as the most interesting work of the annual collection. Rather than calling "Paris and Helen" a play, Rahv refers to it as a "charade," and thus emphasizes its humor, and its counterpoint of action and analysis. Nevertheless, the piece has other pretensions, ones which Rahv criticizes: Schwartz ". . . leans too heavily on text and precedent, continually looking over his shoulder and citing literary and philosophical sources."<sup>13</sup> Rahv also dislikes Schwartz's ". . . tendency toward a critical and intellectual italicization of experience, regardless of its given weight or inner disposition."<sup>14</sup> The work is not only ill-proportioned in this sense, but it is also tasteless; in this respect one can agree with Randall Jarrell's condemnation of "Paris and Helen" as ". . . self-conscious, self-indulgent, a literary and embarrassing failure. . . ."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>To Leonard C. van Geysel, May 24, 1940, Letters, p.356.

<sup>13</sup>"Souvenirs and Experiments," Kenyon Review IV (Spring 1942), 239.

<sup>14</sup>Rahv, p. 240.

<sup>15</sup>"In All Directions," Partisan Review IX (July-August 1942). 345.

### Shenandoah

Shenandoah is a short, one-act play that Schwartz first published in the Summer 1941 issue of Kenyon Review, and which he revised later that year for publication in the "Poet of the Month" series of New Directions. The play is concerned with the naming of a child of Jewish ancestry born in America in 1914. In Shenandoah all the forces at work shaping the individual are concentrated on the naming process: name-giving is viewed as determining the psychic life, and, retrospectively, as forming the poet--himself a name-giver. The Jewishness of the play operates, not as belief but as background, permeating modes of feeling and of language. This ethnic blood line is, actually, only one strand of the future poet's double lineage; the other strand is cultural, intellectual, artistic. Schwartz names as the great men who will obsess him: Kafka, Rilke, Joyce, Yeats, Eliot, Pound. The product of this co-mingling issues in the name Shenandoah Fish.

The adult Shenandoah is present at the naming ceremony, acting as observer and commentator on himself and his sources. This device gives Schwartz that unusual remove of consciousness which is so important to his dramatic method.

Return with me, stand at my point of view,  
Regard with my emotion the small event  
Which gave my mind and gave my character,  
Amid the hundred thousand possibilities<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Schwartz, Shenandoah (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1941), p.7.

Here we are asked to join the central Schwartz characters who, as Heinz Poltizer has observed, ". . . halt midway between their origin and their future."<sup>17</sup>

Within the play we learn that the child is to be named Jacob in memory of his mother's deceased father. However, Jacob is also the name of the child's father's father--not deceased. This grandparent fears that his life will be shortened if the child receives his name; he pleads with his daughter-in-law to find a new name for the child. Thus, this fear of the child's father's father destroys the Adam-like, natural flow of the naming process and it becomes a tortuous, conscious procedure; that is, the poet is thrust into being. With traditions uprooted (America), the essentiality of naming is no longer guaranteed and the ensuing panic results in a frantic seeking.

The child's mother, at a loss for a name, turns to the newspaper's society pages. Here is the best that America has to offer--and the worst, for there is no real American aristocracy, only the rich and their empty lives.

Mrs. Goldmark: . . . For instance, the Talbot Brewsters, who are mentioned today: every year they go to Florida in January. Mr. Brewster has an estate in the Shenandoah Valley. . .

Elsie Fish: Shenandoah! What a wonderful name:  
Shenandoah Fish!  
(The baby begins to howl.)<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>"Lucifer in Brooklyn: The Two Worlds of Delmore Schwartz," Commentary X (December 1950), 564.

<sup>18</sup>Shenandoah, p. 15.

The sport pages also supply names, names of horses running at the race-tracks, the places of the idle rich. But the ultimate break-down of the word is reached when the guarantee of the name Shenandoah is sought from a gentile lawyer by means of a phone call.

And yet the name Shenandoah Fish, ridiculous as it is, represents a new beginning, an incongruous creation, a promise. The child-poet will actually fare far better with this new name than if he had been called Jacob after the old traditions.

Such is the outline of the play, a play whose content is more philosophic than dramatic. Paradoxically, Schwartz is more effectively dramatic in his poems than in his plays. His "plays" are actually of two types: one, the "theater of the mind" ("Coriolanus and His Mother," Genesis), the other, more conventional, external theater ("Dr. Bergen's Belief," Shenandoah). In the latter type, the characters are usually quite wooden and there is almost no dramatic action; the content becomes simply the intellectual ideas, which tend, because of the surrounding deadness, to take on the air of a tract.

The language of Shenandoah is not, for Schwartz, very effective, although he does, to some extent, control the shifts of tone from verse to prose. The humor is mediocre (there are some bad puns), and the self-consciousness is awkward rather than inventive. Too much becomes too explicit, at times



### Genesis: Book One

Genesis is Schwartz's longest, most ambitious poetic work. During the course of a sleepless night the poet (as "Hershey Green") recounts his history from his Russian-Jewish grandfathers (both named "Noah") and their move to America, through his parents' courtship and disastrous marriage, to his New York childhood. This narration by the "sleepless New York boy" is in arranged, rhythmic prose; a chorus of unnamed dead, the secular divinities, provide commentary in verse.

Critical responses to Genesis were neither as numerous nor as enthusiastic as those which followed the publication of In Dreams Begin Responsibilities. Here, for the first time, critics voiced judgments of Schwartz's work in terms of their prior expectations. Allen Tate's comments typify that reaction which subsequently became a critical commonplace in respect to Schwartz's work--that is, that In Dreams deserved all the praise it had received, but Schwartz did not "live up to his early promise." Tate finds Genesis in general ". . . unsuccessful; it is formless, ambitious, repetitious, and often quite dull."<sup>20</sup>

In some respects Tate's comments are justified; during

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<sup>20</sup>Sixty American Poets, 1896-1944 (Washington, D.C., 1945), p. 148.



a first reading of Genesis one occasionally experiences boredom, and, at times, a degree of irritation. Schwartz's context and characters seem overly-familiar, and one feels the "ping-pong" effect of constant alternation of prose narration and verse commentary.

Yet the book is compelling, and one reads on--with some sense that the details, pacing and patterns carry more significance than can be absorbed during the process of reading, and that the author has calculated all of this too carefully. Then, from seemingly gratuitous detail or repetitive forms come flashes of insight. R.P. Blackmur, in his review of Genesis, realized this aspect of the work by calling attention to single details. Blackmur saw that a single detail could be "so ripe or gravid" that it would "grow wherever dropped." Such a "separable struck-off insight" is, actually, "so lodged in the life of the poem that its roots will catch elsewhere, however accidentally it falls. It is in such accidents, as one of Mr. Schwartz's ghosts observes, that 'Necessity shows its disfigured face.'"<sup>21</sup>

Both the poem and the life depend, not only on detail, but also on repetition as their binding force. It is in the features of memories that return repeatedly that Schwartz knows he has a life:

And now the memory which keeps the self from  
nothingness, or from the lakes and scenes the body  
often swims,

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<sup>21</sup>"Commentary by Ghosts," Kenyon Review V (Autumn 1943) 470.

Grasps in my mind scenes of more length<sup>22</sup> and depth  
and width. . . . .

In establishing some of these memories as events in his own poems, and then repeating them, the poem itself gains "memory." Repeated reference to a life event that has been made accessible to the reader through prior articulation turns personal allusion into literary allusion. Such allusion (giving a girl an apple, ice-skating at five years old, mother's outraged rhetoric) recalls not only the event and its implications, but also the poem in which it occurred, the words with which it was expressed, the tone which gave it impact, and the significance which the poet attached to it.

Schwartz's use of repetitive formal patterns may be a similar attempt to endow with significance those aspects of life that are not his own. Schwartz has, after all, a tragic view of life, an overwhelming sense of its recurrent, quotidian, uncontrollable, determinate nature. The dully repetitive forms of Genesis express that deterministic pathos and attempt to transform the necessitous and banal in what the poet calls an ". . . effort to declare the miraculous character of daily life and daily speech."<sup>23</sup>

Whether his effort succeeds, he at least acknowledges the necessity of coping with those repetitive elements in a work

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<sup>22</sup>Schwartz, Genesis: Book One (New York, 1943), p. 121.

<sup>23</sup>Genesis, p. ix.

which purports to reflect a consciously lived life. Repetition binds past and present in a conscious continuum, linking the chaotic materials out of which a future is generated. Tate's comments that Genesis is "formless, ambitious, repetitious, and often quite dull," do, then, apply not so much to the poem as to the materials out of which Schwartz creates the life of the poem and the poem of the life.

Thus the structure of Genesis as well as its subject is addressed to "how a life, a particular, predicated, necessitous and wayward life, comes to have significance."<sup>24</sup> Well into the sleepless night the narrator complains:

How long must I endure this show and sight  
Of all I lived through, all I live in: Why?  
Why? I know, I have been told that one  
Gets used to anything and every pain:  
I feel like one before a hundred doctors,  
Stripped of my clothes, ugly in nakedness,  
Walking in infancy up to this night,  
While all the white-gowned antiseptic men  
Lean down to hear my beating heart, stare down  
My throat, touch all my limbs, and try  
My eyes, my ears, my breath, feel the strange skull,  
Look for my mind, seek for my thoughts!

When will

I sleep? when will I be allowed to close  
My mind, and look no more at my long life  
(I feel as if I had lived hundreds of years,  
Assisting in his pain the Wandering Jew),  
Be the warm beaver of a winter's sleep  
And feel the warm bath of unconsciousness?

A ghost responds:

"This you must face," a voice unmoved in tone  
Replied to Hershey, whispering as before,  
"This you will not evade. Like Time and Space,

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<sup>24</sup>Blackmur, p. 468.

All memory holds the mind. In life, in Death,  
 O in Death most of all! Like Oedipus,  
 No one can go away from genesis,  
 From parents, early crime, and character,  
 Guilty or innocent! Though he cut out  
 His eyeballs, though he kill himself, no man  
 Escapes the Past, nothing is lost,  
 --There in the ultimate pit, rising and falling,  
 Lie all the deities which make our lives--"25

Within this necessitous, pre-determined context, Schwartz nevertheless explores the potentials for individuation, and thus significance. As Frank Jones acknowledges, in Genesis "Schwartz adumbrates a theme of the first importance and value: the infinite possibilities, logically and ethically studied, of human individuality. . . . This poem may well be characterized in Eliot's words for Pound's 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley': 'a positive document of sensibility.' It is one of the few such documents recently produced in America."26

Among Schwartz's papers are several versions of his statements of intentions for Genesis, statements which he calls scenarios. In these scenarios, as in the published note "To the Reader," Schwartz attempts to

. . . remove some of the preconceptions and 'habitual expectations' which would condemn the formal character of the whole work.

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<sup>25</sup>Genesis, p. 120.

<sup>26</sup>"Ourselves When Young," Nation August 14, 1943, pp. 186-187

Thus, the use of prose and verse in the same work is nothing new or strange if one remembers the Bible and the Elizabethan play.

The alternation of the two kinds of composition, for which there are many reasons, is a formal thing, like stanzas, lines, meter and rhyme, chapters and scenes, acts and curtains, arias and recitatives.

But above all, the use of a chorus of commentators ought to be seen as the same kind of thing as the chorus in Greek drama.<sup>27</sup>

In one scenario Schwartz cites further precedent for the "formal character" of Genesis: "The Book of Job; the three friends; and their arias and lyricism and dialectic. The Arabian knights episodic; the Divine Comedy, episodic and commentative; the Elizabethan play, prose and verse; Scheherazade, death like an imminence."

In this scenario (Labelled "A," dated March 30, 1942), Schwartz seems to be talking to himself, perhaps to clarify his intentions. Scenario "B" (undated) is longer and more detailed. In this version we learn that the original impetus for the story-telling was the death of the narrator's father and the mistaken impressions of the waking boy that 1) it was his brother who was dead, and 2) it is snowing, although the month is May. In this original conception (the opening of the book--with its guilt and wish fantasies--combined with the ending of the book--an account of the traumatic ending of the narrator's childhood), the work would have been almost completely interpretable within a Freudian framework.

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<sup>27</sup>Genesis, p. vii.

Schwartz endeavored again and again to start the book with these Freudian themes of guilt and wish-fulfillment. The following is one of many manuscript versions, all of which contain both the mistaken impressions of snow in May and the brother's death:

Waking, walking to the window, looking out,  
Seeking for snow in May, a miracle  
(Quick in the dozing head's compelled free mix),  
He saw the snow which was not snow,  
but moonlight,  
The moonlight's lie, error's fecundity,  
Fallen from the dead planet near the roof--

Then heard his brother Roger's breathing stop,  
Noted like clock tick stop,  
                                and reached to him,  
His only brother sleeping next to him,  
In the nearby twin bed which his hand sought out,  
And touched his cold face, touched his nose,  
                                and knew  
He did not wake, he did not move,  
                                and shook  
Him, cried aloud, afraid that he was dead!

In the published version, all literal references to father's or brother's death are omitted (although death remains "like an imminence"), leaving only Hershey's mistaken perception of snow as the impetus for the story. As we shall later see, shifting the emphasis onto the snow vision becomes an important thematic, tonal device, setting the rest of the book into a less Freudian, more comprehensive, more poetic and philosophically inclusive framework.

In scenario B Schwartz clearly intends that Hershey will not speak, but instead only listen to an array of ghosts. These ghosts (the recent dead) who speak in unknown foreign

voices, both recount the story of the boy's life and comment upon it. In this original conception of the book, Schwartz --as Hershey Green--is audience, not speaker, thus neglecting the crucial part played by the poet's speaking voice in the affirmation of that life. However, even in these preliminary sketches, Schwartz registers some sense of the poet's voice, its origins and its utilizations. This is evident in scenario A when the ghosts initially silence Hershey with their knowledge of the worthlessness of his story and with their awareness of the motivations, strategies and limitations of any self-revelatory narration: nevertheless, Schwartz has a partially formulated notion of the entire work as the "flowering" of the romantic ego, and not just the flowering of denunciation and confession, but, more significantly, of oration:

Character, they tell him, is an endless struggle. They show him how the manic-depressive introverts (do we not know many such characters?) at parties or drunken or shy or afraid or drowning or about to be hanged, must speak, say all, saying all knowing he is saying too much, anything to gain attention, knowing it is a scandal or betrayal and may be seen as such, wishing to destroy the difficult silence. Thus, when the roadhouse is the flowering (again, for there are previous ones) of the romantic ego, and, formal note, the flowering of oration, denunciation and confession.

The final version of Genesis encompasses that "flowering of oration" and is thus Schwartz's contribution to the genre of *Kunstlerroman* as well as that of *Bildungsroman*. In the closing scene in the roadhouse comes the recognition of the

archetypal end of childhood:

"Childhood was ended here! or innocence  
--Henceforth suspicious of experience!"<sup>28</sup>

and the equally significant initiation into the necessity  
of poetic speech:

"And here is where this very night begins,  
For here you learned to cry aloud your life!  
Before a staring mezzanine audience,  
Superior, wise, thunder-struck, apart,  
Yet guilty too, alas! being in Life:  
How many times before your life is lived  
This hideous scene will make fresh repetitions!"

"Your mother's oratory will abide,  
Whence what a senate, what a court becomes,  
What a profoundest theatre holds and will hold  
Your being as a being-in-the-world!"<sup>29</sup>

And, actually, this is already a "fresh repetition" of that  
scene which has gained recognition and resonance from pre-  
vious poetic use in "Prothalamion":

I will forget the speech my mother made  
In a restaurant, trapping my father there  
At dinner with his whore. Her spoken rage  
Struck down the child of seven years  
With shame for all three, with pity for  
The helpless harried waiter, with anger for  
The diners gazing, avid, and contempt,  
And great disgust for every human being.  
I will remember this. My mother's rhetoric  
Has charmed my various tongue, but now I know  
Love's metric seeks a rhyme more pure and sure.<sup>30</sup>

The end of childhood that is the beginning for the poet,  
however, comes at the close of Genesis. In the actual writing

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<sup>28</sup>Genesis, p. 206

<sup>29</sup>Genesis, p. 207

<sup>30</sup>Schwartz, In Dreams Begin Responsibilities (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1938), p. 45.



of the book, Schwartz experienced that old problem of beginnings. Various extant typescripts reveal the difficulty he had in finding an appropriate and effective opening. With his self-awareness concerning beginning, what seem to be his own ghosts tell him to "Begin. . . with a false beginning," since, as seems perfectly clear to the ghosts, "all beginnings are false." Such clarity as the ghosts exhibit, however, is not the actuality in the living of a life nor in the poem's "fullness of actuality." Or, as the poet wittily observes in a pencilled marginal note on one of the scenarios, "The benefits of clarity are not obscure."

Genesis begins with an anecdote about a mistake: moonlight is mistaken for snow and, even when the error is recognized, the image of snow remains, a kind of phantom. In this case the interpretations of reality clearly divide into that which is false (seeing snow) and that which is true (seeing moonlight). What is "false" as an interpretation of reality, however, is true emotionally for the character Hershey Green; he turns away from the window, realizing his mistake and commenting: "How each view may be false!" But when he turns back to the window, ". . . the whole thing happens again." Hershey doesn't see moonlight as such, but rather ". . . the snow which is not snow but light."<sup>31</sup>

". . . each view may be false!" -- Hershey sees snow,

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<sup>31</sup>Genesis, p. 4.

not just the first time, but every time he looks out the window.

" . . . each view may be false!" -- If seeing snow where there is really only moonlight is somehow "true," may not seeing only moonlight where there is only moonlight be somehow "false" (that is, a denial of "error's fecundity," and of the "fullness of actuality")?

The beginning of Genesis thus echoes the note "To the Reader" where Schwartz says that

. . . the author's beliefs and values may be wrong in the abstract or in the living world, but 'right' in relation to his own experience, so that we may read Homer, Dante, Lucretius, or a Buddhist poem, because the views which they contain are profoundly right as generalities which govern and illuminate their subject-matter, however wrong otherwise.<sup>32</sup>

The insight that "each view may be false" implicitly recognizes that there are many views, and further suggests that each view may reflect part of the truth. Schwartz seems to anticipate all possibilities: epistemological, psychological, and literary "truths." He presents us with a disguised, and therefore fictional autobiography; since it is the story of Hershey Green, rather than definitely that of Delmore Schwartz, there seems no basis for falsifying the narrator's actions, feelings, or beliefs. But this literary "truth" in no way accounts for the psychological truths of self-protection and

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<sup>32</sup>Genesis, p. viii.

self-deception involved in anyone's telling of his own story:

. . . another ghost assumed the theme,  
 Begin your endless story, Hershey Green,  
 --We know (do we not know!) how some  
 Accuse themselves with prosecutor's zeal  
 In order to forestall another's word  
 --Hershey, you will not fool us in the least,  
 What you say is true:  
 . . . . . a famous trick!<sup>33</sup>

Schwartz makes use of mistaken perceptions, fictions, lies, self-deceptions; he makes use of a man's guilts, his need for love, and his desire to know how, why and what happens to him when he lives; he makes use of the contending views of ghosts. From this chaotic multiplicity emerges a complicated dialectic by which one arrives at a total truth--"a famous trick!"

In Genesis Schwartz elaborately develops instances and episodes illustrating "error's fecundity" and the growing awareness on the part of the boy, of "truth's aridity," its limitations and harmfulness. These modes permit Schwartz to develop and encompass the multiplicity of life--a slow process in the poem as well as in the life.

If the story of Hershey's life is the story of a triumph, ending with the capacity to live life and, simultaneously, to understand it, then it must emerge out of the disorder that is Hershey's life. He must acknowledge all stages prior to the triumph to make that triumph felt; and then, ironically,

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<sup>33</sup>Genesis, p. 7.

Hershey Green can say, with the ghosts: "Felix qui potuit cognoscere causas"!

As illustration of what can emerge from the very process of working through mistakes, Schwartz eventually develops a context in which living and understanding have transcended the original sense of truth and falsity; that is, mistakes have become facts in the totality of life. A passage from Genesis: II is fully re-printed in an appendix;<sup>34</sup> in this passage Schwartz has arrived at a level where understanding is encompassed in the narrative. But in order to get there, Schwartz must make a beginning.

" . . . Me next to sleep, all that is left of Eden,"  
 --The one who speaks is not remarkable  
 In the great city, circa 1930,  
 His state is not uncommon in the world,  
 O, by no means, sleepless and seeking sleep  
 As one who wades in water to the thighs,  
 Dragging it soft and heavy near the shore;  
 For now his body's lapse and ignorance  
 Permits his heavy mind certain loose sleeves,  
 Loose sleeves of feeling drawing near a drowse  
 He knows of dark and sleep the unity,  
 He knows all being's consanguinity,

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<sup>34</sup>Appendix B. Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground is an unnamed, but important antecedent of Genesis: the snow at beginning and end; the levels of awareness; the need to confess coupled with professed lying, by which, nevertheless, one ultimately sees truth; and in this passage, the inadequacy of mathematical truths.



These ghosts, the recent dead, "hover over human life, look at it, and comment on it."<sup>40</sup> Hershey's life and the story of it has proven meaningless until now, but when the life becomes Scripture interlaced with exegesis, Life, with its absurd causes, emerges as significance. The dialogue of Genesis establishes a method by which Schwartz can fuze and re-contextualize old ideas in such a way as to generate new ones, and--perhaps more importantly--to grasp something more significant about the ideas, the life which contains them, and the art through which they are expressed. The boy's narration brings us close enough to his experiences so that we participate in his pain, disappointments, and in his need for love and understanding. From the theorizing of the ghosts, and in particular from their opposition, stems the dialectic by which the boy eventually understands his life. For example, a Freudian-Marxist polarity eventually allows Hershey to acknowledge that his own neuroses are true causes as much as "those mighty, world-wide, thoughtless causes,"<sup>41</sup> --the Russo-Turkish War and the British Empire.

Schwartz, who once called the child the "illegitimate father of the man," legitimizes his own recurrent return to

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<sup>40</sup>From Scenario "B."

<sup>41</sup>Genesis, p. 15.

childhood by incorporating--with various degrees of mockery and seriousness--such views as Wordsworth's (the lost grace of childhood) and Freud's (the suffering of childhood). The boy's narration expresses the tensions of his life; in their various interpretations the ghosts turn these tensions into paradoxes; the paradoxes then feed back upon the life, enabling the boy to assimilate and transform both tensions and paradoxes. Thus, "Felix qui potuit cognoscere causas."

Genesis reveals Schwartz's usual ability to express private attitudes and emotions that turn out to be representative of many artists and intellectuals of the late thirties and forties, and which generally reflect the political, intellectual, and social climate of the era. The story of a "sleepless New York boy," then, is also the saga of middle-class Jewish-Americans, the children of East European immigrants. The older generation (grandparents) never recover from the shock of arriving in the "promised land." The next generation (parents) are frightened and uneasy in America's bigness, and when hurt they turn inward to the Jewish family group with an over-dependence. The next generation (Hershey's) is formed by the mythos, symbols and images of America: Macy's, comic strips, Santa Claus, baseball cards. These deities--deities who strike at each other, creating in the soul a broken battlefield--are the modern ruling powers; they include

school, family, success, baseball, religion, Capitalismus, and movies.

In part of a continuing correspondence concerning Genesis, Dudley Fitts criticizes Schwartz for his failure to discriminate between the "terribly significant things" that happen to Hershey and the "comparatively insignificant."<sup>42</sup> In this criticism Fitts fails to recognize the very donee of Schwartz's work; that is, the attempt to forge significance out of the undifferentiated materials of his life. All forces, all elements and deities that affect the life must be equally considered. Schwartz attempts in this manner to encompass the totality of life and understanding; it is both his strength and his weakness. The multiplicity, the banality of life is too much, and too much of it is in the book. Here Allen Tate's comments about the book being dull, formless, and, also ambitious are actually more pertinent. What Fitts criticizes as lack of a priori significance or hierarchy is what Schwartz must deal with, and actually is what he deals with best.

The best aspects of Genesis stem from what Fitts condemns, but what another critic, R.H. Deutsch, praises as Schwartz's

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<sup>42</sup>Unpublished letter from Dudley Fitts, dated 2 September 1943.



technique of equating the trivial with the important and underlining the dull or sententious. Deutsch terms the technique the "indirection of tragic clowning" and lauds Schwartz's "original irony."<sup>43</sup> This technique, the mind's "compelled free mix,"<sup>44</sup> so frequently used by Schwartz is reflected in various thematic, structural, and rhetorical levels. The equation earlier produced the "fun, foam and freedom" of "Far Rockaway" (In Dreams Begin Responsibilities); it later results in Coleridge being considered as an "expert in German philosophy, indecision, and laudanum" (Vaudeville for a Princess). In Genesis this 'zeugmatic' thinking and rhetorical patterning enables the poet to affirm "The gold, the vivid, and the actual." This affirmation of life, its understanding and expression, although analogous to the True, Good and Beautiful, avoids metaphysical pathos, the desire for the eternal; rather it accepts transience:

The gold, the vivid, and the actual  
Will melt like flakes upon the open hand.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>"Poetry and Belief in Delmore Schwartz," Sewanee Review, LXXIV (Autumn 1966), 921.

<sup>44</sup>Genesis, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup>Genesis, p. 98.

Schwartz here evokes the snow-vision that opens the book and remains as a presence in Genesis. That recurrent, transcendent snow-vision and the presence of death, imminent, hovering over life, compel the momentary crystallization of "actuality, the ragged richness"<sup>46</sup> which otherwise

. . . lacks beginning, lacks an end, and has no plot  
But Life itself, weird, wasteful, wild, without limit--<sup>47</sup>

In a six-page unpublished letter (reproduced in full in an appendix)<sup>48</sup> W.H. Auden advised Schwartz not to publish Genesis. Auden feels that Schwartz has advanced along the "road of consciousness" to a point "where the question of religious faith is inescapable," and advises a Kierkegaardian leap into faith. Auden sees the poet as caught between two insights: qua Jew and qua neurotic he desires suffering; qua American he desires happiness. The suggestion is that Schwartz should have resolved the paradox.

Auden's reaction to Genesis is representative of his general position in 1943. As Randall Jarrell describes Auden at this time: "He becomes fond of writing criticisms and reviews which, under a vague show of criticizing a work,"

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<sup>46</sup>Genesis, p. 98.

<sup>47</sup>Genesis, p. 183.

<sup>48</sup>Appendix C.

actually attempt "to beat people into submission. . .to force home to us the realization that there is none good but God, that no works can either save us or make us worth saving."<sup>49</sup>

But Schwartz is not interested in "salvation": he has no real sense of sin, only guilt; no God, only substitute gods. His is the opposite of a God-like survey--a plunge into the perceptible, into time and history, moving toward their articulation. Schwartz and Auden did share common concerns: Freud, Marx, World War II, guilt, anxiety. But from 1940 on, their concerns diverge. Auden, with his British, Protestant, moralistic background, became increasingly involved with theology, monism, Authority. Schwartz, who was American, Jewish, liberal, remained philosophic, pluralistic, humanistic.

Within the context of Genesis Auden's exhortation is equivalent to one of the many commentaries of the ghosts. Actually, Schwartz incorporates a similar exhortation in the last words of the book. It is an ironic ending, for the unknown ghost reassures Hershey that he will "triumph" by finding in death what life cannot offer:

"Poor New York boy, with what finality  
You will in time say,--and triumphantly!--  
O what a metaphysical victory  
The first morning and night of death must be!"<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>"Freud to Paul: The Stages of Auden's Ideology," Partisan Review (Fall 1945). Reprinted in Jarrell, The Third Book of Criticism (New York, 1969), p. 160.

<sup>50</sup>Genesis, p. 208.

Genesis: Book II (Unfinished)

But those are not the last words on Genesis. In his note "To the Reader" Schwartz said, "This is the first book of a work which is almost finished."<sup>51</sup> Genesis II, which takes Hershey Green through early adolescence, was, indeed, almost finished: over 150 typescript pages were written and revised, and most of these pages remain among his papers.<sup>52</sup> Dates pencilled in the margins indicate that this work was written and revised during 1941-1942.

It is not surprising that Schwartz neither finished nor published Genesis: II, for Genesis: I did not fully realize the poet's intent. In spite of the book's scope and philosophic interest, it does not sustain itself poetically. Schwartz's ambitious poetic intent was ". . . to declare the miraculous character of daily life and ordinary speech," and ". . . to regain for Poetry the width of reference of prose without losing what the Symbolists discovered."<sup>53</sup> In this respect, Schwartz did not succeed. There are many striking lines

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<sup>51</sup>Genesis, p. vii.

<sup>52</sup>The existing pages are numbered as follows: 238, 241-359, 395-397. These numbers represent a continuation of pagination from Genesis: I.

<sup>53</sup>Genesis, p. ix.

(paralleling what R.P.Blackmur called "struck-off insights"), but these isolated lines do not, in Blackmur's terms, "take root." All too often the tone of the prose is, as R.H. Deutsch aptly put it, that of a "biblical journalese"; and in the poetic choruses, ". . . the stanzas are frequently supported by four-square, Teutonic, weight-lifting lines."<sup>54</sup>

Genesis: II continues in this same style: weighty, yet frequently relieved by flashes of wit and passages of poetic intensity. Schwartz, while maintaining the same style and format, continues the story of Hershey Green; nevertheless, the continuation reveals an interesting shift of focus. During Hershey's adolescent years the deities, powers, and causes seem less Freudian, less world-wide and more particularized; we see a shaping of those elements into a growing individual consciousness, recognizable in its richness and nuance as that of the young Delmore Schwartz.

The context in which this process operates, and which remains unquestioned by the narrator, is middle-classdom:

"Here we go in the lower middle class,  
Over and over and over and over again:  
What mastery it holds on many hearts,  
To make a living is the rushing sound  
Sighed by the blood in souls who have been fed  
From birth in middle-classdom's dining room--"

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<sup>54</sup>"Poetry and Belief in Delmore Schwartz," p. 920.

Fed on middle-classdom, Schwartz nevertheless becomes poet/  
intellectual; by using the raw-materials provided by that  
context, Schwartz becomes spokesman for those similarly  
alienated from the middle-class.

An episode characteristic of the poet's evolving intellect and accompanying self-directed humor is Hershey's encounter with Spengler. Impressed by Spengler's theories, the boy decides to prove by an act of will that Spengler was wrong; because Spengler declared that the man of an autumn culture was weak and effete, Hershey decides to refute the doctrine by walking home from high school. Confidently, he spends his nickel carfare at lunchtime. For the first ten blocks he is exultant and joyous; he slowly becomes tired, bored, disgusted--hateful of himself, his faltering purpose and ambition.

In such a case Hershey sees and expresses his own shortcomings, but when the ghosts mock his failings, Hershey himself, grown articulate, retorts:

"This is a circus," Hershey said, "to you,  
Spectacular, enthralling and amusing,  
But what it is for me is fear and shame,  
Humiliating memory,  
                                and nameless fears  
You might consider that,  
                                spare me, perhaps,  
Your laughter: this is no joke,  
                                this is my life!"

But if Hershey's life is not a joke, he has developed a capacity to joke about it; Genesis: II, therefore, contains more of the growing assertive wit which Schwartz was forced to subdue in the general deterministic pathos of Genesis: I. Hershey is, in his adolescence, recognizable as the embryonic poet Delmore Schwartz; in his wit, his vulnerability, and in his anguished striving for love, he constantly returns to the roles of "courtier and clown."

We are also provided with instances of his growing sensitivity to language and his increasing facility with metaphor. In Genesis: I Hershey self-consciously recorded and celebrated his first childish metaphor:

"Trolley, trolley!" his first metaphor, the swift perception of a resemblance between different things. For he meant to say  
 The pretty<sup>55</sup> lady who kisses me delights me like  
 the trolley.

In Genesis: II the metaphors are more readily and less self-consciously assimilated into the boy's consciousness as they are in the poem itself:

The fog was an idiom which on the streets  
 And houses set such words as snow,  
 Sleep, silence, forgetfulness, old time--

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<sup>55</sup> Genesis, p. 88.

The lives behind the door seemed dignified,  
 Noble, and by the pure feather, candlelight,  
 Illumined, under portraits of the dead  
 --It was not true. I knew it was not true,  
 Yet for such images I would have paid  
 Whatever cost Escape each time required  
 Before I went back to my strong desires  
 In the racketed traffic of the modern street  
 Under the office buildings, numb as lions  
 Of the natural world, yet moved by rugged men  
 Who at each height were but the more insane!"

At about this stage of the somniloquy one becomes aware that Schwartz, like Proust, is attempting to reclaim his life in language. Unlike Proust, however, Schwartz's goal is not to transfer that life into immediate moments of sensation and emotion, but to understand each event, each motive, each emotion, to feed them through all theoretical categories of understanding, and to uncover their connections. The totality that Schwartz seeks is an endless process; life, however, is not. In Genesis: I the presence of death seemed wholly other; in Genesis: II the emerging self must recognize the presence of death within the self. Through this second volume Hershey Green works through a chain of motivation: his intellectuality and creativity were first seen as motivated by his need for recognition; the devouring ego was seen as a fear of anonymity; eventually he is led to an awareness of the underlying fear, that of the ego's extinction--the fear of death.



As far as we know, Schwartz never finished Genesis: II.

A passage late in the existing typescript, however, reveals the density of that which has been thus far subsumed:

"Now I remember all those sentiments,  
Now when the depths of fear have risen up,  
And when the dead speak to me in the dark,"  
Thus Hershey Green, his voice much more assured,  
"It must have been the night's vagueness, in part,  
For in the daylight I did not believe  
I was afraid of darkness, as in winter  
I felt how strange it was, yearning for summer,  
That I had been unhappy in the summer,  
Surrounded by the pleasures of camp life. . ."

"In winter, yearns for summer; in summer pictures  
Winter as beautiful! Do we not know  
This dialectic of the human heart?  
It stops with death, the pure profound  
And absolute. . . As for the death of boys  
And girls at an unusual rate, I think  
The papers played it up! I read of it  
(Still in the life which breathes and hoped), I thought,  
As I remember now, that sex was first  
Among the reasons, among the causes of it,  
Fear of desire and shame of self-abuse,  
The black irrationality when sex  
Is seen as an endless wrong and never downed!"

"But other causes, other divinities  
Played their parts then, no doubt: which ones, who knows?"

"All the divinities of modern life  
Were causes then in an unusual mixture--"

"But when some seek for death, they wish to live  
Pitied or free of shame, or making their friends  
Sorry for them, sorry for feelings hurt. . . .  
The ego never leaves ~~its~~ audience!"



Vaudeville for a Princess

Vaudeville for a Princess is the most insistently theatrical of Schwartz's books. Other works, such as the short story "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," the long poem "Coriolanus and His Mother," and the book-length Genesis, made use of a real or oneiric theater; other works called plays, such as "Dr. Bergen's Belief" and "Shenandoah," seem entirely lacking in scene and drama. Vaudeville for a Princess, as its title indicates, suggests more of a variety show, encompassing music hall gaiety, wit, slapstick, nostalgia, song and dance. The book's format, three parts with black pages intervening (representing the drawing of the theater curtain) divides the work effectively into three "acts." Each "act" provides a general stance for the poet: in I, "Vaudeville for a Princess," which alternates bitter-sweet lyrics and prose satires, he plays the role of clown; in II, "The True, The Good and The Beautiful," in mock forensic poems, he plays demagogue; in III, "The Early Morning Light," consisting of sonnets and near-sonnets, he plays lover. With this format Schwartz gains full outlet for his resourcefulness and fertility of invention--capabilities which were untapped in

Genesis. Here, without mediating ghosts or voices of the dead, Delmore himself plays all the roles.

With Schwartz as the only performer, we are more immediately aware of the clashing and contradictory nature of his various roles and voices. When the poet appears on stage as lover and courtier, he voices a romantic need for love and illusion; as comedian and ironist he debunks illusion. Some lyrics discount this world, leaving grace as the only value; some literary satires are parodies of grace. Schwartz seems both victim and perpetrator of practical jokes. He plays the role of a man capable of heroic efforts and diminutive accomplishments, and, in other voices, becomes the connoisseur of his own limitations. These clashes and contradictions make Vaudeville a difficult work to react to. One did not know, at mid-century, whether to be edified or entertained.

In any case, the reception to Vaudeville differed greatly from that of his two earlier major poetic efforts. As we have seen, the response to In Dreams was almost unprecedented in enthusiasm and unanimous acclaim. Genesis, in contrast, was somewhat neglected; among the scattered reviews, opinions were mixed, guarded, diffuse. The reactions to Vaudeville

were, in almost every case, extreme and dissident. In recognition of the widely differing opinions, Poetry magazine published "Two Views of Vaudeville for a Princess": Hugh Kenner's "Bearded Ladies and the Abundant Goat" and William Van O'Connor's "The Albatross Was Intended to Fly." Kenner dismisses the entire book: "The unbelievable badness of these poems is irrelevant to any criteria of technique."<sup>56</sup> In the alternate view O'Connor refers to individual pieces as "shrewd and amusing. . . clever and witty."<sup>57</sup>

Other critics displayed even more disparate judgments. Hayden Carruth observed that the book ". . . contained so much poor work that Delmore himself was unable to include only three poems from it in his selected edition of 1959."<sup>58</sup> With a widely differing emphasis, R.H. Deutsch proclaimed that Vaudeville ". . . contains several poems which are among the finest Schwartz has written."<sup>59</sup> Dudley Fitts described Vaudeville as "an enchantingly mad book."<sup>60</sup> Heinz Politzer

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<sup>56</sup>"Bearded Ladies and the Abundant Goat," Poetry LXXIX (October 1951), 50.

<sup>57</sup>"The Albatross Was Intended to Fly," Poetry LXXIX (October 1951), 55.

<sup>58</sup>"Delmore: 1913-1966," Texas Quarterly (Summer 1967), 46.

<sup>59</sup>"Poetry and Belief in Delmore Schwartz," p. 921.

<sup>60</sup>Dudley Fitts, "Three Brilliants," Saturday Review, July 21, 1951, p. 36.

wrote, "There are more good lines in this latest volume of Schwartz's than in any of its predecessors; this is especially true of the love poems, which are brave and direct, and present knowledge of the living being's soul such as no one but Freud could have taught the poet."<sup>61</sup>

Obviously Vaudeville is, on many levels, a difficult book to cope with and assess. Even in their reactions to particular aspects of the book, critics took diametrically opposed positions, often elevating some features of the work at the expense of others. For example, Vivienne Koch dislikes the lyrics but praises the essays. Of the poems she observes:

To be sure, Mr. Schwartz's masters, Yeats, Eliot and Tate, are not exactly contemptible, but there is a diffuse Audenish casualness in the way he combines them. . . which is disconcerting. But it is the brief essays which carry the weight of this collection. They are written in a wonderfully contrived 'innocent' banality of prose. . . a kind of essay that requires considerable knowledge to be written at all, and it deals with profounder problems of American life than the professional humorists. . . ever attempt.<sup>62</sup>

Stephen Stepanchev reverses that opinion: "Unhappily the essays are not very funny, and, in fact, seem curiously vulgar to be coming from a writer of such known taste, but the verse is witty, lively, and pleasant in its smooth regularity."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Politzer, p. 561.

<sup>62</sup>"The Necessary Angels of Earth," Sewanee Review LIV (Augumn 1951), 673.

<sup>63</sup>"The World as Vaudeville," Accent XI (Winter 1951), 64.

Assessment of the poetic accomplishment seemed not only difficult, but also hesitant and tentative. In 1966 R.H. Deutsch noted that the verse of Vaudeville showed both formal and musical exploration, and had "tightened":<sup>64</sup> four years later, Deutsch, writing on these same poems, refers to Schwartz's tendency toward a "prosier line."<sup>65</sup> Finally, Schwartz's own changing evaluation should be taken into account. When, late in the fifties, his publisher suggested a volume of selected poems, Schwartz went through reprints of the Vaudeville lyrics making minor pencilled revisions; then, with a final gesture of rejection, he crossed out total poems. Ultimately he selected only three lyrics from Vaudeville, while including all of the poems from In Dreams Begin Responsibilities.

All of these differing and changing views are understandable, for even with a twenty year perspective Vaudeville remains a problematic work. The book itself is full of internal conflicts and hesitancies, and is peculiarly involved with its time and with its position in Schwartz's writings. A more detailed study of the work reveals some of its problematic aspects: a structural and rhetorical lack of assurance that stems from the poet's ideological confusion, an uncertain relation to his audience, and a fear of imitation of self and others.

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<sup>64</sup>"Poetry and Belief in Delmore Schwartz," p. 922.

<sup>65</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: Middle Poems," Concerning Poetry II (Fall 1969), 22.

Vaudeville for a Princess was published at exactly mid-century--that is, well into the post World War II milieu, but not yet the "post-modern" era of the last twenty years. Ideas, style, subject matter, vision and tone were all undergoing transition in 1950. During the fifties many poets turned to confessional poetry, to their own private lives, for in light of recent world-wide events, all but simple, personal experience seemed pretentious. At the same time the "Beat" poets--whom Schwartz called "the San Francisco Howlers"--were screaming the disorder back into the noisy chaos. The poetry of Vaudeville for a Princess can be categorized neither as "confessional" nor as "Beat," yet has characteristics of both types. Schwartz is still concerned with his own experience, yet in Vaudeville he confronts the present world more directly than he had in his earlier poetry. R.H. Deutsch remarks that Schwartz ". . . abandons much of the personal pre-occupation" of his earlier work. The same matters affect him, but now he turns outward ". . . for an examination of society in pretty much its own terms. . . ." <sup>66</sup> Actually, although Schwartz does confront society "in pretty much its own terms," he refuses to "howl." Instead, he maintains the essentially modernist position of poet as priest. In 1951, in his famous essay, "The Vocation of the Poet in the Modern World,"

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<sup>66</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: Middle Poems," 19.



he affirms:

. . . the poet as creator, and metaphor-maker, and presiding bringer of unity is a kind of priest. He unites things, meanings, attitudes, feelings, through the power, prowess and benediction of words, and in this way he is a priest who performs a ceremony of marriage each time he composes a poem. Unfortunately, not all marriages are happy.<sup>67</sup>

But Vaudeville, when considered in this priestly sense as bringing unity, fails. Individual images, lines, and occasionally an entire poem still celebrate The True, The Good and The Beautiful, but that is not the main thrust of the book. Schwartz does play the role of priest, but he also plays vaudeville comedian. As the title suggests (and as he refers to himself in Genesis: II) he is both "courtier and clown." Where the book as a whole works, and where individual pieces succeed, is in clashes between these roles--that is, in antic discongruities. The form accommodates elements as disparate as a 1938 Buick, Iago's "motiveless malignity," New York State divorce laws, Shakespearean sonnets, and even a laugh at the grimmest of existential insights.

One of Schwartz's problems is to accommodate these disparate elements without repeating what he has done previously. Throughout his career Schwartz frequently expressed a fear of self-imitation, sometimes as a general dictum to fellow poets, who he feels must ". . . guard against the

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<sup>67</sup>Schwartz, Poetry LXXVII (July 1951), 224.

deadly habit of self-imitation which has paralyzed some of the best poets in English. . ."<sup>68</sup> In the attempt to avoid self-imitation, Schwartz adopts several strategies. One of these is parody--particularly of his own past accomplishments. In the prose pieces he parodies all forms of literary analysis, and thus mocks the whole enterprise of literary criticism. The intent of these pieces seems not so much a disowning as a deflation, one which reveals that such analysis can be easily, playfully accomplished. Although in the final poem, "Why Do You Write an Endless History," Schwartz gently parodies the genetic mode of his earlier poetry, Vaudeville generally avoids that characteristic method of discovering the self by understanding the process by which one arrived at the present. But in giving up that mode, and anamnesis in general, Schwartz finds himself confronting the present with no means of explaining its failures. He is, as in his earlier work, afraid and guilty; he sees about him all forms of failure--particularly failure to achieve the truly human. In this respect, Vaudeville reflects the post-war world and its inability to find new forms, new directions, new meanings.

But to some extent Schwartz not only mirrors but also partakes of that chaos; for, as poet, he has no clear sense of his audience, no new voice or forms. It is ironic that

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<sup>68</sup>Schwartz, "The Cunning and the Craft of the Unconscious and the Pre-Conscious," Poetry, XCIV, (June 1959), 204.

the distinctively alienated voice of the early poems made Schwartz a spokesman for the alienated--and thereby created an audience. In this middle period he is obviously aware of that audience, but uncertain of his rapport with them. Paradoxically, then, that early alienation was productive; in this middle period, no longer alienated in that same sense, he is stifled in his creativity.

What Schwartz lacks in Vaudeville for a Princess is a distinctive, unifying voice; actually that lack is related to alienation, but alienation of a new kind for the poet. His light touch, his agility and tricks of style stem from his consciousness of being a performer--that is, of having an audience. Yet this vaudeville role expresses only one aspect of Schwartz as poet: that of entertainer, but not that of priest, courtier, celebrator of the true, good and beautiful. Schwartz feels the confusion of the times in which he lives, and the difficulty of articulation and communication in that general confusion. The contemporary scene is too vast, too impersonal, too chaotic to be encompassed by a single unique personality; reality seems psychically vitiating. Schwartz remains a disappointed Platonist in an existential world.

In Vaudeville, then, Schwartz manages to avoid some aspects of self-imitation, but at the cost of losing some of his former strengths--with nothing much to replace what was given up. In his ideological discomfort and rhetorical lack

of assurance (which is partly mimetic, partly artistic shortcoming), Schwartz seems ready to discard some received structures and mythologies, but wants others desperately, perhaps in compensation. He evinces a greater need for structuring form and falls back upon what worked for him before: dialectic structure, both for the individual poems and for the three-part arrangement of the book. Nevertheless, without the "sky's pure capital" to draw upon--that is, without the Platonic assurance that rational dialectic leads to truth--the dialectic of the individual poems can be seen as a false dialectic, and, as we shall see on closer examination, the book's three-part structure (more of a Hegelian dialectic) is a "failed" dialectic in that it effects no real synthesis.

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Part I of Vaudeville for a Princess serves as a showcase for Schwartz's special talents. The poet confronts some of the same dismaying insights and lack of solace as his youthful poems in what R.H. Deutsch calls a ". . . recital of one disenchantment after another."<sup>69</sup> In poems interspersed with prose vignettes (much as in "Coriolanus and His Mother"), Schwartz reacts to the absurd and the implications of the absurd with a mixture of cunning and innocence, witty clowning and ingenuous deadpan.

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<sup>69</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: Middle Poems," p. 19.

The prose of the essays is mock-naive, intentionally flat, and, for Schwartz, relatively objective. In the essays dealing with literary analysis and social commentary, various interpretations are offered; each is given equal consideration, a technique which implies that meaning does not exist in interpretation. The intention, however, is not reductive, for it leads not to the tragic-absurd, but to the comic-absurd. Schwartz's humor is rebellious, signifying the strength of the pleasure-principle to assert itself in the face of adverse circumstances. By parodying the grim and serious, Schwartz places them in an ambiguous state; he gives us a way of living with despair--that is, by registering it as a triumph. In "Existentialism: The Inside Story," Schwartz suggests that the central insight of Heidegger's existentialism be reformulated:

Having studied existentialism in an offhand way since 1935, I became more and more convinced that its meaning can be reduced to the following formulation: Existentialism means that no one else can take a bath for you.<sup>70</sup>

Such humor is neither arbitrary nor gratuitous, for Schwartz's reformulation has released us from one kind of meaninglessness and led us into another; in the process, however, he has at least temporarily humanized what was a remote, relentless, nihilistic ontology. These momentary releases throughout Part I of Vaudeville function in opposition to a dull, bleak world which is thus seen as a bad joke in itself.

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<sup>70</sup>Schwartz, Vaudeville for a Princess (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1950), p. 4.

Much as a vaudeville routine often leads into a song, each of Schwartz's prose pieces leads into a song-like lyric. The lyrics are often Elizabethan in form and structure; some are actually re-writings of poems of Shakespeare, Marlowe and Dyer. Many use the Elizabethan technique of elaboration, of stating a metaphor and developing it in such a way that our understanding is developed in the process. Rhythms are light, regular and song-like. All of this Elizabethan lyricism allows Schwartz to play priest--sanctifier of language, celebrator of the beautiful. But at the same time he manages to parody that which he celebrates--to play fool, corruptor of language, mocker of the beautiful. He does so by techniques of inversion and counter-point by which ambiguous references undercut the beauty; or his characteristically heavy, clumsy rhythm slows down and almost trips up a light song-like meter; or he exaggerates, turning a light verse into a jingle. Such parody is never bitter nor totally destructive; Schwartz instead allows us to appreciate lyric beauty at the same time it is being exaggerated or ridiculed. This type of ironic technique produces subtle, easily missed effects.

A poem which relies on such subtle irony is "I Did Not Know the Spoils of Joy," a re-writing of the fool's song which closes "Twelfth Night." Schwartz's version seems to maintain a child-like wonder and naivete; actually, the

resonance of pure Elizabethan lyricism provides an ironic background against which Schwartz counterposes a duality of American self-assertiveness and his own lack of self-confidence. Marius Bewley, writing in 1954 on "Some Aspects of Modern American Poetry" fails to see this complex juxtaposition and its effects. In his article Bewley discusses what he considers the easily identifiable characteristics of a nation's poetry: "For a poet is a man in whose creative talent the energy of a society becomes momentarily focused."<sup>71</sup> Bewley relates the exhaustion of modern British poetry to a more general exhaustion after the war. In contrast, he finds American poetry confident, "pure and emphatic assertion," for the American poet feels ". . . that what he has to say is important." Bewley observes that these identifying signs are sometimes disguised, but

. . . if one listens carefully enough the voice of the American is heard at last expressing his satisfaction in his own being. To take a fairly obvious example of this disguised security, Mr. Delmore Schwartz ends a recent poem in which he carefully delineates the successive disillusionments of life in these three verses:<sup>72</sup>

Bewley then quotes the last three stanzas of "I Did Not Know the Spoils of Joy":

Illusion and madness dim the years  
 Mere parodies of hope, at best,  
 And yet through all these mounting fears  
 How glad I am that I exist!

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<sup>71</sup>The Complex Fate, 1954. Reprinted in Modern Poetry: Essays in Criticism (New York 1968), p. 249.

<sup>72</sup>Bewley, p. 253.

How strange the truth appears at last!  
 I feel as old as outworn shoes,  
 I know what I have lost or missed  
 Or certainly will some day lose

And yet this knowledge, like the Jews,  
 Can make me glad that I exist!  
 with a hey ho, the stupid past,  
 and a ho ho, and a ha ha at last.<sup>73</sup>

Bewley has failed to note either the Shakespearean backdrop or Schwartz's mockery of his own romantic narcissism. In these verses Schwartz expresses the limits of his own ego, his own ideas, his own lack of self-confidence in the context of American self-confidence. This self-mockery as poet-clown is a technique Schwartz often uses for satirizing American stridency.

Yet another facet of the poem, one which Bewley misses, but which is common in Schwartz, identified by Auden in his analysis of Genesis, is that Schwartz writes not only "qua American," but also "qua Jew." Judaism, jarringly injected into the last stanza, and the rhyming "Jews" with "lose" and "outworn shoes," hardly suggests self-confidence. The elliptical and ambiguous syntax by which the Judaism theme enters ("And yet this knowledge, like the Jews,"), forces the reader to cope with this incongruity with less than accustomed assurance. Multiple readings are necessitated. In each reading, "knowledge" refers to that which has been enumerated in preceding lines. The phrase "like the Jews" is syntactically problematic, but poetically significant. Whatever

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<sup>73</sup>Vaudeville, p. 14.



variant referent one choses for the phrase, Jewishness, survival, knowledge and existence are shown to be in problematic relation. If there is any relation at all in Jewishness and self-confidence, it would be a new one for Schwartz and uncharacteristic of his earlier work; it would be an extremely topical reference in 1950, however, for the state of Israel had just been founded in 1948.

There is evidence that Schwartz intended this topical reference to the newly won Jewish image of aggressive hero, for in the first poem of Vaudeville, "On a Sentence by Pascal," Schwartz rhymes "Zion" with "lion." This poem is worth quoting in its entirety, for it states motifs that run through this whole section of the book.

"True eloquence mocks eloquence."  
 Did that Frenchman mean  
 That heroes are hilarious  
 And orators obscene?

Eloquence laughs at rhetoric,  
 Is ill at ease in Zion,  
 Or baa-baas like the lucid lamb,  
 And snickers at the lion,

And smiles, being meticulous,  
 Because truth is ridiculous.<sup>74</sup>

Here Schwartz combines abrasive elements--not only such obvious ones as lion and lamb, but also eloquence and mockery, heroism and hilarity. Such a strategy leads to the unexpected but fitting reversal in the last two lines: the smile with the meticulous, the truth with the ridiculous.

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<sup>74</sup>Vaudeville, p. 4.

This first poem takes as its theme the words of one of Schwartz's masters, Pascal. In another poem, "The Masters of the Heart Touched the Unknown," Schwartz includes a host of his secular saints and literary forebears: Keats, Emerson, Hawthorne, Mozart, Wilde, Hugo, Baudelaire, Poe, Bronte, Dickinson, James, Wordsworth, and Dostoevsky. Vivienne Koch feels that this poem is ". . . indebted in conception and structure to the Welsh poet Vernon Watkins' 'Discoveries'."<sup>75</sup> There do seem to be connections between Watkins' poem and Schwartz's work, but not exactly as stated by Vivienne Koch. Actually, the book in which Watkins' poem appears was published by New Directions in 1948, a time when Schwartz was serving as literary consultant for the publisher; therefore he probably knew the poem. In heroic couplets Watkins' poem celebrates the discoveries and accomplishments of Columbus, Ptolemy, Copernicus, Donne, Voltaire, Swift, Burns, Heraclitus, Beethoven, Milton, Rilke, Yeats, Keats, and Kierkegaard. In the last couplet Watkins reconciles the accomplishments and the suffering of these men by the Christian paradox of reward and loss:

The Christian Paradox, bringing its great reward  
By loss: the moment known to Kierkegaard.<sup>76</sup>

Schwartz, always concerned with his intellectual and artistic forebears, refers to some of these same men in "The Masters

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<sup>75</sup>Koch, pp. 673-674.

<sup>76</sup>Watkins, Selected Poems (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1948), p. 35.

of the Heart Touched the Unknown." In contrast to Watkins, Schwartz seems more concerned with personal consolation than with ideological reconciliation. Schwartz begins with his own isolation and suffering:

For thirty years what madness I have known;  
Of solitude the blankness and longeurs,  
The nervous doubt which thought and art assure,  
Causeless despair, or causeless joy alone.<sup>77</sup>

But then he thinks of "the masters of the heart,/ And of the mind and of life's long disease," and, throughout the poem, rehearses "their passion's history." In the last two stanzas he summarizes their suffering, puts himself in their company, and then goes beyond them. He accomplishes that ironic feat by ending the poem with the single image of all these masters as Saint John the Baptist--that is, as Precursor:

These masters used their lives like Christmas trees,  
They skinned themselves alive to find the truth,  
They gazed upon their vileness like excrement.  
They ate their hearts to sate the need for love.  
They fingered every coiled snake of the mind,  
Searching for choice and chance and wish and memory.

They stood upon their heads. They thrust their hands  
In furnaces to find what they could bear.  
They climbed down pits and wells, and praised  
The wilderness, the future, and the truth.  
And in the end their separated heads  
Glared from a plate and criticized this life!<sup>78</sup>

Another poem, "True Recognition Often Is Refused," thought by Stephen Stepanchev to be the best of Part I,<sup>79</sup> also deals with the suffering of poets. In this poem Schwartz

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<sup>77</sup>Vaudeville, p. 34.

<sup>78</sup>Vaudeville, pp. 35-36

<sup>79</sup>Stepanchev, p. 64.

immediately places himself in the company of all poets:

We poets by the past and future used  
Stare east and west distractedly at times,  
Knowing there are, in fullness and in flower,  
Chrysanthemums and Mozart in the room,  
A stillness and a motion, both in bloom.

The company offers little consolation, but an awareness of  
"dull dim suffering":

For we must earn through dull dim suffering,  
Through ignorance and darkened hope, and hope  
Risen again, and clouded over again, and dead despair,  
And many little deaths, hardly observed,  
The early morning light we have deserved.<sup>80</sup>

That is, the most that can be earned through the suffering is  
the next day's early morning light--not a real beginning, but  
only the possibility of beginning again and again.

In the final poem of the section, "Starlight Like Intuition Pierced the Twelve," Schwartz explores the possibility of being present at a real beginning. The poem is an unusual one for this poet--perhaps unique in its point of view, theme, tone and structure--and understandably so, for it deals with what Schwartz considers a unique experience. In this poem, according to John Hollander the author's favorite lyric,<sup>81</sup> Schwartz presents the reaction of Christ's disciples after the resurrection--those inadequate though forgivable responses men make

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<sup>80</sup> Vaudeville, p. 20.

<sup>81</sup> "Poetry Chronicle," Partisan Review XXVII (Spring 1960), 363.

when confronted with mystery. The central Christian myth provides a paradigm for articulating such an experience. The impetus for using that paradigm may have originated much earlier, as early as 1940, when Schwartz was examining the relationship of "Poetry and Belief in Thomas Hardy."<sup>82</sup> In discussing Hardy's poem "The Oxen," Schwartz states that the belief in that poem is a disbelief in the truth of Christianity; but the emotion which ". . . motivates the whole poem depends on a very full sense of what the belief in Christianity amounted to: and this sense also functions to provide the poet with the details of the Christmas story which serves as an example of Christianity."<sup>83</sup> Schwartz places himself in a position analogous to that which he sees as Hardy's, using the resurrection rather than the birth of Christ as the focal event which compels men's reactions.

Unlike the early morning light of other poems which only enables one to begin again and again, here the starlight sheds an unprecedented and therefore unbearable clarity, for there is nothing in experience to prepare one for such undeniable certainty. The inappropriateness of any possible reaction to

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<sup>82</sup>See also Auden's letter, Appendix C: "It must have been precisely their experience which was the disciples' greatest difficulty."

<sup>83</sup>Southern Review VI (Summer 1940), 71.

this experience is reflected by various "inappropriate" linguistic and poetic strategies. There is an unusual reversal of direction in the poet's use of the word "intuition"; the starlight contemplates, or sees into the men rather than the more usual, reversed human seeing. The meter, too, is unusual. Schwartz uses a loose, varied, five-stress line throughout the poem, but in the opening line (or in its amended form as title) all possible scansiones are unsettling. It is as though Schwartz foresees, "No matter what we do, he looks at it!" After this first line unusual semantic combinations reflect the inability to cope with the ineffable mystery. The night sky is "brittle" and "like a tune/ Tinkled and tapped out on the xylophone." Proportion is disrupted: "the moon/ Arose too big," and its beauty is "useless." And as a "part of the mood which ruled," we even accept, without finding it humorous, that a disciple "carefully spat."

The poem is also uncharacteristic in its point of view. Christ himself is not present at the scene and, in what is an analogous but unusual departure for Schwartz, the poet does not occupy center stage. The focus is on audience reaction rather than on the principal actor. The nature of the reaction to what is really new is disorientation; yet, strangely, all reactions are essentially the same:

"No matter what I do he looks at it!"

"No matter what I choose, he stares at it!"

"No matter what I do, what good is it?"

"No matter what the feat he first accomplished it!"<sup>84</sup>

That sameness of reaction, a result of the overwhelming nature of the occasion, gives Schwartz a taut stanzaic form for "Starlight Like Intuition Pierced the Twelve." Schwartz here has just that type of "limit" that R.H. Deutsch believes would "contain" his work. In this poem, however, limit is engendered by the myth of Christ as a one-time event--thus by its very nature, determining the form and content of the poem at one stroke. Day to day living, Schwartz's usual concern, is neither as ordered, schematic, nor, obviously, as extraordinary. There simply is no symbol large enough for commitment to limit in the normal life situation where, as Schwartz writes in "To Figaro in the Barbershop":

All men are strangers dark and lost  
All are deceived as girls and boys.<sup>85</sup>

And, in this same poem, "There is a gulf which I detest," writes Schwartz, but which nevertheless provides him with his subject and commitment. And then he ". . . smiles, being

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<sup>84</sup>Vaudeville, pp. 47-49.

<sup>85</sup>Vaudeville, p. 41.

meticulous,/ Because truth is ridiculous."

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Part II of Vaudeville for a Princess, ironically titled "The True, The Good, and The Beautiful," consists of eight poems of occasionally rhymed iambic pentameter. Here Schwartz plays the role of public man, writing mock forensic in poems addressed to "Dear Citizens." In this oratorical mode the poet seems totally embedded in the present with no trace of his Janus-faced look backward to the problematic past nor forward to a possibly ideal future. Schwartz temporarily limits himself to the present social order, its institutions and its idiom. Consequently, he often succumbs to the hazards of that mode; that is, in using the common idiom he often himself lapses into flatness and cliché, or in protesting the hypocrisy and inhumanity of the world, he sometimes becomes shrill.

In the role of entertainer, Schwartz wrote poems which were self-justifying in that they could sustain themselves (by their own dynamics and by techniques Schwartz had mastered) without reference to outside "truth." In the role of Platonic metaphysician (only used ironically in this section) he had eternal verities with which to gauge the present. In



this section, Schwartz, in the role of public man, acknowledges his bondage to the social order and his dependency on its linguistic exchange and the social dimension of truth: the correspondence of fact, statement and understanding. Schwartz cannot make use of the channels of indirection--of irony, mockery and literary allusion--that are usually available to him. In his relation to the social order with its discord, error, deceit and instability, he has almost no role but that of participant. Thus Schwartz must assume that his readers will respond to his tone, idiom, references and attitudes as fellow "Citizens."

Schwartz is here involved in what is a new problem: exactly how he relates to his reading audience. In his early poems, dreams beget responsibilities as they beget a reading audience. The result was a shift of emphasis, from self to audience, from dreams to responsibilities. Heinz Politzer noted this shift; in Vaudeville:

Schwartz seems to have developed a new sense of responsibility, an ironical and at the same time profound conception of the common weal. . . . In spite of all of Schwartz's intellectual bravado, a new sense of community emerges in these lines, of an integration that the poet may not like and therefore ridicules, but which he accepts nevertheless.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Politzer, p. 561.

This "integration that the poet may not like and therefore ridicules" leaves him with no special status as poet nor even any special status for the art of poetry itself. In his early poetry Schwartz felt, as artist, an alienation from citizenship which readily found expression in his poetry. Now that the poetry has been accepted and read, Schwartz becomes an uneasy citizen in the post-war world and an uneasy poet in both past and present voices.

In the first poem of the section, "He Heard the News-Boys Shouting 'Europe! Europe!'" Schwartz deals explicitly with these problems: with his role:

And knew I must again confront myself:  
 "What shall I cry from my window?" I asked myself,  
 "What shall I say to the citizens below?  
 Since I have been a privileged character  
 These four years past. Since I have been excused  
 From the war for the lesser evil, merciless  
 As the years to girls who once were beautiful.  
 What have I done which is a little good?  
 What apples have I grasped, for all my years?  
 What starlight have I glimpsed for all my guilt?"

and with the role of poetry in that world:

Myself I dedicated long ago  
 --Or prostituted, shall I say?--to poetry,<sup>87</sup>

Schwartz again refers to his war-role in the next poem, "The Silence Answered Him Accusingly":

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<sup>87</sup>Vaudeville, p. 53.

"I teach the boys and the girls in my ageing youth,  
I try to tell them the little I know of truth,  
Saying, In the beginning is the word."<sup>88</sup>

Actually, as "privileged character," Schwartz was teaching "the word" during those war years. In a letter to Auden he recounts his experience teaching in the Navy V-12 program:

In the letter Schwartz jokes about defending the language; in the poem, however, he is unsure of the word, of its power, of its truth, of his ability to express it, and of his audience's ability to receive it:

<sup>88</sup>Vaudeville, p. 54.

<sup>89</sup>Unpublished letter to W.H.Auden, datelined Cambridge, Massachusetts, November 16, 1943.



of first one side then the other so that the whole is finally illuminated.<sup>92</sup>

But there is no real "arguing out of the problem," no arrival at truth through the method of true argument. There is only mock dialectic in that the results are known in advance, there is no truth to arrive at, no real opposing position, and at the end of the poems, nothing new has been discovered. The final lines of some poems might serve as the starting point for Schwartz in his earlier period:

'Arise and lift your eyes and raise your hearts  
In celebration and in praise because  
Plato's starlight glitters amid the shocking wars.'<sup>93</sup>

Schwartz seems to have decided in advance that within this context no rhetorical stance will succeed. He even mocks the poetic techniques that achieve their effects in such circumstances by means of a detached, Audenesque bitterness. These mocked techniques include the yoking of "Crusades, charades, parades and masquerades"; the ironic rhyming of "democracy" and "hypocrisy"; poetic imitation of the ridiculous by meter and rhyme ("'Elizabeth would like to be a horse!'/ Though she'll be queen of England in due course"); exaggeration of cliché, forcing an ambiguous, yet doubled-cliché ("What does he think this is, Utopia?/ He should have stood in bed and read a poem.")<sup>94</sup>

Even the rehearsal for oratory breaks down in "Lunas

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<sup>92</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: Middle Poems," p. 20.

<sup>93</sup>Vaudeville, p. 54

<sup>94</sup>Vaudeville, pp. 56, 58.

Are Tempting To Old Consciousness," an obvious precursor of Lawrence Ferlinghetti's "Coney Island of the Mind." Schwartz begins his poem with what seems, for the first time, a direct address:

Dear Citizens,  
You are a summer people, all year long.

The poet delineates the vulgar joys of the playground: when the roller coaster dives, "How much some love the gross and plunging shock"; "A girl's skirt is blown up!"; "Apples and cones are sticky, licky, lush"; in the shooting gallery "hearts not satisfied and still denied/ Can win a mama doll with a good shot." What is discovered, however, is not simply the vulgarity of the mob; poet and audience are equally uncovered and condemned for their satisfaction in the carnival world:

This is the Luna of the heart's desire,  
This is the play and park we all admire.<sup>95</sup>

In the poem which immediately follows these lines, Schwartz gives up even the pretense of address, omitting the usual opening, "Dear Citizens." In titling this poem "Disorder Overtakes Us All Day Long," he seems to excuse himself from the very need to articulate or communicate anything in a world where:

These politicians have an easy time,  
They can say anything, they have no shame,  
Kiss babies and blow promises to all  
And chant that everything is wonderful.

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<sup>95</sup>Vaudeville, pp. 58-59.

Schwartz here detaches himself from current forms of language and politics. Nevertheless, he is still very aware of his formal engagement, not only with kinds of language, but also with the kinds of disorder, shallowness and absurdity that surround him:

Awed or indifferent, bemused or ill at ease,  
We who are poets play the game which is  
A deadly earnest searching of all hearts  
As if we struggled with a puzzle's parts,

Making the huge assumption that there is  
A lucid picture which these fragments fit.<sup>96</sup>

These poems are, in a sense, planned in advance to fail--as though Schwartz had to prove to himself that he could not deal with the world in "pretty much its own terms," at least not that world in which "The true, the good,/ And the beautiful have been struck down/ Because of what they are."<sup>97</sup> Thus in this section he expresses both his dissatisfaction with that world, and his own means of expressing that dissatisfaction. The best he can do in this mode is not to celebrate the beautiful, but at least present "A picture true, good, and appropriate."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>Vaudeville, p. 60.

<sup>97</sup>Vaudeville, p. 62.

<sup>98</sup>Vaudeville, p. 60.

Although Schwartz cannot truly celebrate The True, Good and Beautiful, he can at least praise each day's new life; thus he devotes Part III, a group of sonnets, to "The Early Morning Light." With this final section, the general form of the book and the relation of its parts reveals itself. Part I's mixture of playful clowning, music-hall gaiety, slapstick and nostalgia is the poet's reaction to the absurd, to the antic-incongruities of life. Part II attempts a more serious engagement with the post-war world and the poet's position in that world. Schwartz's negotiations and struggles, his effort to accommodate present sounds and forms, and the consequent failure of those given sounds and forms, reflect, to some extent, the post-war inability to maintain energy or voice, to find new modes of maintaining individuality in a deadening mass culture.

Schwartz feels the changes from the thirties to the fifties, but has not found poetic modes to fully accommodate them. There are new cries of cultural impoverishment added to the older ones, but Schwartz is unable to articulate his own place in that world with the combined humor and pointed anguish of his early poems. There seem no shapings of the self out of these raw materials, no new assertion of the self so much as absorption of the self into that world. As R.H. Deutsch observes:

He is at the point where he has worn out his world;  
he is on the verge of impassivity, apathy, paralysis.



In brief he has taught himself to go with the red light and stop with the green, and he has seen, for some time, that both are burning brightly. . . . (He must) get himself out of the dilemma of intrinsic separation--stylistically, philosophically, and emotionally.<sup>99</sup>

Part III of Vaudeville can be considered either as an esthetic transcendence of that dilemma, or as a retreat from it by a dependence on traditional forms, past accomplishments, and on the timeless: love and art. The sonnet form provides Schwartz with at least a literary structure in which he is comfortable. Within this form he need use only those discordant elements that the structure itself can accommodate. In another sense, however, the work of this section represents a defiance--for writing poetry at all under these existing pressures seems hardly possible. Starting with an inherited structure, Schwartz is not so much retreating from his culture as making use of that part of the culture's accretions that he has assimilated; if he cannot control his world, he can at least command and contribute to part of that world's cultural achievements.

For themes and techniques used elsewhere, Schwartz has been called "a merciless realist and an often malicious satirist."<sup>100</sup> For his use of sonnets, however, he is termed a "romantic":

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<sup>99</sup>"Delmore Schwartz: Middle Poems," p. 28.

<sup>100</sup>Politzer, p. 562.

Here was a proper romantic. Delmore acknowledged his model--Shakespeare--and it seemed almost unheard of. He wrote sonnets--how novel!--and he gave them high-powered first lines in the proper sonnet-eering tradition. It was part of his almost foolish poetic courage. Yet it worked; the sonnets were good, and they still are--some of them probably among the best of their kind in English.<sup>101</sup>

Eliot, too, finds it "novel" for modern poets to write sonnets; he agrees with Pound, who Eliot claims once said that ". . . when one has the proper material for a sonnet, one should use the sonnet form; but that it happens very rarely to any poet to find himself in possession of just the block of stuff which can perfectly be modelled into the sonnet."<sup>102</sup>

Delmore Schwartz must have often felt that he had "the proper material for a sonnet," for he wrote sonnets and sonnet sequences throughout his entire career. Nevertheless, there is a question of whether he actually did have that proper material for the sonnets and near-sonnets of "The Early Morning Light." Certainly the pre-conditions existed for a sonnet sequence. Schwartz dedicated Vaudeville for a Princess to Elizabeth Pollett, whom he had just married; thus the sonnets, in good tradition, are addressed to a woman and many actually celebrate a love relation. In addition, Schwartz had mastered the sonnet form as far back as his

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<sup>101</sup>Hayden Carruth, "Delmore, 1913-1966." Texas Quarterly (Summer 1967), 45.

<sup>102</sup>"Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry," 1917. Reprinted in Modern Poetry: Essays in Criticism, p. 40.

apprenticeship years, and had written highly praised individual sonnets in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities. Also, Schwartz had rich poetic models for images, form and voice. These models were, as Schwartz so often proclaimed, Shakespeare and Eliot.

Schwartz's sonnets, like Shakespeare's, usually develop in terms of a dialectical complexity of thoughts concerning problems of the external world and the speaker's self-awareness. Many of Shakespeare's sonnets offer resolutions, but others leave unanswerable questions or confessions of desperation and perplexity. Schwartz's sonnets more often resemble those of Shakespeare which Barbara Herrnstein Smith describes as:

. . . the hesitant gropings and shiftings of a mind almost overwhelmed by those elusive questions of public and private morality; and any resolution, as such, would be weak or anticlimactic, a betrayal or evasion of the speaker's own profound and compelling perceptions.<sup>103</sup>

T.S. Eliot's influence is felt in the sensibilities of the speaker whose inadequacies and yearnings recall the gestures of Prufrock--at least a non-aristocratic, middle-class Prufrock. This speaker has sensitivity, but no over-refinement; he reacts against mid-century banalities, yet shows no

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<sup>103</sup> Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End, (Chicago 1968), p. 144.

need for the grandiose. His reactions to exacerbation range from embarrassment, guilt, clownishness or doubt to a non-Eliotic affirmation (of joy, hope or love) in an attempt to counter-act all negations.

The pre-conditions for a sonnet sequence, then, seem right. And his themes should be amenable to the form, for they are familiar ones, stemming from Schwartz's usual concerns: the discrepancy between what he would like to believe and what he fears is true; the backward push toward guilt and the forward pull toward hope. And some of these sonnets do work, although the claim that some are "among the best of their kind in English" is perhaps an over-estimate of their worth. Many of them are flat, prosy statements in which the poet seems strangely uninvolved. Nothing he does or says appears to affect or even touch the world he lives in; he wishes the world better, yet lacks resistance to the chaos. And this, perhaps, explains his use of the sonnet. With the vibrancy of discovery gone, lacking in energy to protest, the poet falls back upon a formal structure, one which will at least provide a ready-made frame to cope with what he calls "Two worlds" which "are separated endlessly."

The traditional mold provides Schwartz with a formal coherence; it does not however, make up for these poems' lack of expressive form or inner coherence. In earlier poems

Schwartz had dealt successfully with those "two worlds" within the sonnet form. But in the poems of "The Early Morning Light," he lacks the energies with which he formerly turned and twisted doubt and despair into a dense and deeply felt struggle with those negative forces. Earlier, through Schwartz's energies and poetic strategies, one felt the power of the poet and of the word against the dullness and stupidities in modern life. Now, although he still asserts his old concepts of joy, truth and hope, one does not feel them, for Schwartz lacks the means of expressing them poetically. In "All Guilt and Innocence Turned Upside Down," plagued by the deepest despair and greatest need for hope, he simply turns aside and uses the closing couplet to assert--with more need than conviction:

--Then, then, denouement done, like a May sun  
 Forgiveness frees and blesses everyone.<sup>104</sup>

The sweetness of this voice is probably meant to be ironic, especially in light of the title; nevertheless, there is no poetic denouement beyond the poet's flat assertion that there is.

In one poem he admits: "Hope and imagination like the blue" are "Accused and recognized by nothingness."<sup>105</sup> He

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<sup>104</sup>Vaudeville, p. 100.

<sup>105</sup>Vaudeville, p. 70.

sometimes notes his lack of energy, and, at the same time, doubts the worth of that energy:

--And I will never be as I once was,  
Furious at the crossroads, striking at what I do not know.<sup>106</sup>

In another, "The Winter Twilight, Glowing Black and Gold" (this, a poem we shall return to, is a re-casting of Shakespeare's sonnet #73, and is one of the few poems from Vaudeville that Schwartz considered worth re-printing in his selected poems, Summer Knowledge) he doubts the worth of his own gifts:

Now boxed and tied by what I know of art  
--But as before accepted and refused.<sup>107</sup>

And, elsewhere, he even doubts the worth of all art, which may be only "Useless, senseless, gratuitous vanity."<sup>108</sup>

In comparison to Schwartz's early sonnets (those of his apprenticeship years as well as those of In Dreams), these poems make use of a wider latitude of rhyme schemes, and, in general, a loosening of rhyme. Lines often fall into flat, prosy statement. Meter is sometimes unsure--neither the intentionally ponderous "heavy bear" rhythm, nor the lyrical, song-like rhythms of Part I of Vaudeville, nor even a counter-point of the two. The sonnets have neither the complex sound-

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<sup>106</sup>Vaudeville, p. 71.

<sup>107</sup>Vaudeville, p. 67.

<sup>108</sup>Vaudeville, p. 87.

patterning of Schwartz's early work nor the sonic density of his late poems. Irony is often confined to the titles ("Boy Wonders and Precocities Are Wrong," "The Desperanto of Willy-Nully," "Chaplin, Upon the Cliff, Dining Alone"), titles which (like those used in modern paintings) refuse to find a linguistic equivalent for the work. With no interior reference, many of these titles are more ironic "labels," labels that do not "mean" in relation to the poems.

The greatest weakness of these poems, one discussed previously, is structural, and involves Schwartz's reliance on the sonnet for pre-determined shaping and for the resonance of tradition. Oddly, although much of the section is good, it gains strength from neither of these sources. The pre-determined shaping affords Schwartz only a false stability, for he often turns away from despair to what seems a sentimental or unwarranted assertion by relying on the form for a closure not justified by the poem's own generating principles. This is true even of those poems which deviate from the conventional sonnet in meter, line length, or number of lines, for the reader still responds to those poems in the general context of the other sonnets. And the modern reader, accustomed to open-ended inconclusiveness, does not demand the kind of resolution that the poet himself seems to need. Where the reader does gain coherence and resonance is not from the form, but from a source Schwartz seems only partially conscious

of--that is, from his own past poetry.

As we saw in Genesis, Schwartz succeeded in turning personal allusion into literary allusion. In Vaudeville that process is so assimilated that the resonance of these poems emerges from the memory of past poems--literary allusion has become reflexive reference.

Schwartz himself feels trapped in a cycle of repetition (similar to Prufrockian "visions and revisions"); yet that very repetition becomes the most positive aspect of these poems. For example, "The Winter Twilight Glowing Black and Gold," which opens:

That time of year you may in me behold  
gains an effective resonance, not so much from our knowing Shakespeare's sonnet as from our knowing Schwartz's previous poems. In the poem Schwartz laments recurrent rejection:

At noon the fifth year is once more abused,  
I bring a distant girl apples and cake,  
Pictures, secrets, lastly my swollen heart,  
Now boxed and tied by what I know of art  
--But as before accepted and refused.<sup>109</sup>

Ironically, the poem becomes a celebration; in our familiarity with these recurrent images from Schwartz's past poems, we accept (not refuse) poet and poem. Through this reflexive process Schwartz no longer "must carry/ His fathers on his back." Even in this poem Shakespeare is not the poetic father;

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<sup>109</sup>Vaudeville, p. 67.



Schwartz has become his own father. His real models are no longer Shakespeare, nor even Eliot; the poems imitate, not the gestures of Prufrock, but the strategies of Delmore Schwartz.

The poet who so greatly feared the paralysis of self-imitation has turned that process into an asset. (He may have lost the "sky's pure capital," but still draws interest from that old investment.) Throughout "The Early Morning Light," Schwartz, like Narcissus, creates his own echo: "leafshadows on the wall, carlight's flashed sleeves," "fruit, flowers, candy boxed," "here rule the modern powers," "wound of consciousness," "dark accidents," "every time I look at it." It is as if the poems themselves have memory. What Schwartz has lost in immediacy, dramatic vibrancy, sonic and rhythmic density, he has partially regained in low-key, but effective reflexive reference. Lost also is that old psychological realism, but in its place Schwartz has heightened our sense of the poem as literary artifact.

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An anonymous writer for the New York Times recently referred to Delmore Schwartz as ". . . a man with one foot firmly in the zeitgeist and the other in the eternal verities."<sup>110</sup> Although this clumsy, yet humorously apt

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<sup>110</sup>"New and Recommended," New York Times Book Review, January 24, 1971, p. 33.

metaphor was describing Delmore Schwartz, the "influential critic," it applies equally well to Schwartz the poet, and even helps explain the course of his poetry. During these middle years, Schwartz, always intellectually attuned to the changing times, found that the base for poetry was constantly shifting. He was ready to discard some of those "eternal verities," but consequently suffered ideological discomfort and an accompanying loss of assurance in poetic voice. He tried adopting roles, styles and sounds to find the measure of what it felt like to be alive during those times, but found no means to push through to a liberating form.

After Genesis he no longer returned to childhood nor to recollection as a means of understanding. In Vaudeville Schwartz's intellectual sportiveness sometimes strikes a false note, for such sport is difficult without some supportive assurance. At times it seems as though there were no support--that intellectual, moral and esthetic convictions were of no different status from any other conceptualized verbal form. Thus there was no longer the challenge of the shaping dialectic, but only the excitement of performance. And although Schwartz always enjoyed the role of performer, as poet he was uneasy in it, for entertainment was not considered as esthetically valid within the elitist intellectual position that Schwartz still maintained. Indeed, at mid-century Schwartz was in an uncomfortable position; hence the aptness of that clumsy metaphor--he has been straddling "eternal verities" and shifting zeitgeist for too long.

#### PART IV. THE LATER YEARS

##### Beginning Again and Again -- and Again

A note of exhaustion is evident in the last two sections of Vaudeville for a Princess. The writing of those poems seems somehow forced; after that effort he was unable to write poetry at all for four years. Actually the whole period from 1950 to 1958 was extremely sparse in poetic production for this usually prolific poet. During those eight years he printed only eight poems (two in 1954 and six in 1955) while maintaining his normal productivity in fiction and criticism. Schwartz had not lost his interest in writing poetry; his efforts to find a new mode, to begin again, are seen in an almost endless succession of notes, drafts, plans and journal entries. The notes, often written in semi-poetic form, reveal that the need for poetic expression was greater than ever, yet Schwartz felt almost paralyzed by his inability to achieve a new, viable form.

The most significant insight gleaned from the notes of these years is that Schwartz's struggle involves not only his personal needs as man and poet, but also the needs of his age. In searching for a new means of poetic expression,

Schwartz, "frustrated metaphysician"<sup>1</sup> that he was, had to find the ground for a new poetic.

Beginning again was a long, tortured, but deliberate process, one that first entailed an act of repudiation. Throughout 1952, in notes, as well as in projects and letters, Schwartz states his conviction that he must break away from all past debilitating influences on his poetry. In a February 1952 letter to Van Wyck Brooks, he locates the most debilitating of these influences in James and Eliot:

I was unaware, although I should not have been, of the extent to which Henry James and T.S. Eliot were hideous snobs in their work. I would have (been) less unaware, had I not been living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and struggling with the unfortunate consequences of an unfortunate marriage. Since that time, I've returned to New York, moved to the country, and gotten married again, all of which has had the effect of making me see with some clarity how one-sided and distorted my own view of literature (and in particular, of the relationship of literature to life in America) had been in certain important respects. I still think that James and Eliot are great authors, but I feel now that the leading social attitudes in their work is vicious and destructive too often. I do not think the same is true of Joyce, however, for he seems to me to be fundamentally affirmative in a way that neither James and (sic) Eliot are.

Schwartz goes on to say that he might have been "much more

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<sup>1</sup>Journal entry, 1951: "I shall always suffer from a frustrated desire to be a metaphysician."

fruitful as a creative writer," had he "not suffered from too uncritical an admiration of Eliot in particular. . . ." He sums up his complaint by writing, ". . . no authors more than James and Eliot would be likely to create so many feelings of self-distrust and conflict of mind in a person existing in my own social and literary situation."<sup>2</sup> Schwartz may not have accurately identified the cause of his poetic paralysis in these "bad influences," but by finding flaws in an old poetic, he could begin the search for a new one.

Up to this point Schwartz had steadfastly maintained the aristocratic position of artist as priest. He now found that he must abandon that position. Furthermore, Schwartz believed that he had to break with more than just his literary past, for that literary heritage was engendered by a prevalent modern intellectual attitude. Those obsessive habits of the modern mind--the atomizing and analyzing of experience--had ruled too long. Schwartz himself was very accomplished at this intellectual game, for he created poetry by using his own life in this way--arresting its flow, seeking its causes, and analyzing its motives; then it was possible to lament his own alienation and the general isolation of modern poetry. Now he rejects that position of alienation and the poetry generated by it.

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<sup>2</sup>Unpublished letter date-lined Pittstown, New Jersey, February 8, 1952.

In the semi-poetic notes of 1954, Schwartz can be seen working toward a more affirmative orientation. He begins to express more concern with the needs of the world than with his own role as poet. In one long typescript entitled "Framework//Emotions//Attitudes//Poetry," he enumerates what he calls in a marginal note the "ontological indignities" of his time:

Some have said that this is the age of anxiety and  
     of insomnia  
     some have spoken of the Apocalypse and Armageddon,  
     the suicides of nations, the madness of  
     civilization, risking self-destruction  
 Surely it is true that this is the age of the failure  
     of the heart and the mind,  
 Surely this is the time of the nervous breakdown,  
     when love is psychosomatic, psychotic or a  
     superstition  
     the irrationality of infatuation, or the handcuffs  
     of fixation

. . . . .

Certainly this is the time when most human beings are  
     more and more nervous and afraid and sick  
     at heart  
 Surely the unrest and the sense of existence comes more  
     and more close to the point of the unbearable  
     (the sudden eruption of the irrational volcano)

. . . . .

Hence the poem must aspire (as it has always, yet not so  
     that it must become a conscious purpose)  
     Hence the poem must aspire (bathetic but true,  
     homely but exact) to the powers of aspirin!  
 Born as it was at the marriage of Bacchus and Venus,  
     it wished and sought the will of wine and the powers  
 (And did not the Stagirite speak of katharsis, a physic?  
     . . . But it is true too that much else is desirable  
     and required:  
 Hence the poem must be beautiful as birthday cake and  
     as creamy-luxurious:

Hence it must have the cheering, uplifting waking and  
 enlivening//lively-making powers of coffee  
 Hence these semblances, however homely, are not facetious,  
 but literal and serious and very important.

That last passage quoted is in the voice of the familiar,  
 self-consciously facetious poet; that which the passage voices,  
 however, contains the first tentative groping toward a "Frame-  
 work//Emotion//Attitudes//Poetry" that will negate that self-  
 conscious, ironic mode. Several pages later in that same  
 typescript, the tone is already changed as Schwartz expresses  
 the poetic needs of his time: those needs are not fulfilled  
 by "crying out: Joy! joy! Joy!" but by

Struggling to acquire the habit and love of the painful  
 as part of the passage to the purely desired and  
 entirely pleasurable.

. . . . .

The need of the choiring hymn, the necessity of the  
 soaring anthem  
 Appears and recurs, now more acutely than ever, more  
 intensely

. . . . .

It is the assent of the will which is the whole being's  
 consent  
 which is love, and love only blind and prophetic

In another 1954 typescript Schwartz wrestles with the  
 "myth of selfhood" which perpetuates the 'wound of conscious-  
 ness' and supports only the poetry of isolation:

Since we now in the dark and labyrinth of the emotions  
 are groping

. . . . .

We must confront what is evasive and hard to hold  
 as a dream and a drifting fog and another's myth:  
 the sense of selfhood.

. . . . .

For the myth of selfhood holds up the duellist's raised  
arm as he fires  
Rigid, aiming at the bullseye which is the heart of pride  
(which is contained within the self's myth)

In the process of abandoning the "myth of selfhood," Schwartz begins to move from lament toward celebration:

Let us now praise the dry clear light of autumn,  
the season of memory and knowledge;

Let us celebrate the cold cloudy light of winter,  
which is eternity's cold cloudy light.

Next, having rejected alienation and aristocracy, Schwartz discovers (as has many another American poet) a new affiliation with Whitman, whose poetry he had once derogated as the "hysterical screaming of Walter Whitman." In what remains of many work-sheets entitled "Whitman," Schwartz records his "change of key," and, later, "changing keys again, to look at your book/ To look with opera glasses and microscope/ Upon the doctrines of your dearest love and your utmost hope." Throughout the next eight pages Schwartz quotes from Whitman and delineates all that he has learned from him. On the tenth and final page he confesses:

--Nevertheless, it was long before I was willing  
to confess to any degree  
Of satisfaction/gratification. But I was, for a time  
Self-deceived in histrionic posture and (illegible word)  
For a time I thought it was my duty and responsibility  
(Either) to denounce the isolation of modern poetry  
(Or?) to suspect profoundly the nature and art of poetry  
(or my own poetry)

--So in self-dramatization I loudly declared  
That all the prizes, honors and awards (some having been  
given me) were nothing essentially,  
Declaring that I had to be a teacher of composition  
to afford to write poetry,



(Forgetting or ignoring how I would not have been able  
to afford to be a teacher / a self-delighting one//  
Had I not proven that I was a poet. . . Thus and thus,  
in the late adolescence of youthful arrogance  
/and self-ignorance

I damned modern civilization  
or donned the mantle of the critic and prophet//  
mocking the madness of modern life,  
accusing industrialism of an insane degradation  
and consummate corruption

Of the godhead of human kind /// man //  
So I was wrong again,  
So from wrong to wrong I advanced and retreated.....<sup>3</sup>

In rejecting Eliot and James and in re-affirming Joyce and Whitman, Schwartz was deliberately working toward a positive orientation for himself, toward the possibility of affirming life and consciousness, affirming poetry and his own role as poet. As evidenced by his critical writings during these years, Schwartz was actively seeking sources for a new poetic among contemporary poets as well as in antecedents. In reviews and essays from 1954 to 1959 he repeatedly praises those poets who find the power to express positive views toward existence and those poets who have accomplished what he is now attempting: that is, to avoid self-imitation and to combine seriousness with joy.

Three articles published during these years, two on Stevens and one on Roethke, are of particular significance in tracing Schwartz's development. In 1954 Schwartz wrote "In the Orchards of the Imagination" commemorating Stevens' seventy-fifth birthday and the publication of his Collected

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<sup>3</sup>Worksheets dated 2/1/54.

Poems; following Stevens' death in 1955 he wrote "Wallace Stevens: An Appreciation."<sup>4</sup> Schwartz had always praised Stevens as a poet of ideas (and, unlike Auden), a truly philosophical poet, one who knew "the ultimate Plato," "in love not only with the beautiful, but also with the just."<sup>5</sup> Yet, in 1938, reviewing The Man with the Blue Guitar and Other Poems, Schwartz had noted certain weaknesses: "dandyism of speech," "florid irony," and, more specifically,

. . . the word-play does not always escape the adventitious frivolity for which it is always mistaken by the careless reader; the poem is sometimes extended not by a progress of perception, or of meaning, but one word and one phrase multiplies others; and, to sum up these defects, the poet is 'too poetic.' It may also be that the burden of this style is responsible for the faults which have always been present in Stevens' blank verse, a lack of variety in going from line to line, a difficulty with overflow, and lately, in "Owl's Clover," a tendency to anapestic substitution which unsettles the sonorous Miltonic period.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>"In the Orchards of the Imagination," New Republic November 1, 1954, pp. 16-18; re-printed in Selected Essays, pp. 187-191. "Wallace Stevens: An Appreciation," New Republic August 22, 1955, pp. 20-22; re-printed in Selected Essays, pp. 192-196.

<sup>5</sup>The Man with the Blue Guitar and Other Poems, review, Partisan Review IV (February 1938), 49-52; reprinted in Selected Essays, p. 185.

<sup>6</sup>Selected Essays, p. 186.

In 1938 Schwartz was barely started on his career and Stevens was just mid-career as poet; in 1954 Schwartz had, not only the main body of Stevens' work before him, but also his own experience as poet for sixteen years. Schwartz no longer mentions weakness, but instead, lauds Stevens'

metrical powers: Stevens "continues and renews the greatest rhetorical mode in English, the mode of blank verse in which Shakespeare and Milton wrote."<sup>7</sup>

his growth: "an ever-growing mastery and power, all the more impressive in middle age, a time when most poets, good or bad, tend more and more to self-imitation, or worse."<sup>8</sup>

his profundity: "The surface of his poetry is very often verbal, visual, and gay; beneath the surface, it is a deadly earnest scrutiny of attitudes toward existence, of 'how to live, what to do.'"<sup>9</sup>

his range: "suave and elegant--and also profound, uniting an underlying seriousness with an ultimate gaiety."<sup>10</sup>

and, above all, his affirmation of life and poetry: "Here is a modern poet who has celebrated the fact that it is good to be alive and that the goodness is magnified by that powerful way of being alive which is the writing of poems."<sup>11</sup>

In both articles he refers to Stevens' antecedents with an emphasis that reveals his own concerns, noting Stevens'

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<sup>7</sup>Selected Essays, p. 195.

<sup>8</sup>Selected Essays, p. 187.

<sup>9</sup>Selected Essays, p. 188.

<sup>10</sup>Selected Essays, p. 188.

<sup>11</sup>Selected Essays, p. 187.

similarity to Joyce, "whom he most resembled as a master and revolutionist of language,"<sup>12</sup> and "his relationship to Whitman and Baudelaire (two poets who almost never are a combined influence upon any modern poet.)"<sup>13</sup> In the 1955 appreciation Schwartz emphasizes Stevens' "triumphant affirmation," his "new knowledge of reality"; Schwartz concludes his tribute by calling Stevens "Prince of the realm and of English, majestic voice, sovereign of the mind and of light, master of reality."<sup>14</sup>

Many of the concerns expressed in the Stevens articles reappear in Schwartz's 1959 review of Roethke's Words for the Wind. He praises Roethke for avoiding the "deadly habit of self-imitation,"<sup>15</sup> and he calls attention to the "enchanted depths below the surface."<sup>16</sup> In addition, he compares Roethke's poems to the later works of Yeats, and then Yeats to Valéry in order to assert that:

Roethke is capable of far greater affirmation-- which is not to say that he is, as yet, as good as Yeats and Valéry, but that he is to be regarded as having his own uniqueness. . . . And it is worth

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<sup>12</sup>Selected Essays, p. 195.

<sup>13</sup>Selected Essays, p. 190.

<sup>14</sup>Selected Essays, p. 196.

<sup>15</sup>Selected Essays, p. 198.

<sup>16</sup>Selected Essays, p. 197.

adding that the difficulty of affirmation and hope, and the reality of the abyss have become more and more clear, more and more appalling, for poets alive today, as for all of us, than they were for Yeats when he wrote "Among School Children," and for Valéry when he wrote "La Cimetière Marin."<sup>17</sup>

There are two points to be noted here: one is Schwartz's insistence on the value of affirmation, even, as in this case, when it conflicts with the overall worth of the poetry; the other is Schwartz's reference to Valéry, who is twice removed from the poet he is reviewing. But this apparently unrelated allusion is not unique among Schwartz's writings at this time. It seems that Valéry is very much on his mind, perhaps more than ever in 1959, the year following the Bollingen publication of The Art of Poetry with an introduction by T.S. Eliot. More significantly, Schwartz's heightened interest in Valéry is related to the formulation of a new poetic, and, in this area Valéry is a force to be reckoned with.

Like Valéry, Schwartz, at various stages of his career, portrays himself as Narcissus, although the reflected observations of Delmore Schwartz are very different from those of Paul Valéry. We shall be dealing at greater length with the complex relations between them when discussing Schwartz's long, unfinished, and mainly unpublished "The Studies of

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<sup>17</sup>Selected Essays, p. 199.

Narcissus." That work, which will provide a perspective on Schwartz's career, will also permit a more detailed study of Valéry's influences on that career. For the present, it is sufficient that we observe Valéry's position within the Symbolist tradition, a position which Schwartz never shared, but one which he must deliberately confront while working out a new poetic. Schwartz's "symbolist" heritage, like that of Eliot (and possibly because of Eliot) is a descent from the dry, ironic, conversational mode of Laforgue and Corbiere. Thus he could, in Genesis, indicate that he wanted both the intensity of the Symbolists and the range of reference of prose; not only in Genesis, but throughout his poetry Schwartz made use of "deliberate flatness" in "an effort to declare the miraculous character. . . of ordinary speech."<sup>18</sup> Valéry, in his insistence on the relation of poetry to music, slights poetry's relation to speech; like Mallarmé, he is a proponent of "pure poetry." Schwartz, who has always been resolute in his defense of the good and the just as well as the beautiful, is, in the 1950's rejecting the poetry of isolation, and must reject the "purely beautiful" along with it. In his search for an affirmation and integration of life and poetry, he

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<sup>18</sup>Genesis, To the Reader, p. IX.

might have agreed with Eliot, who writes in his introduction to The Art of Poetry:

The one complaint which I am tempted to lodge against Valéry's poetics, is that it provides us with no criterion of seriousness. He is deeply concerned with the problem of process, of how the poem is made, but not with the question of how it is related to the rest of life in such a way as to give the reader the shock of feeling that the poem has been to him, not merely an experience, but a serious experience. And by "experience" I mean here, not an isolable event, having its value solely in itself and not in relation to anything else, but something that has entered into and been fused with a multitude of other experiences in the formation of the person that the reader is developing into.<sup>19</sup>

Actually, Schwartz does, in the Roethke review, lodge an analogous complaint against Valéry. He says of "La Cimetière Marin," which he considers a masterpiece, that ". . . existence itself and the mind of the poet seem the sole flaw in the pure diamond of being, so that Valéry's affirmation . . . is hardly more than 'Il faut tenter de vivre' and he . . . is appalled by the reality of process and unable to believe in another reality."<sup>20</sup>

That negation of process and that opposition of consciousness and being is exactly what Schwartz feels he must strenuously resist in order to find what is called in a recent article

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<sup>19</sup>Valéry, The Art of Poetry, trans. Denise Folliot (New York, 1958), p. xxiii.

<sup>20</sup>Selected Essays, p. 199.

"A Way Out." The "way out," according to R.K. Meiners, is to break through the prison of self-consciousness and the terrible difficulties of individuality, which, this critic feels, is the implicit subject of all modern poetry, and, "To a remarkable degree, the explicit subject of (Schwartz's) poetry."<sup>21</sup> Mr. Meiners believes that the ends to which Schwartz directed his late poetry are particularly important for us to consider at this time: "We cannot cease to be conscious, but we can change the mode of our consciousness, and realize that an isolated self-consciousness, set off in tension against all the world, is not only not inevitable but a calamitous falsehood."<sup>22</sup>

The poems of Summer Knowledge will record that change and the poet's celebration of the new mode of consciousness. In those late poems, which are, perhaps, "more of an aspiration than an achievement,"<sup>23</sup> Schwartz

. . . reaches toward something like a Goethean vision of a beautiful life permeating all our experience, a vision which denies the separation of an inner and outer world, which mocks

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<sup>21</sup>Meiner, "The Way Out: The Poetry of Delmore Schwartz and Others," Southern Review VII (Winter 1971), 325.

<sup>22</sup>Meiners, p. 336.

<sup>23</sup>Meiners, p. 331.



the notion of consciousness as a something which sits inside the box of the skull, sadly insulated from everything "out there."<sup>24</sup>

Underlying all of Schwartz's late work is the acceptance of a world in process and the unification of inner and outer reality. We have traced the stages of this development until 1955. In 1956 Schwartz is at least able to refer to his old attitudes in the past tense:

I have lived too long in the dark room of a person,  
in camera,--is that the phrase?--and

--I have lived too long in the consciousness of  
past and of future

What is PASSED HAS LOST THE BRASSY VIVIDNESS  
OF \*\*WHAT IS VISIBLE\*\*

AND THE FUTURE IS FULL OF THE FOETUSES OF  
not-yet amorphous being,  
So great the distance between myself and  
other object  
I was  
related only to objects that had not yet  
(omission) into being

--and now I devour effigies in a carnival of lunatics

(Valéry's metaphor about abstract thought as  
opposed to poetry  
--"the state of mind of a man engaged in dancing")

Although, in this 1956 typescript, he speaks of himself as  
"A child gathering shells by the salt sea's shore," he is able

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<sup>24</sup>Meiners, p. 335.

to speak with some assurance of his new sense of reality:

"Emotion and the experience of concrete situations through the imagination are a clue and key to the nature of reality."

With greater assurance in that new position, and in modes approximating the poetry that will result, in 1958 Schwartz writes:

I stood and saw the rising of the white swan of morning:  
And I saw what cannot be understood, the black hawk  
of the dusk;

I saw the fair and ancient temple which was the moonlight of  
midsummer established [illegible]  
but it was nothing.  
I gazed at the Appalachians (?), at the God's blue  
shoulders and distances, couchant;

This was nothing

I stood in the stadium of [illegible]  
and it was nothing,

Although the stadium was crowded with shouting hearts  
and heroes, and with the moving moods of the citizens  
of the city

yet it was all nothing, no more than a blur of color,

For I heard nothing, saw nothing, knew nothing, felt  
nothing but my own boredom, the burden of selfhood,

or whatever it was which cut me off  
from the infinite beauty of the life before me.

And then--when this time and emotion passed, when I  
stood in the same places and saw what I had not seen,  
--wakened by a mild happiness,  
little more than a faint light and smile,

I knew that joy is a necessary form of perception and  
experience:

I saw how joy may be a window, a mirror, a lamp, and a  
street light,

And the beacon of a lighthouse,  
swinging over desperate seas,

And the thread of Ariadne in the labyrinth  
of blue and anguished mortality

And the lyre of Orpheus, charming the dead  
and the animals of the underworld and  
the dead,

Because whatever is becomes truly whatever through  
[illegible] and lighting of joy  
Because joy is the sunlight and moonlight of consciousness  
and being  
And when joy is lessened or absent, there is little,  
there is less, there is nothing.<sup>25</sup>

By 1958 Schwartz could write joyously, for he had found  
a release, not only from the old, oppressive self-consciousness,  
but also from the poetic paralysis of the last eight years. In  
addition, he felt that he now participated in "The Kingdom of  
Poetry"; as a participant in this new realm, he could freely  
share in all artistic endeavors, drawing upon varied poetic  
sources without the old ego's compulsion to maintain a unique  
voice or even individual poetic achievement.

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<sup>25</sup>Typescript dated 4/58.

### Summer Knowledge

By April of 1958 Schwartz had written enough new poems to consider publishing a volume of them. Plans were underway for Doubleday to publish this book when Jason Epstein suggested an alternative; Summer Knowledge, New and Selected Poems 1938-1958 resulted from that suggestion. For that volume Schwartz was awarded the Bollingen Prize--the youngest poet to be so honored.

In making his selections for the book Schwartz decided to include all of the lyrics and the long poem "Coriolanus and His Mother" from In Dreams Begin Responsibilities, a single passage from Genesis ("Lincoln"), and three poems from Vaudeville for a Princess. The omission of most of the poetry of Schwartz's middle period, not only reflects good, objective critical sense, but also highlights the contrast between his early poems and his newest writings. Organization, titles and section sub-headings suggest that Schwartz has gained a perspective on his career. Schwartz's juggling and reversal of the original Yeatsian title In Dreams Begin Responsibilities yields the section sub-heading "The Dreams Which Begin in Responsibilities," a change which reflects the experience of his career. Starting with dreams, he engendered

responsibilities, which, in turn, led to dreams impossible to realize. The ambiguous title for Part I, "The Dream of Knowledge" (which seems to echo Bacon's more condescending "Poesy is a dream of learning," and perhaps even his following statement about having stayed too long in the theater) furthers the sense of retrospect.

Schwartz writes in an "Author's Note": "Most of the poems in the first half of the book have been revised since they were published in 1938." Some of these revisions (such as "By Circumstances Fed," discussed earlier in this study) are major re-castings. Occasionally there is a change generated more by social than by poetic pressures. One of these, nevertheless, also has its sonic benefits: The line from "Faust in Old Age" which in 1938 read, "Fucked Venus, sneering at her moan," becomes, in 1959, "Plucked Venus, sneering at her moan." Most of the revisions consist of minor improvements of detail, alterations of punctuation and of individual words for euphony, clarity or significance. It is interesting to note that Schwartz is still concerned with sharpening the cutting edge of these early, lean lyrics at a time when he is writing poems with long, flowing lines, repetitive sounds, poems with no clear-cut beginnings or ends.

In Part II, "Summer Knowledge," consisting mainly of new

poems, there is a new focus, a new style, a new acceptance. Free from guilt, claustrophobic oppression, and that old metaphysical and metropolitan pathos, Schwartz writes of a phoenix re-birth of life and art.

In one of these long, semi-poetic notes of the mid-fifties Schwartz had lamented, ". . . so long has the self been estranged from the actuality of things, growing or waning--" But in "Summer Knowledge" growing things do appear. Like Socrates, Schwartz seemed one who had never before ventured outside the city gates. Actually Schwartz did live in the country for a few years in the mid-fifties on a farm in Pittstown, New Jersey, with his second wife, Elizabeth Pollett. Such a move must have been under consideration as early as 1946, for in a letter to Miss Pollett he wrote: "The city is as beautiful as the country, as Socrates remarks in the Phaedrus, and he was no fool."<sup>26</sup> Schwartz could also have said (as did Socrates in the Phaedrus): ". . . I am a lover of knowledge, and the men who dwell in the city are my teachers, and not the trees or the country." Yet in "Summer Knowledge" new images appear as they do in the Phaedrus where that other inveterate city-dweller praises "summer sounds and scents."

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<sup>26</sup>Unpublished letter datelined Cambridge, Massachusetts, March 29, 1946.

Socrates, overwhelmed, admits to a "very unusual flow of words." Schwartz, too, has a very unusual flow of words: his old tight line is now often replaced by a long, flowing line, sometimes amounting to three or four rows of print. Socrates was lured from the city for a discussion of rhetoric and poetry; one of Schwartz's concerns is "The Kingdom of Poetry." Opening the new poems with the line, "Let the musicians begin," he focuses on the musical values of poetry; there is a whole section of poems on poets; and now Schwartz's models are not so much the old intellectual antecedents, as new, poetic antecedents (Whitman, Hopkins), and, for the first time, poetic contemporaries (Stevens, Williams, Roethke).

Schwartz observes nature in its profusion of forms and attempts to participate in the creative nature and power, that proliferating process (like the Whitmanesque "procreant urge") so resistant to formalization. Among the rhapsodic utterances that celebrate life's infinite renewability are placed the laments for "waning" and death ("All of the Fruits Had Fallen," "During December's Death").

Schwartz's title for Part II, "Summer Knowledge," registers his confidence in the new poems; nevertheless, in a preface to the book he cautions: "Every point of view, every kind of

knowledge and every kind of experience is limited and ignorant. . . ." This new knowledge, then, is not presented as absolute, but as an outlook by which Schwartz gains an assurance and a new surge of poetic energy. No longer concerned with guilt, alienation, memory and history, he now sings hymns celebrating a rebirth of joy and delight, of immediate participation in life, growth and change, and, therefore, also an acceptance of decay and death as part of the cyclic process.

The new poems do not derive their force from the opposition of hope and despair, nor from the dialectic by which Schwartz formerly juxtaposed the sharp, bold contradictions of his essentially ideological world. We no longer hear that "voice jejune," victimized, betrayed, yet maintaining its hope and longing in a vulgar, banal world. The countermovement to that tight, conceptual dialectic is now an exuberant release of sunlit images and a proliferation of recurrent sound in flowing, expansive lines. Schwartz, no longer concerned with the climate of distinct ideas, with the sophisticated world of the analyzing intellect, now assimilates those former concerns into an all-embracing, affirming esthetic wherein "the dream is knowledge and knowledge is a dream."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Summer Knowledge, p. 19.



In "Summer Knowledge," the former poet of guilt, insomnia, city and isolation, celebrates his release from oppression in a new fulfillment singing joyously of music, children, sunlight and morning. With a pastoral grace in this new "green morning," he extols summer, quickened life, growth from dark roots to flowering, ripening fruit and flowing rivers. Now, in this "First Morning of the Second World," he can accept and even affirm change as a liberation of energy in the process of creation and decreation, and delight in phoenix rebirths resulting from coming into being and passing away.

Schwartz's encounter with the world has undergone drastic change: in direct contrast to that earlier position which opposed touch and consciousness, Schwartz now delights in immediate contact with his surroundings, and in an intimate apprehension of things in their density, plenitude, flux and diversity. No longer living in memory or history, he experiences life as present; no longer imprisoned in isolated self-consciousness, he feels communion with countless presences and the co-existence of the world with his own existence so that each new contact with the cosmos renews his being in the "splendor of the tenderness of surrender."<sup>28</sup> With this

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<sup>28</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 19.

phoenix rebirth there is no doubt, no skepticism, no self-analysis; old antinomies are resolved in the new knowledge that is, unlike the old intellectual knowledge, not explanation, but natural knowledge from participation in the natural. Summer knowledge is the knowledge that we don't seek but already possess, the knowledge that endures; it is substantial knowledge rather than mere understanding. With no separation of subject and object, existence becomes its own predicate, self-affirming, self-loving, rejoicing.

In contrast to the early lyrics which reflected only an isolated self, the poet now expresses himself with an amplitude that lets his feelings flow and allows the cosmos to enter. He thus reverses the lyric tradition which entails the channeling of the world through a single individual, and now allows the world to speak through the poet. Structures of seeing and feeling work outward in extensions of form as well as in what Harry Strickhausen calls "Extensions of Language."<sup>29</sup> These forms emerge not from analytic thought, but from responses that recur without any self-conscious need to re-examine sources, history, motives. The unity of these poems is a result of choirs singing in unison, birds singing tutti,

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<sup>29</sup> Poetry XCX (February 1960), 300-303.

and the phoenix rising anew after each death. As part of a self-renewing process, the poems themselves have no absolute beginnings or ends; that is, they are not organic in the sense of being discrete units, but organic in the living sense of generative interaction with other poems, other poets and the world, and in breaking out of given boundaries like the growth process itself. In contrast to the tortured intellectuality of Schwartz's early work, form is now a working principle of both mind and nature, a continuous process where energy = configuration; subject and form are both the perception of phenomena in their forms, and the powers and transformations of form. Schwartz's reflexive reference is now inclusive of what is without as well as within, including both pre-logical and post-logical affirmation of dream, fertility, decay, life, death and re-birth. This poetry which is now in a reflexive relation to the poet, to itself and the world is the culmination of a process that we have witnessed in development; Schwartz himself articulates this process in The Studies of Narcissus, a work we shall discuss in the following section.

The poems of "Summer Knowledge" offer a range of prosody including various open forms, normative five-stress lines, and long, supple lines often amounting to several rows of

print. This new long line consists of hypnotic waves of sound, patterns of intonational cadences and infoldings of densely repetitive sound. In these lines (which are only partially "Biblical" or "Whitmanesque") Schwartz manipulates syntactical parallels, thought rhythms, alliteration, assonance, and a variety of true-rhyme, off-rhyme, rich-rhyme and interior rhyme. In this highly repetitive, loosely rhythmic mode, the poet is able, when he so desires, to orchestrate ranges of feeling by musical articulation, for the sonic reduplication has made the words more malleable by calling attention to their sonant nature and loosened them to some extent from their usual signatory sense.

Since the poet is not working here with or across a metrical base, one feels no tension or resistance, no obstacle to the flow of the line. No longer concerned with overcoming time nor with serial time, Schwartz needs no metronomic count; his lines cut across time in a simultaneous present where time is of no concern. The presentness is reinforced by an abundance of participles: "Singing and celebrating," "Ascending and descending," "climbing and chanting" ("At a Solemn Musick"); "Arising, waving, flying, glittering, and glistening" ("May's Truth and May's Falsehood"); "gazing, gaping, grasping, flickering, fumbling" "A Dream of Winter,

Empty, Woolen, Ice-White and Brittle").

These lines, then, have great flexibility and openness; at times they achieve the mimetic nature of the re-iterative, rhythmic process of generation and the excitement of that process: "the elation and celebration of the motions of energy everywhere."<sup>30</sup> When controlled, such lines engage the reader almost at the level of physical impact. Yet control is difficult. Schwartz has the problem of keeping such long lines fluid without losing the sense of pattern and of rhythmic boundaries. He attempts to control the movement with rhythmic and syntactical units, internal rhyme and alliteration; nevertheless, he is not always successful in maintaining emphasis, pauses and inflections, so that instead of "celebration of the motion of energy," there are dull, monotonous assertions that neither elate nor celebrate:

Suddenly and certainly I saw how surely the measure and  
treasure of pleasure is being with, belonging<sup>31</sup>

or flat prose statement:

The praise of poetry is like the clarity of the heights  
of the mountains.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>"Poem," New Republic, October 19, 1959, p. 24.

<sup>31</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 154.

<sup>32</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 189.

In addition, by choosing expansion rather than poetic concentration, Schwartz is always in danger of having congested rhetoric:

The roar of the heart in a shell and the roar of the sea beyond the concessions of possession and the successions of time's continual procession.<sup>33</sup>

Since most of the new poems are not concerned with sequence, their forms are not determined by logical or temporal structure. Syntactical patterns, as would be expected, are simple, mainly paratactic, and within this continuous present, structure is more or less accumulative. There is endless iteration, not only within, but among the poems, so that in many instances one poem can continue or repeat what has gone before without any clear sense of beginnings and ends. "Rooted and rising,"<sup>34</sup> such art rises out of nature in stubborn self-affirmation.

In these poems Schwartz does not strive for conclusiveness nor stability; for even minimal closure he must rely on thematic references to endings:

Hearing the thunder of the news of waking from the false dream of life that life can ever end.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 216.

<sup>34</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 191.

<sup>35</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 156.

Everywhere was full of the pulsing of the loud and  
fallen dark.<sup>36</sup>

Showed me my fear at last!<sup>37</sup>

--or on thematic references that suggest continuance beyond  
the poem:

I will always be me, I will always be new!<sup>38</sup>

This is the grasped reality of reality, moving forward  
Now and forever.<sup>39</sup>

The hope, and the pain of hope, and the patience of hope  
and its torment, its astonishment, its endlessness.<sup>40</sup>

Of fragrance and of freshness, of birth and beginning.<sup>41</sup>

This mode of continuance, one which encompasses and  
accepts endings, predominates; in its openness, it is all-  
inclusive, even of Schwartz's earlier struggles with the truths  
and falsehoods which are now "resolved" in an eternal present.

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<sup>36</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 203.

<sup>37</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 205.

<sup>38</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 161.

<sup>39</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 179.

<sup>40</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 217.

<sup>41</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 219.

### The Fulfillment

The first section of new poems is called "The Fulfillment"; Schwartz uses this section to announce his new outlook and to demonstrate the varied styles it will generate.

The opening poem, "At a Solemn Musick," serves as overture to all the new poems. Auden had opened his 1936 song cycle (On This Island) with the line: "Let the florid music praise."; Schwartz announces this insistently musical portion of his book with a similar line: "Let the musicians begin." The title, taken from Milton, was not the original inspiration for the poem, but more of an inspired afterthought. An early draft is entitled "Phoenix Lyric." In this initial concept of the poem, tone, imagery and voice is more that of the early "heavy bear" Schwartz:

Let the players tune up  
Scratching and screwing carefully  
The instrument of their love and discipline.

On that same draft the changed title is already pencilled in; by the time of publication the Miltonic influence has been thoroughly incorporated so that Schwartz's, like Milton's, is an "undisturbed Song of pure concert." Milton's ending:

O may we soon again renew that Song,  
And keep in tune with Heav'n, till God ere long  
To his celestial consort us unite,  
To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light.



also serves as model for Schwartz's lines:

Let every instrument awaken and instruct us  
In love's willing river and love's dear discipline;  
We wait, silent, in consent and in the penance  
Of patience, awaiting the serene exaltation  
Which is the liberation and conclusion of expiation.<sup>42</sup>

Both Milton and Schwartz, then, see music as a liberation and renewal, capable of uniting men in a restoration of initial harmony.

Throughout "At a Solemn Musick" we gain glimpses of the old concerns--the dead, guilt, greed, the isolated self--but ". . . the emphasis is," as John Hollander pointed out, "always on the absorption of the old experiences by the new, rather than the creative living of the memories."<sup>43</sup> Hollander's remark gains further weight as one becomes aware that all of Schwartz's new imagery is so pre-figured: "love's willing river"; "the splendour of the tenderness of surrender"; "the river of the morning"; "the dream is knowledge and knowledge is a dream."

The following poem is called "Darkling Summer, Ominous Dusk, Rumorous Rain." Here, even more than in that first poem which is literally about music, it is apparent how significant a role sound and sound manipulation plays. The opening lines,

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<sup>42</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 147.

<sup>43</sup>"Poetry Chronicle," Partisan Review XVIII (Spring 1960), 367.

in their density of patterning, imitate the sudden appearance of a rain-storm:

A tattering of rain and then the reign  
Of pour and pouring-down and down.<sup>44</sup>

Then a heavy slowing is injected and underlined by a strongly Anglo-Saxon alliterative line:

Where in the westward gathered the filming gown.

The power of a sudden beginning is thus lost in a "grey and clouding weakness." Through the rest of the poem he articulates various beginnings of rain: "Then came a splatter, a prattle, a blowing rain!" "A softness of a dripping," " - A pebble - a ring - a ringing on the pane." Schwartz has now turned his old obsession with the continuous need for human beginnings into a Stevens-like perspectival articulation of physical phenomena. This perspectivism, however, does not entirely inform the spirit of the poem, for in the final lines Schwartz attempts to encapsulate what would have been in Stevens' hands, an expansion of perception.

The poem called "The Fulfillment" depicts Schwartz experience of change. Stanzas one and three, consisting mostly of dialogue, are quite similar to the type of advice given by the ghosts in Genesis:

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<sup>44</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 149.

'Beware of all your desires. You are deceived.  
 (As they are deceived and deceptive, urgent and passing!)  
 They will be wholly fulfilled. You will be dead.  
 They will be gratified. And you will be dead!'<sup>45</sup>

In stanzas two and four Schwartz sounds the notes of fulfillment, flourish and joy:

Like light, like all kinds of light, all in the domination  
 of celebration existed only as the structures of joy!

In that long line, and in the segment that follows, Schwartz begins the mounting "emotion more exhausting than mountains," that exaltation that is now "fulfillment," one which acknowledges the reality and limitations of his former position:

. . . . at last we knew where we had come,  
 . . . .  
 And knew for the first time the richness and poverty  
 Of what we had been before and were no more,  
 The striving, the suffering, the dear dark hooded mortality  
 Which we had been and never known, which we had resisted,  
     detested,  
         feared and denied, the rocks and the flowers and  
         the faces of the needs and the hopes which had  
         given us our reality!

With no sense of poetic antecedents as either ideals to be emulated nor as threats to his own creativity, in "The First Morning of the Second World" Schwartz sings ("in the experience of voices in chorus") of the denial of "self-hooded selfhood." The writings of all poets are now available to him, as well as the entire tradition: what has been done, what is being

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<sup>45</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 150.

done, and the process itself which contains the seeds of its own future development. Schwartz thus incorporates images from Yeats ("falconer, falcon"), Eliot ("Aware of the dry river beds, the droughts of the little deaths"), Dante ("the pathless wood"), and Williams ("Little boats at anchor lolled or were lapped, and a yacht slowly glided"); techniques from Hopkins ("wizard blizzard, the white god fallen, united"), Gertrude Stein ("For the gratification of action by those who enact it and at once/ In the enacting behold it, actual and antiphonal, as antiphonal in another and others who are with them and look to them, toiling and smiling,/ Know the act and their enaction and another's and others' who suffer the struggling")--and they are all made new:

Suddenly it was the awe and moment when Adam first looked  
upon another self, a self like his own self, yet  
an absolute other and newness, being the beginning  
of beginning of being and love and loving and being  
loved

(Then all astonishment rippled to recognition, unbelievable,  
Yet actual before him, growing with the certainty, serenity  
and majesty of morning.)<sup>46</sup>

In "The First Morning of the Second World" Schwartz resurrects himself and all of poetry in a plenum of words creating a new, full world which realizes all possibilities. In this

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<sup>46</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 155.

poem, and in the one that gives its name to the book, whatever the poet creates, exists; there is nothing else, so nothing outside the poem can enter to disturb the superabundance of this profuse garden. In a self-transcending fecundity where all possibilities are translated into actuality, there are no limits to what is created, to kinds of language, imagery, to line length, to poem length. "Summer Knowledge" consists of a series of negations: "Summer knowledge is not the winter's truth. . . It is not May knowledge . . . not picture knowledge. . . not the still vision in a gold frame. . . not the knowledge of lore and learning." It cannot be understood by detachment: "It is not the knowledge known from the mountain's height," nor can it even be defined: "It is not the measured and treasured sentences of sentiments." It can, however, be communicated by ostensive instance: "It is cat knowledge, deer knowledge. . . phoenix knowledge. . . the knowledge of the truth of love and the truth of growing. . . the knowledge before and after knowledge." Thus, through a natural, re-iterative process, showing the multiform, flowing nature of things, the poet, using poetic language, attempts to be the translator of nature. The poem itself is both medium and instrument for making apparent the correspondences between natural form, the forms of the mind, and the art which

expresses those correspondences.

The "knowledge" of this poem, and of the entire section, is poetic knowledge, not intellectual knowledge. In contrast to the earlier use of language that stimulated the interaction of ideas, Schwartz now unashamedly indulges in the play of words, rhythms and sounds, not "for their own sake," but for revelations of a different order. Schwartz himself seems astonished at his new accomplishments: "Suddenly, suddenly and certainly. . . Suddenly it was the awe and moment. . . all astonishment rippled to recognition. . . Quickly and certainly."<sup>47</sup> yet the development of his new poetic language was, actually, not as abrupt as Schwartz seems to assert. That development can be seen as a more gradual change by tracing what we called zeugmatic thinking and patterning. The kind of trilogy that replaced the "fun, foam and freedom" of the early poems became, in Genesis, "the gold, the vivid and the actual." That trilogy, one which still suggests a disordered hierarchy, nevertheless moves toward an acceptance which, in turn, becomes in the late poems the affirmation of "fruition, vision and recognition." What Schwartz is perhaps reacting to is the bitterness of having to replace "The True,

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<sup>47</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 155.

The Good, and The Beautiful" with the "candy, fruit and flowers" in 1950. In 1958 he no longer speaks of the true, good and beautiful, but instead, of attainable, personal, poetic goals, ones which he himself likens to the process of ripening--from the little leafing to blossoming to fruition.

### Morning Bells

Having introduced us to his new attitudes and modes in "Fulfillment," Schwartz, in "Morning Bells," returns to beginnings, childhood and morning. Each of these themes has served complex and ironic ends in the past; now the poet attempts to celebrate the simple beauty of beginnings as a bird sings to greet the morning light. Schwartz's endeavor is to redeem, not his inescapable, personal past, but ideal, permanent childhood. From a child's point of view he sings, "Each morning I am something new." Not only is History forgiven, but also personal history:

But I don't tell the grown-ups: because it is sad,  
 And I want them to laugh just like I do  
 Because they grew up and forgot what they knew  
 And they are sure I will forget it some day too.  
 They are wrong. They are wrong. When I sang my song,  
 I knew, I knew!<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 161.

It must be admitted that this lyric, "'I am Cherry Alive,' the Little Girl Sang," is one of the weakest of Schwartz's printed poems. Its embarrassing first line and its unfortunate position at the beginning of a section illustrate that the poet, once a master architect of effective awkwardness and a powerful manipulator of beginnings, has relinquished both these talents for the sake of simple, pre-logical acceptance. Schwartz may have "put it in along with everything," as he writes in the poem, "To make the grown-ups laugh." Nevertheless, this naive, sing-song lyric seems a serious attempt to regain the joy of childhood. In the following poem, "O Child, Do Not Fear the Dark and Sleep's Dark Possession," he returns to dispel those childhood fears that hovered over the sleepless night in Genesis:

O child, when you go down to sleep and sleep's secession,  
 You become more and other than you are . . .  
 And in sleep's river you sleep  
 Like the river's self and the marine  
 Beings who mouth as they glide, nosing  
 And gliding lithely and smoothly  
 Gleaming serenely and sleekly.<sup>49</sup>

Whether these first two "songs of innocence" succeed in re-capturing those simple, joyous aspects of childhood that Schwartz has previously ignored, they do not succeed as poems.

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<sup>49</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 162.



In those initial lyrics Schwartz is working in an unfamiliar, simple style; the next two poems, characterized by his more usual complexity, humor, irony, topical allusion and self-reference, do succeed. "The True-Blue American" is, in a sense, about the way anyone succeeds in America, and, more specifically, the way Schwartz succeeded as a poet:

Knowing immediately the intimacy of truth and comedy,  
Knowing intuitively how a sense of humor was a necessity  
For one and all who live in America. . . .<sup>50</sup>

This poem, originally published in 1955 as "The Children's Innocent and Infinite Window"<sup>51</sup> was one of the few poems published between Vaudeville for a Princess and Summer Knowledge. Its style is familiar, and so is its persona; Jeremiah Dickson (like Shenandoah Fish and Hershey Green) is that twentieth-century Jewish-American boy "Who understood America, for he felt that he must/ Think about everything; because that's all there is to think about." Jeremiah,

Taught by Christmas, by the circus, by the vulgarity and  
grandeur of Niagra Falls and the Grand Canyon,  
Tutored by the grandeur, vulgarity, and infinite appetite  
gratified and shining in the darkness, of the light  
On Saturdays at the double bills of the moon pictures,

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<sup>50</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 163.

<sup>51</sup>New Republic, January 3, 1955, p. 19.

when faced with a choice between a chocolate sundae and a banana split, as a true-blue American, rejects "the either-or of Kierkegaard, and many another European," refuses "to accept alternatives, refusing to believe the choice of between;/ Rejecting selection; denying dilemma; electing absolute affirmation," cries "Both, I will have them both!"

Neither "The True-Blue American," nor the following, "The Would-Be Hungarian," is written from a child's point of view. Although both deal with children, childhood "innocence" is seen with a sophisticated outlook, one which can easily be manipulated so that it terminates humorously:

The consummation of the advertisements of the imagination  
of the light  
Which is as it was--the infinite belief in infinite  
hope--of Columbus, Barnum, Edison, and Jeremiah  
Dickson.<sup>52</sup>

or seriously:

This is America--as poetry and hope  
This is the fame, the game and the names of our fate:  
This we must suffer or must celebrate.<sup>53</sup>

Schwartz's penchant for organizing his books into sections dictates that this pair of poems be in "Morning Bells," which otherwise focuses on childhood innocence. The effect is

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<sup>52</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 163.

<sup>53</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 164.

somewhat disruptive, and the simple poems that follow, although purposefully unpretentious, still suffer in juxtaposition. Three "little" poems complete the section. In "Is It the Morning? Is It the Little Morning," a child asks:

Are those the birds? Their voices begin  
Everywhere, whistling, piercing, and joyous.<sup>54</sup>

In "A Small Score",

Meek, sang the crickets, wheat, meet, creek,<sup>55</sup>

and in "A Little Morning Music,"

The birds in the first light twitter and whistle.<sup>56</sup>

It is evident that Schwartz intends these diminutive openings as modest initiators of poems which affirm growth from small beginnings. Even these simple poems contain passages that can be read as auto-referential, and as for these beginnings, "all of them are melodious, erratic, and gratuitous."<sup>57</sup> But since the poet is "Singing solely to heighten the sense of morning's beginning," after these small beginnings, everything rises, brightens, ascends, soars into a dazzling and "overflowing radiance,"

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<sup>54</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 166.

<sup>55</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 167.

<sup>56</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 168.

<sup>57</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 168.

Discovering and uncovering all color and all kinds,  
 all forms and all distances, rising and rising higher  
 and higher, like a stupendous bonfire of  
 consciousness,  
 Gazing and blazing, blessing and professing all vividness  
 and all darkness.<sup>58</sup>

An un-dated, semi-poetic typescript contains what seems  
 the initial declaration of need for the type of poetry in  
 "Morning Bells":

Hence the new poem in praise of the deathless, ever-fresh  
 nature and power of poetry  
 Must be full of triumphant repetition, like reputation,  
 Like the insistence of symphonies.  
 It must contain stories of light, it must narrate and  
 explicate international romances, exuberant examples  
 Such as "Flowers telegraphed to all parts of the world":  
 It must declare anew the doctrine that love is full of  
 children  
 Children are full of poetry, love is not a child, nor a  
 boy and an arrow, but children,  
 The uncontrollable mystery and history and immortality  
 of progeny:  
 When it is not, it is merely the glib ebullience and flaring  
 of fireworks, the trash of transient flashing.

This long typescript contains a reference to Jeremiah Dickson,  
 "The True-Blue American," that leads into a general conclusion:

A child named Jeremiah was asked what he was thinking,  
 at night in bed in the darkness.  
 He answered: "I am thinking about everything": "How can  
 you think about everything?" a baffled adult asks him.  
 "That's all there is to think about!" Jeremiah answers,  
 a comedian of the cosmos  
 a juvenile master of metaphysics.  
 Thus poetry is childhood and  
 Poetry is ontology.  
 A little boy is a boat and a poet  
 Bouyant at the edge of the seas of being.

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<sup>58</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 169.

This is only one of many instances where Schwartz's full statement of intent is more interesting than the published poetry that resulted. One cannot doubt his sincere assertion of need for the poetry that "moves, and it must, toward childhood as toward hope." Yet, as "Morning Bells" makes apparent, Schwartz is still at his best as "comedian of the cosmos," and as delineator of himself as "juvenile master of metaphysics."

#### The Kingdom of Poetry

Schwartz's "summer knowledge" enables him to voice simple, child-like innocence; it also enables him to assume the sophisticated, subtle language of artists and their creations. In the section of poems called "The Kingdom of Poetry" Schwartz imaginatively enters into artists' lives and creative processes to write poems that mediate between their art and lives. In these poems Schwartz creates for himself a living tradition; through identification and interaction with other artists he regains the élan of his early poems without any of the bitterness of his middle years.

Three undated versions of what Schwartz called a "Literary Project" record the initial conception of "The

Kingdom of Poetry," which was to be ". . . a poem of some length or set of related poems having connected themes."

In one version he explains:

The plan, or, to be more exact, framework, within which I have been writing verse for several years is a rather flexible or supple one and hence it might be less misleading if I describe the way in which I came upon it and came to find it more and more interesting as a source of poetry. In reading a good deal about the lives of poets, musicians and other creative artists of the past, and reading at the same time a good deal about folklore, mythology and the origins of language.(sic) Though the reading was casual and unsystematic, I found myself versifying passages from the letters, memoirs and journals of such writers as Swift, Sterne, Dorothy Wordsworth and Baudelaire, and I was struck first of all by the fact that some knowledge of their lives made possible a transformation of interesting prose passages in their letters and journals into dramatized poems.

In another of these "plans," Schwartz names the mythological figures (Cupid and Psyche, Orpheus, Narcissus) and historical personages (Jacob, Sarah) that were to be included in this "poem of some length or set of related poems." We can now explain (although not justify) the apparently disunified nature of the last section of Summer Knowledge. In that final section called "The Phoenix Choir," Schwartz places the poems about historical and mythological figures. This leaves "The Kingdom of Poetry" to the artists.

Later in that same plan Schwartz explains that his initial impetus for writing about many of the artists came to him when

he ". . . found passages of prose, biographical incidents, important choices and actions in their lives, to have its source (sic) in some aspect of poetry or poetic way of thinking." A knowledge of Sterne's life, for example, made possible a reading of his "Journal to Eliza," ". . . in such a way that isolated prose sentences became the starting point of a poem."

Schwartz recognizes literary precedent for this method:

Of course this method of poetic composition was practised spontaneously (or perhaps even systematically by Wordsworth, particularly drawing upon his sister Dorothy's journals; and somewhat differently by a good many Elizabethans. The prose passages play in part the same function as a landscape or a model does for a painter. . . . What I was doing, at first by accident, was not, however, the Elizabethan practise of versifying passages of interesting prose, but drawing upon the prose of various writers at points to which I was directed by some sense of their life and work.

Schwartz was obviously fond of "Swift"; he had worked on it at length for there are over twenty drafts of the poem, and he chose it to record for the Library of Congress American Poetry series.<sup>59</sup> In his reading Schwartz emphasizes Swift's satiric anger ("The Caesars in my heart/ Tell me how all infamy is possible/ And certain treacheries extremely probable"); his "pretty prattle" ("Farewell my deepest Nite

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<sup>59</sup>Re-issued in The Spoken Arts Treasury of 100 American Poets, Volume XI, Library of Congress 78-750876.

poo dee M D . . ."); and, as in his reading of "The Ballad of the Children of the Czar," a childish whine--here for Swiftian sulks ("I think he has used me ill:/ I have as little pleasure as anyone/ In all the world, although I am/ In full favor with the entire ministry.")

"Sterne," originally published as "Yorick,"<sup>60</sup> is dedicated to Gloria Macdonald. Schwartz uses this poem, not only to versify incidents from Sterne's journals, but also to parallel incidents from his own life. According to the Macdonalds, Schwartz playfully represented his differing relations with each of them by addressing Gloria as Eliza, Dwight as Lord Fauconberg.

In line with Schwartz's new emphasis on morning, he transforms Shakespeare's "good night, sweet prince" into "Gold Morning, Sweet Prince." In this, his fullest tribute to the bard, Shakespeare is praised for his "vivid exactness" and "eloquent variety."

He knew us all before we were, he knew the strong, the weak,  
The silly, the reticent, the pious, the powerful, the experienced  
Of fortune, sudden fame, extremes reversed, inevitable loss  
Whether on land or sea. He knew mortality's immortality  
And essential uncertainty, as he knew the land and sea.<sup>61</sup>

By means of a clever shifting device, Schwartz manages a creative interaction between his own poetry and that of

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<sup>60</sup>New Republic, January 3, 1955, p. 20.

<sup>61</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 173.



Shakespeare:

Ripeness is all: the rest is silence. Love  
Is all; we are such stuff as love has made us  
And our little life, green, ripe, or rotten, is what it is  
Because of love accepted, rejected, refused and jilted,  
faided, raided, neglected or betrayed.  
Some are defeated, some are mistreated, some are fulfilled,  
some come to flower and succeed  
In knowing the patience of energy from the dark root to  
the rounding fruit.<sup>62</sup>

Schwartz originally intended to include poems about other poets in this section. He began one called "Walt Whitman in Heaven," a poem which opens with an explicit statement of his method:

Walt Whitman, here are your words, if a little in the  
distortion of quotation,

"I dote on myself--there is that all of me, and all  
so luscious:

"Each moment, and whatever happens thrills me with joy."

Then the mood of the poem changes; celebration is tempered by questioning what has been neglected:

Each moment?--whatever happened?  
Gettysburg and polio?  
The indifference of the populace and the cold rigid scorn  
and ignorance  
of the beak-sharp and snob  
pride of the gifted and learned critics  
Terrified by the gift of God, the natural glory of being,

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<sup>62</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 174.

the wisdom and will of the body  
James Russell Lowell, Henry James Jr., as  
secretary of Lincoln--

"I am wonderful!"

Yes, truly, you were and are wonderful  
More wonderful--wonder of wonder--that one who thus  
celebrates himself  
Should truly be wonderful, a wonder so to believe and  
love himself

a wonder to speak that love clearly  
Among the other marvels which remain to move miraculous  
among us

Truly you were wonderful--but Goethe too equally wonderful  
Yet he spoke of a life he had known, celebrated, successful,  
the fruitful, loved and applauded more than  
you were for a moment / for generations  
Europe's intellectual king, the favorite of princes  
The fawned upon by the famous, the beloved of  
beautiful women  
Spoke of all that life in summary:  
"I have not known happiness for three days---

This poem and many others were eventually discarded. Instead, Schwartz decided to include in this section poems about individual poets, and also appreciations of music, poetry and painting--poems in which he expresses his feeling of community with all creative artists.

The poem which gives the section its name, "The Kingdom of Poetry," is Schwartz's paean to his own province, "the country of morning." Poetry is "An omnibus, containing, bearing and begetting all the mind's animals. . . the surfeit of consciousness. . . the soil of the fruits of knowledge."

Poetry is "birth and rebirth," "better than hope," "superior to success."<sup>63</sup>

"The Kingdom of Poetry" celebrates the art of poetry in general, but it is particularly weighted in its celebration of the art and poetics of Wallace Stevens: poetry is "the actuality of possibility"; it is "The reality of the imagination"; "It lights up the structures of reality"; it "magnifies and heightens reality." Thus "The Kingdom of Poetry" acknowledged Schwartz's indebtedness to Wallace Stevens, a debt which is apparent in much of Schwartz's late work and in the attitudes underlying that work. In unpublished writings that debt is even more apparent. In one poetic fragment entitled "The Walt Whitman Hotel in Camden New Jersey," Schwartz clearly draws upon the organizing intelligence, that "consummation of consciousness,"<sup>64</sup> inspired by Stevens' work:

The poem of the structures of reality  
Is neither a description nor chant  
Nor a formulation, nor an analysis nor a generalization  
. . . . .  
Reality has a top and it has also a bottom  
    entrance and exit: but they keep moving  
        and everything  
            or almost everything-- omnes  
Keeps moving, growing and waning

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<sup>63</sup>Summer Knowledge, pp. 187-188.

<sup>64</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 189.

Everything is potentially something else  
     and at any point it is only itself and the cause  
 Of another, the material of another, the soil or the  
     path of another  
     the glass of another  
         (No tree is a book  
         no book is a tree  
         but trees are the cause of books and books  
         are the cause of trees and books unite  
             with trees  
         to collaborate with the leap of love as  
         mise-en scene. . .

"Summer Knowledge" is offered as poetry that "has no meaning and is possessed by all meaning"; this is actually Schwartz's definition of music in the poem "Vivaldi." In this poem, more explicitly than in any of the other new poems, Schwartz strives to express the extensive inter-relations of poetry and music. Both are:

Patterns in motion and in action, successions  
 Of processions, moving with the majesty of certainty<sup>65</sup>

As in the poem "Summer Knowledge," Schwartz turns to a series of negations--negations which are then qualified:

Music is not water, but it moves like water,  
 It is not fire, but it soars as warm as the sun.  
 It is not rock, it is not fountain  
     But rock and fountain, clock and mountain  
 Abide within it . . .<sup>66</sup>

These statements seem somewhat trite; nevertheless, the poet feels that they must be "uttered fully and yet freshly, newly

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<sup>65</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 176.

<sup>66</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 177.



those sources were and how they contributed to the making of the poem. First, dozens and dozens of drafts reveal Schwartz's developing and changing conception of the poem as it grew and then underwent careful revision. Equally interesting is a reproduction of "La Grande Jatte" that Schwartz took from a magazine; in its margins are his notations--words and phrases that enter the poem. Seurat's painting is one source of inspiration for the poem; the most obvious, but perhaps not the most important. The other source is an article by Meyer Schapiro called "New Light on Seurat."<sup>68</sup>

In a letter to Mr. A. Hess of Art News (where the Schapiro article appeared, and to which Schwartz was submitting his poem) Schwartz freely acknowledges his debt to the article: "Throughout the poem various passages are based upon Meyer Schapiro's piece on the painting which you printed last spring and sometimes, as you will see, I use his very words."<sup>69</sup>

That Schwartz does use in his poem, not just words, but untouched phrases and even whole sentences from Schapiro's article, is in keeping with his method of versifying prose throughout "The Kingdom of Poetry." To cite some examples,

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<sup>68</sup>Art News, Volume 57 (April 1958), pp. 23-24, 44-45, 52.

<sup>69</sup>Unpublished letter dated October 11, 1958.

Schapiro's article states:

One can enjoy in the Grande Jatte many pictures each of which is a world in itself.<sup>70</sup>

Schwartz's poem reads:

Many pictures exist inside the Sunday scene:  
Each of them is a world itself, a world in itself. . .<sup>71</sup>

Again, Schapiro reads:

We move with the crowd from right to left. . .<sup>72</sup>

Schwartz:

We move with the Sunday people from right to left.<sup>73</sup>

The poem, then, owes as much to Schapiro as it does to Seurat.

Schwartz talks about pointillism, as does Schapiro, but his style is not pointillistic, as K.G. Chapin seems to think.<sup>74</sup>

To characterize the style, one would have to say that Schapiro's style is the model, and perhaps describe it as flowingly prosaic. But more than a literary style, Schapiro lends Schwartz an intellectual style--a balanced, sensitive and enlightened appreciation.

The poem is essentially an appreciation based on Seurat's

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<sup>70</sup> Schapiro, p. 44.

<sup>71</sup> Summer Knowledge, p. 194.

<sup>72</sup> Schapiro, p. 45.

<sup>73</sup> Summer Knowledge, p. 192.

<sup>74</sup> "The Man He Chose To Be," New Republic, November 9, 1959, pp. 24-26.

painting, and it turns out to be an appreciation, not only of Seurat, and Schapiro, but also of life. And life consists of both the real and the ideal, for either taken alone develops into a horror. It is the artist, more than anyone else, who is capable of true appreciation, or beholding of life:

The one who beholds them beholding the gold and green  
Of summer's Sunday is himself unseen. This is because he is  
Dedicated radiance, supreme, concentration, fanatically  
threading

The beads, needles and eyes--at once! of vividness and  
permanence.

He is a saint of Sunday in the open air, a fanatic disciplined  
By passion, courage, passion, skill, compassion, love: the  
love of life and the love of light as one, under the sun,  
with the love of life.<sup>75</sup>

This passion and fanaticism are what it means to be an artist, but the passion must be enlightened and the fanaticism disciplined, giving us compassion and love. The artistic product will be a work of radiance which "glows like a garden in stillness blossoming." This certainly applies to the Seurat painting, and it equally applies to the Schapiro article.

The stillness that seems to pervade the painting results from identifying with people in a park on a sunny Sunday.

The sun shines  
In soft glory  
Mankind finds  
The famous story  
Of peace and rest, released for a little while from the  
tides of weekday tiredness, the grinding anxiousness

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<sup>75</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 190.



Of daily weeklong fear and insecurity,  
 The profound nervousness which in the depths of consciousness  
 Gnaws at the roots of the teeth of being so continually,  
     whether in sleep or wakefulness,  
 We are hardly aware that it is there or that we might ever  
     be free  
 Of its ache and torment, free and open to all experience.<sup>76</sup>

Underneath their calm, then, is their nervousness; just as, if  
 we look more deeply into the painting, we see the radiance of  
 Seurat's light, the energy of his trees ("Rooted and rising  
 with a perfect tenacity"), and the quivering of the river:

The sunlight, the soaring trees and the Seine  
 Are as a great net in which Seurat seeks to seize and hold  
 All living being in a parade and promenade of mild, calm  
                                                             happiness.<sup>77</sup>

And underlying all is the technique and style of the artist,  
 in this case, the tiny dots:

His marvelous little marbles, beads or molecules  
 Begin as points which the alchemy's magic transforms  
 Into diamonds of blossoming radiance, possessing and  
                                                             blessing the visual.<sup>78</sup>

Schwartz's own style also attempts an alchemist's transforma-  
 tion, but rather than producing a visual radiance by the poin-  
 tillistic rendering of light, he seeks, through the image of  
 the river, to render life as a flow of intellect and emotion.  
 Occasionally within the poem the poet adopts a more molecular  
 style and rhythm--and appropriately so--because he is dealing

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<sup>76</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 192.

<sup>77</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 193.

<sup>78</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 193.

with the molecular:

If you look long enough at anything  
It will become extremely interesting;  
If you look very long at anything  
It will become rich, manifold, fascinating.<sup>79</sup>

Schwartz extols Seurat for extolling the everyday and transforming it into summer gold:

Here is the holiness of all the little things  
Offered to us, discovered for us, transformed into the  
vividest consciousness.<sup>80</sup>

Yet Schwartz also wants the everyday to be recognized for what it is, before transformation; the very next lines are:

After the shallowness or blindness of experience,  
After the blurring, dirtying sooted surfaces which,  
since Eden and since birth,  
Make all the little things trivial or unseen.

Schwartz as poet, now in the biggest sense, wants not only the holiness of all the little things, but their triviality as well. Neither alone is the true reality. And this is true for style as well. Poetry cannot be exclusively precious and gem-like; to be faithful to life, it must reflect the trivial and faltering. Poetry must transform life, and this transformation process itself must not be one of exclusion, but inclusion, the poetic process following life's own transforming process:

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<sup>79</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 190.

<sup>80</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 195.

This is the nervous reality of time and time's fire which  
 turns  
 Whatever is into another thing, continually altering and  
 changing all identity, as time's great fire burns  
 (aspiring, flying and dying),  
 So that all things arise and fall, living, leaping and  
 fading, like flames aspiring, flowering, flying and  
 dying--  
 Within the uncontrollable blaze of time and history.<sup>81</sup>

Schapiro closes his article with possibilities of new  
 openings, for more can always be said: "Much more may be said  
 about this aspect of Seurat's art, which points to deeper  
 layers of his personality and the social process of his time."<sup>82</sup>  
 Schwartz closes his poem with a similar open-endedness, for  
 we suddenly hear the voice of Kafka, who speaks of the pains  
 and despair of life, not its luminosity:

. . . . Can we not also hear  
 The voice of Kafka, forever sad, in despair's sickness  
 trying to say:

"Flaubert was right: Ils sont dans le vrai!  
 Without forebears, without marriage, without heirs,  
 Yet with a wild longing for forebears, marriage and heirs:  
 They all stretch out their hands to me: but they are too  
 far away!"<sup>83</sup>

They, the artists, may seem far away, but in Schwartz's  
 "Kingdom of Poetry" their art--and all art--is revitalized

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<sup>81</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 194.

<sup>82</sup>Schapiro, p. 52.

<sup>83</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 196.

by means of a phoenix-like re-birth in which new art arises from old, consumed and renewed in that very process of creating new art from itself.

### The Deceptive Present, The Phoenix Year

The image of re-birth has played throughout the poems of previous sections of "Summer Knowledge," pre-figuring its embodiment in the phoenix image of the last two sections, "The Deceptive Present, The Phoenix Year," and "The Phoenix Choir." In previous poems the change of forms has in itself been reason for celebration, but it is only with the last two sections that the full complexity of Schwartz's phoenix pattern is revealed. In the first section of new poems Schwartz discovers the ease with which art can arise out of the world of nature. In the second section he celebrates the vital simplicity of this discovery. In the third section (with a contrasting sophistication) Schwartz creates art out of the world of art which has preceded him.

The final two sections reveal that Schwartz has been working toward an accumulative, complex and total sense of renewal --of transformation which encompasses continuity in change. This transformation was, in other sections, a theme; it now

extends to technique and organization, with the result that the whole section called "The Deceptive Present, The Phoenix Year" seems to arise from the final page of the preceding section:

. . . Time passes: nothing changes, everything stays the  
 same. Nothing is new  
 Under the sun. It is also true  
 That time passes and everything changes, year by year,  
 day by day.  
 Hour by hour. . . .<sup>84</sup>

These lines do, in fact, provide the most obvious interpretation of the following section's theme of continuance and flow in cycles of death and re-birth. (There is, however, as we shall see, another, less obvious, and somewhat playful significance to the title, for Schwartz uses this section to combine old, new and resuscitated poems, forms and ideas.)

The poem which gives the section its title crystallizes the poet's acceptance of time, seasons and change. Opening this poem without recourse to the rhetoric of "opulence, radiance, sparkle, and shine. . . rippling radiance dancing light's dances," or to "supple somersaults of energy and deathless feats of superexuberant vitality," ("May's Truth and May's Falsehood")<sup>85</sup> Schwartz offers a lyric whose

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<sup>84</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 196.

<sup>85</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 213.

presence among those of more luxuriant rhetoric is somewhat deceptive. Its mode, that of acceptance of change, justifies its presence in this section. But, whereas most of the late poems suggest the entire range of their impact (which is mainly textural) in brief citation, this poem, more like his early, "lean" lyrics, depends for its force on its structural integrity. Schwartz ranges through the images, diction and tone of William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, and Wallace Stevens:

The surf of apple tree delicately foaming.

All winter the trees had been  
 Silent soldiers, a vigil of woods,  
 Their hidden feelings  
 Scrawled and became  
 Scores of black vines,  
 Barbed wire sharp against the ice-white sky.  
 Who could believe then  
 In the green, glittering vividness of full-leaved summer?

and emerges, surprisingly and yet fittingly, with the familiarly luxuriant rhetoric of "Summer Knowledge":

In the green warm opulence of summer, and the inexhaustible vitality and immortality of the earth?<sup>86</sup>

In that title poem Schwartz articulates his newly found ability to treat absence as potential presence. Throughout the section this interpretation of the literal present as "The Deceptive Present," makes it a "Phoenix Year," out of which may arise various forms of renewal, and therefore a rich and revitalized present. Thus we find the section one that accommodate otherwise unrelated poems. Poems like

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<sup>86</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 212.

those in "The Fulfillment" (e.g., "May's Truth and May's Falsehood," "The Mounting Summer, Brilliant and Ominous," "In the Green Morning, Now, Once More") celebrate presentness, plenitude and ripeness. Other poems (e.g., "Dark and Falling Summer," "During December's Death," "All of the Fruits Had Fallen"<sup>87</sup>) turn themes formerly used to lament absence into occasions for meditations that result in serene acceptance. In other poems (e.g., "The World Was Warm and White When I Was Born," "I Am a Book I neither Wrote nor Read"), with his new ability to reclaim forms as well as themes, Schwartz revives his mastery of the normative five-stress line.<sup>88</sup>

In two types of phoenix-rebirth Schwartz brings into the deceptive present revivals of some of his earlier poems: one type is the metamorphic redemption of poems from his middle period (otherwise neglected in this volume); the other is a resuscitation of old uncompleted or rejected and unpublished poems. The first type enables Schwartz to include in this section two poems from Vaudeville for a Princess, "I Did not Know the Spoils of Joy" and "The Winter Twilight Glowing Black and Gold." In each of these poems seemingly minor revisions

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<sup>87</sup>M.L. Rosenthal's tribute to Schwartz was a reading of this poem at Schwartz's funeral.

<sup>88</sup>Journal entry, 1949: "I have lost the genuine habit of blank verse."

effect transformations appropriate to his new poetic. "I Did not Know the Spoils of Joy," which we have previously discussed as a complex and ironic vehicle for themes of disparities and alienation, becomes, with a few additions--particularly the two lines,

For now I know the spoils of joy:  
I only knew the spells of joy.<sup>89</sup>

--a commentary on the limitations of his earlier position and the original poem's articulation of it. With the addition of the phrase "and a hurrah" in the last line--

And a ho ho, a ha ha and a hurrah at last.

--Schwartz undercuts his former irony about "the stupid past" in a direct and straightforward evaluation of his middle period and its characteristic denials. In "Winter Twilight," Schwartz makes even fewer additions and slighter revisions; yet these minor changes are actually more telling and more poetically significant. The line that originally read "boxed and tied by what I know of art,"<sup>90</sup> now reads "boxed in the learning and music of art."<sup>91</sup> The poet's new "learning" and

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<sup>89</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 210.

<sup>90</sup>Vaudeville for a Princess, p.67.

<sup>91</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 204.



new poetic "music" lead him to transform the final line by the addition of a single metrical foot. In Vaudeville the line read:

--But as before accepted and refused.

And in Summer Knowledge:

But once more, as before, accepted and refused.

The addition of interior sonic repetition, the shift in rhythm and pauses, and the resultant line, rhythmically balanced, effect a perfectly balanced poetic acceptance of the poet's own past psychic and poetic refusal.

The other form of redemption of older writings becomes evident only upon examination of Schwartz's manuscripts and drafts. Such an examination reveals that the new view enables Schwartz to retrieve and recreate poems that he had worked on as much as ten years before. An example is the poem printed in Summer Knowledge as "The Foggy, Foggy Blue." This ballad, much like those that appeared in the first section of Vaudeville, has the characteristic Schwartzian humor, self-analysis, and mocking reflexivity:

When I was a young man, I loved to write poems  
     And I called a spade a spade  
 And the only thing that made me sing  
     Was to lift the masks at the masquerade.  
 I took them off my own face,  
     I took them off others too

And the only only wrong in all my song  
 Was the view that I knew what was true.<sup>92</sup>

Actually, Schwartz was working on this poem at the same time that he was writing those other, similar, bittersweet Vaudeville ballads. Among his papers is his early conception of the poem (a worksheet bearing the dates 10/20/49 and 11/27/49), which shows it to be only superficially a light ballad; underlying that playful surface is a personal bitterness resembling that of the Vaudeville version of "I Did Not Know the Spoils of Joy":

When I was a young man, I talked to myself  
 And I called a spade a spade,  
 And the only only thing I did that was right  
 Was lifting masks at the masquerade.  
 I took them from my own face,  
 I took them from others too,  
 And the only, only thing that gave me peace  
 Was to be a foggy, foggy, Jew.

In this older version, Schwartz maintains a strict ballad form, repeating that bitter refrain without variation. He also feels the necessity for strict meter and rhyme. The composition itself betrays a psychological need for discipline as urgent as the poetic one:

I ranted when I was manic  
 I moaned when I was depressed  
 And the only only thing that made me sing

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<sup>92</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 206.

--but the poetic discipline with which he attempts to order his psychic disorder is insufficient to the task: Schwartz cannot finish the poem to his own satisfaction. After these three lines he lists four alternative endings for the ballad:

Was the power to be obsessed,  
Was knowledge which I detest,  
Was the longing to be possessed,  
Was the scared heart in my breast.

But it is evident that he found them all unsatisfactory, for he crossed out all four, and left the poem unfinished. Ten years later, however, when Schwartz reconstitutes this poem as "The Foggy, Foggy Blue," he no longer feels "obsessed" or "possessed" by either psychic or poetic constraints; the result is a poem whose open form and relaxed confidence enables him to comment lightly on both present and past approaches:

This is, at any rate, my new and true view:  
Let live and believe, I say.  
The only, only thing is to believe in everything:  
It's more fun and safer that way!

Thus far we have been treating the poems of this section as exclusively representing either deceptive presence or phoenix restoration. Many poems, however, combine facets of old, new or borrowed themes and techniques. One of these, "The Conclusion," exemplifies Schwartz's newly-found synthesizing abilities. The poem opens with what is perhaps Schwartz's most Shakespearean line:

How slow time moves when torment stops the clock!<sup>93</sup>

With no jarring effect, he shifts, in the next line, into rhythm and diction more typically his own:

How dormant and delinquent, under the dawn

In another shift, the third line manages to reverse the opening line's theme and tone:

The uproarious roaring of the bursting cock

He has thus set up a structure into which widely varying thematic and poetic elements can enter easily and be easily transformed into functional components of the poem. It is not surprising, then, that the second stanza begins with a borrowing from a very different poetic source: "For when the flowers of infatuation fade," an obvious reference to Gertrude Stein's "Before the Flowers of Friendship Faded Friendship Faded."<sup>94</sup> Gertrude Stein's poem, "Written on a poem by Georges Hugnet," was, for her, a landmark in her career: in her other writings she repeatedly refers to what she discovered in the act of writing this poem. In a lecture she explains:

Hitherto I had always been writing, with a concentration of recognition of the thing that was to be existing as my writing as it was being written. And now, the recognition was prepared beforehand there it was it

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<sup>93</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 201.

<sup>94</sup>Stein, Writings and Lectures 1909-1945, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1967), pp. 273-285.

was already recognition a thing I could recognize because it had been recognized before I began my writing, and a very queer thing was happening.

The words as they came out had a different relation than any words I had hitherto been writing, as they came they had a certain smoothness they went one into the other in a different kind of a fashion than any words had ever done before any words that I had ever written and I was perplexed at what was happening and I finished the whole thing not translating but carrying out an idea which was already existing and then suddenly I realized something I realized that words come out differently if there is no recognition as the words are forming because recognition has already taken place.<sup>95</sup>

Thus Gertrude Stein explains the genesis of her ability to articulate the continuous present (akin to Schwartz's "deceptive present.") By poetically connecting Shakespeare and Stein, Schwartz is, in his own way, reiterating a conjunction that Stein herself elucidates in her portrait of Henry James. In that portrait she discusses her new-found ability to represent continuous consciousness as a coincidental result of her reading Shakespeare's plays and sonnets ("Shakespeare's plays were written as they were written, Shakespeare's sonnets were written as they were going to be written.")<sup>96</sup> at the time she was writing "Before the Flowers of Friendship Faded Friendship Faded." Although Miss Stein's influence is clear in this poem,

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<sup>95</sup>Lecture at University of Chicago, March 1935. Quoted in Writings and Lectures, p. 273.

<sup>96</sup>"Henry James," Stein, p. 293.

Schwartz wisely avoids imitation of her style, an undertaking at which many other poets have failed. Instead, Schwartz successfully weaves threads from both Shakespeare and Stein into a Schwartzian fabric:

This will be true long after heart and heart  
 Have recognized and forgotten all that was ripening, ripe,  
     rotten-ripe and rotten:  
 Have known too soon, too soon by far how much of love has  
     been forgotten.  
 Have known the little deaths before death do us part:  
 Nothing will ever pass at last to nothingness beyond decay  
 Until the night is all, and night is known all day.

Many other poems of this section similarly combine and thus renew themes, forms and influences. Schwartz has found a means to re-vitalize those "many little deaths" that formerly oppressed him, a way to forgive both death and history:

To be reborn, again and again and again, to be transformed  
     all over again.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Summer Knowledge, p. 214.

### The Phoenix Choir

Schwartz's plan for his large literary project, "The Kingdom of Poetry," originally included poems about mythical and historical personages as well as artists and poets. In its early stages, Schwartz felt that the kingdom was large and diverse:

For Poetry is concerned with God and with the gods  
                   with Venus and with Caesar  
 It is concerned with the heroes, rising and falling  
                   with heroines, magicians and queens  
                   with noble lords and ladies, riding,  
                   with the glittering ladies of the silver screen.<sup>98</sup>

As the project developed, however, Schwartz found he had enough poetic material for a separate section celebrating art and artists. The mythical and historical characters then became "displaced persons" in whose stories, nevertheless, Schwartz found the thematic basis for a new section, "The Phoenix Choir." In this section the author draws upon sources which had informed his earliest poetry (mainly those Hellenic and Hebraic forebears to whom he had cried out "Abraham and Orpheus Be with Me Now"). The Greek and Biblical figures, however, are now dealt with, not as sources of western culture, nor as the poet's Ur-fathers, but as "displaced persons"--that is, as human beings caught in circumstances that seem to

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<sup>98</sup>Typescript dated both 10/2/53 and 10/29/54.

result in estrangement, exile, or alienation.

The poems in this section exemplify, perhaps better than any others, John Hollander's observation that, regardless of formal subject, the poems of Summer Knowledge ". . . are all, somehow about spiritual growth and the terrible toll it extracts from the human soil it springs from."<sup>99</sup> The characters' articulation of their situations and the resulting alienation comprises the literal surface of the poems; opposed to that alienation, however, there is a more profound, unexpressed (by character or poet), yet ultimately more significant force at work--one which the reader recognizes even though the characters cannot. That force provides the very connection that the necessarily limited view of the involved character lacks. Thus, although the literal surface of these poems seems to express displacement and estrangement, actually Schwartz leads us to acknowledge the deeper force that provides the "logos": love, faith, mystery, sleep, dream, waking consciousness, history, myth, life, death are all related in this inclusive view. Schwartz has discovered that "sleep and love are warm and one,"<sup>100</sup> and that love may be "Hidden in night from the one

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<sup>99</sup>Hollander, p. 367.

<sup>100</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 223.



who is nearest."<sup>101</sup> No longer do dreams oppose responsibility, nor does the ego, in its self-pre-occupation oppose the world. Myth and dream are now accepted as part of a total reality in which poetry itself is no longer an alienation from life nor an irrelevancy requiring justification or special pleading, but a necessary consummation, the articulation of the universe itself.

This section, then, ends the book with a reversal of Schwartz's earlier personal and metaphysical pathos. He has arrived at an acknowledgement and affirmation of the positive and unifying nature of the roots of being. Perhaps we can best see the way in which alienation and unification interact in the poem which ends the section and the book, "Starlight Like Intuition Pierced the Twelve." That poem, Schwartz's favorite, becomes a powerful ending for Summer Knowledge. Although it first appeared in Vaudeville for a Princess, it is appropriate here as an unusually early insight into something that in a more general sense Schwartz did not arrive at until much later in his career. Throughout most of his writing, Schwartz's poetic space was theatrical, and, as such, involved an audience; his usual stance was uneasy, center-stage, tragi-comic subject of his own

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<sup>101</sup> Summer Knowledge, p. 224.

work. While this theatrical strategy provided the poet the means for wit and complex irony, it also prevented the easy flow of conscious being that the late poetry articulates.

(In our conclusion we shall attempt to summarize the development of these changing relations of self and world by focussing on Schwartz's own expression of his history of self-as-subject, "Narcissus.") "Starlight Like Intuition Pierced the Twelve," more typical of late than middle work, eliminates history as nightmare, hyper-conscious uneasiness, and instead focusses on a mythico-historical event as seen by living human beings. Those human beings are the audience; Christ (who does not appear in the poem) is the displacer, causing ordinary people to become estranged from their former easiness, their former certainties.

One other poem in this section appeared previously in book form : "Lincoln," an extract from Genesis: Book One. This is, in a sense, a displaced poem, one that strikes an odd note among the mainly mythical choristers. "Lincoln," the only truly historical character, brings into the section literal personages (Grant, Douglas, Davis), events (Gettysburg, Cold Harbor) and their historical consequences. The poem opens:

Manic-depressive Lincoln, national hero!  
How just and true that this great nation, being conceived

In liberty by fugitives should find  
 --Strange ways and plays of monstrous History--  
 This Hamlet-type to be the President--<sup>102</sup>

Thus we see that the poem also carries with it the network of thematic, ideational and rhetorical strands of Genesis. The psycho-analytic portrait of Lincoln ("This failure, this unwilling bridegroom: a "Hamlet-man," "full of black despair"); the Marxist portrayal of history ("--Capitalismus won the Civil War--"); and the personal plaint against history ("This is the way each only life becomes,/ Tossed on History's ceaseless insane sums!") all re-introduce attitudes otherwise repudiated in these late poems.

Three poems, "Abraham," "Sarah," and "Jacob" are devoted to figures from Biblical history. Paradoxically, Schwartz here makes no use of the "biblical journalese" that characterizes "Lincoln," and actually most of his Genesis: One. The diction and rhythm of these poems, although in a sense flat, presents a very different kind of flatness from the "morbid pedestrianism" of Genesis. Throughout that earlier book Schwartz's rhetoric ironically deflates by inflation: with the use of mock-biblical rhetoric the poet highlights the disparity between the well-established spiritual vehicle and the petty, dispirited characters whose lives are recounted.

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<sup>102</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 236.

In contrast, these truly biblical figures are, in this late work, presented without any of the stylistic resonance of heightening which would be justified by their place in our traditional knowledge. Instead, Schwartz almost reverses that older mode of deflating through inflation. These people address us directly without any historical distance or rhetorical amplification. The only one of the three which registers, if not in assertion, at least in intimation, a sense of his active role in making history, is Jacob, who--for a few lines --echoes the rhythms and themes of Genesis:

The gift was mind. The gift was eminence. The gift  
Like every gift, was guilt. The guilt began  
In the darkness and dark mystery where all begins.<sup>103</sup>

Abraham addresses us directly as if totally unaware of the history which surrounds him and endows his life with legendary and spiritual significance:

I was a mere boy in a stone-cutter's shop  
When early one evening. . .<sup>104</sup>

The legend of Abraham embodies the most profound, unfathomable causes for human suffering, yet Abraham objectively recounts the events and their consequences as if untouched by them:

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<sup>103</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 233.

<sup>104</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 230.

But his life was forgiven and given back to me:  
His children and their children are an endless nation:  
Dispersed on every coast. And I am not gratified  
Nor astonished. It has never been otherwise:  
Exiled, wandering, dumbfounded by riches,  
Estranged among strangers, dismayed by the infinite sky,  
An alien to myself until at last the caste of the last  
alienation

The angel of death comes to make the alienated and indestructible one a part of his famous society.

Thus Schwartz strips Abraham of any ameliorating spiritual significance; even more, he strips his life and suffering of any potential significance for his own life-time. He is neither embittered nor ennobled; he gains neither personal nor spiritual gratification from his suffering or its historical implications. The deeper level, that of faith, is never made explicit; without it, we, like Abraham, are left with "nothing, shocked and passive," as if "This was to be expected."<sup>105</sup>

Schwartz arranges a similarly "expected" ending for "Sarah." Like Abraham, she addresses us directly and matter-of-factly. The poetic strategies are, however, neither expected, nor simple and direct. The poet exploits the incongruity of a childless Jewish mother who speaks to angels in a Yiddish accent:

It is Sarah who characterizes her circumstances as a joke:

<sup>105</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 231.

<sup>106</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 232.

. . . . . A joke: A big joke:  
 But the joke is always just on me.  
 He said: you will have more children than the sky's stars  
 And the seashore's sands, if you will just wait patiently.  
 Wait: patiently: ninety years? You see  
 The joke's on me!

The poet, like Sarah, pretends that the event and the poem hinge on a joke. But counter to the levity is Sarah's troubled sense:

. . . . . something inside of me  
 Is continually telling me something  
 I do not wish to hear: . . . . .

And counter to the humor evoked in the poem is the reader's recognition of that which is not explicit in the poem: Sarah's positive historical significance.

Strangely, then, both Sarah and Abraham end their poems with an acceptance of themselves as limited and insignificant. The actual events, those which have far-reaching consequences extending beyond the individual's choice or comprehension, have no place in these poems. In former poems self-conscious personae consumed the poetic space; Schwartz ensured that no voice or character addressed the reader except as filtered through the central, devouring and controlling ego. Here, with poetic self-effacement, Schwartz presents self-effacing characters who speak directly with voices of their own. Thus love and faith are revealed without explicit delineation, in

a reliance on the understated and unspoken--an unusual method for a poet whose earlier techniques were mainly self-conscious, explicit and exhaustive.

Two poems of "The Phoenix Choir" deal with the mythical character Cupid, who is, for Schwartz, the agent of Eros. In "Psyche Pleads with Cupid," Psyche, the only speaker, questions the source of love, that formless, faceless presence:

Why is love dark?  
 Why must your face remain concealed from me?  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . . Must all love be  
 Hidden in night from the one who is nearest?  
 . . . . .  
 Why do you desire my love? Is it love, in truth, if I lack  
 The sight and vision which begins all intimacy?<sup>107</sup>

The answers to her questions are contained in the preceding poem, "Cupid's Chant":

Cupid is  
 A student of leaves,  
 A scholar of Eros,  
 A savant of consciousness,  
 And of sleep's wine-dark seas;  
 Of the heights of the birds  
 And the insides of words,  
 The seed within Adam,  
 The birth, the death, and the rebirth  
 Which breathes in Eve  
 --All that is seedy, loamy, rising, fickle, growing,  
     flowing, flowering, and unknowable, all that we hope  
     and hardly dare to believe.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Summer Knowledge, pp. 224-225.

<sup>108</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 223.

"Once and for All" places in retrospect what Schwartz called "The Fulfillment" in an earlier part of Summer Knowledge. In the poem "The Fulfillment," the poet, as if in a dream, is wonderstruck, for he stands in a process that includes himself, a re-ordering of creation--half unknown, half feared and denied, yet he himself is one with that which he expresses. In "Once and for All," the poet's own history is included in the process it seeks to articulate and develop. His "fabulous discovery," his "Summer Knowledge," is a felt reality, a gratifying release from the tensions of holding together antitheses and dualities in a forced dynamic. His poetry is now not only self-justifying, but automatically becomes the instrument of cohesion, the hinge which holds self and world together. Poetry is not a gratuitous endeavor, but a necessary and active expression of life force. In "Once and for All" Schwartz includes himself as a formerly displaced person; but unlike most of his autobiographical poetry, this poem traces not his personal history as much as his poetic career. Two of the most recent articles on Delmore Schwartz<sup>109</sup> devote considerable discussion to this poem, finding it an

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<sup>109</sup>James F. Knapp, "Delmore Schwartz: Poet of the Orphic Journey," Sewanee Review LXXIII (July-September 1970), 506-516; R.K.Meiners, "The Way Out: The Poetry of Delmore Schwartz and Others," Southern Review VII (Winter 1971), 314-337.



illuminating source for the comprehension of Schwartz's entire poetic career.

In the poem, Schwartz treats this career in mythic terms, describing his early calling as a summons from Apollo:

To be apprenticed to the endless summer of light and  
consciousness,  
And thus to become and be what poets often have been,  
A shepherd of being, a riding master of being . . .<sup>110</sup>

But then came the call from the "goat-god" and he "followed Dionysus, forgetting Apollo." Then, in the "new world," Schwartz discovered both that he had been wrong, and that, "in a way," he "had known all along": "the opulence hidden in the dark depths and glittering heights of reality." The power of Poetry cannot be denied; thus Schwartz's belief is "true" even if one does not consider this late poetry as good as his earlier work.

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<sup>110</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 222.

In the three-and-a-half years following publication of Summer Knowledge, Schwartz printed a total of seventeen individual poems. The last of these poems appeared in the Fall of 1962, and thus represent the end of his literary career, for he had written no essays or reviews since 1960. These late poems, then, are Schwartz's last literary efforts before the final years of withdrawal. Written over a span of five years (although printed between 1959 and 1962), the poems vary very greatly; the later ones explain, to a great extent, the rapid changes in attitude which culminated in the final four years of literary silence.

Several of these late poems are in the mode of Summer Knowledge; they were written either too late for inclusion in that volume, or, perhaps, in the case of those written earlier, excluded to avoid imbalance or excess. Schwartz was, at this time, poetry editor of New Republic, where most of these pieces appear. One, by its very title, "Words for a Trumpet Chorale Celebrating the Autumn,"<sup>111</sup> echoes the many choiring hymns of Summer Knowledge. Another, "The Choir and Music of Solitude and Silence,"<sup>112</sup> expresses (again in terms of music) one of the central affirmations of the preceding volume: "In

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<sup>111</sup>New Republic, November 13, 1961, p. 12.

<sup>112</sup>New Republic, September 28, 1959, p. 27.

measure's pleasure, and in the supple symmetry of the immense intense wings." One, entitled simply "Poem,"<sup>113</sup> ends with a line we have mentioned previously as one which articulates the essential driving force of Summer Knowledge:

And as the sun of June burned all afternoon there  
was nothing but the elation and celebration of  
the motions of energy everywhere.

Another group of poems which, because of their ironic or satiric humor, did not fit into the generally organic and affirmative schema of Summer Knowledge is represented by the fragments from "Kilroy's Carnival" (a work called alternatively "A Masque" or "A Poetic Prologue for T V"):

Kiss me there where pride is glistening,  
Kiss me where I am round or ripened fruit,  
Kiss me wherever however whenever  
I am supple and flare and bare.<sup>114</sup>

O Nirvana  
Don't you wait for me  
I'm going with manana  
She's the only girl for me.<sup>115</sup>

During the 1950's while writing Summer Knowledge, Schwartz maintained his interests in popular culture and the use of

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<sup>113</sup>New Republic, October 19, 1959, p. 24.

<sup>114</sup>"Aria" from Kilroy's Carnival, a Masque, Sewanee Review LXX (Winter 1962), 12.

<sup>115</sup>"A Popular Score" from Kilroy's Carnival, A Poetic Prologue for TV, New Republic, December 1, 1958, p. 16.

humor as a poetic tool. Such endeavors are mainly left unpublished. One of these, in its tone, subject, and treatment of popular culture, seems an experimental anticipation of what has since become known as Pop Art. The typescript, entitled "~~M~~arilyn Monroe (after Spillane)", is dated 4/18/54 and 10/27/54:

Let us be aware of the true dark gods  
Acknowledging the cache of the crotch  
The primitive pure and powerful pink and grey private  
sensitivities  
Winching, marvelous in their sweetness, whence rises  
the future.

Therefore let us praise Miss Marilyn Monroe  
She has a noble attitude marked by pride and candor  
She takes a noble pride in the female nature and torso  
She articulates her pride with directness and exuberance  
She is honest in her delight in womanhood and manhood.  
She is not only a great lady, she is more than a lady,  
She continues the tradition of Dolly Madison and Clara Bow  
and  
When she says: Any woman who claims she does not like to  
be grabbed is a liar!  
Whether true or false, this colossal remark  
states a dazzling intention. . . .  
It might be the birth of a new Venus, among us  
It atones at the very least for such as Carrie Nation  
For Miss Monroe will never be a blue nose, and perhaps  
we may hope  
That there will be fewer blue noses because she has  
flourished--

Long may she flourish in self-delight and the joy of  
womanhood  
A nation haunted by Puritanism owes her homage and  
gratitude.

Let us praise, to say it again, her spiritual pride  
And admire one who delights in what she has and is



Stevens' similarly arch relations of titles to poems and of poems to ontology. Schwartz actually refers to Stevens: "that dandy of ontology"; but unlike Stevens, Schwartz does not acknowledge "The Pleasures of Merely Circulating." For Schwartz the "holy bird of words" has become an "albatross/Hung round his neck by the seven seas of the seven Muses." Schwartz has found his former elation deceptive:

The deceptions and the deceptive elation of the redness  
of the growing morning  
.  
So that everything is or seems to have become nothing,  
or of no genuine importance.

It is not that Schwartz has lost hope, but that he now finds "it inconceivable/ That anything should be or should have been important."

These poems express what is a new attitude for Schwartz, that is, that no position is more important than any other position--including the position of being a poet and creating poetry. It seems strange, or perhaps paradoxical, that he finds it necessary to continue writing poems expressing the conviction that the writing of poems is not necessary, and that, perhaps, all of his poetry is nothing more than

The black pencil lines of telephone poles, crucified,  
At regular intervals, post after post.  
("All Night, All Night") 117

<sup>117</sup> New Republic, March 21, 1960, p. 18.

No matter how strange it seems, however, Schwartz must discover and articulate limits to go beyond those limits.

Schwartz has done this throughout his career; but what he is here doing is de-escalating his own poetic career--that is, working his way out of what he once thought supremely important. Schwartz's discovery that poems are not "needed" requires that he work his way through this discovery and its implications. While the recognition of the lack of all poetic necessity may be painful for any poet, the poetry resulting from that recognition has often been, in the hands of other poets, transformed into worthwhile, genuine poetry. In Schwartz's case, however, no transformation occurs. Rather, many of these poems seem his working out in public of his private beliefs and needs. He, like that other "shepherd and watchdog of being," (a reference to Coleridge in "Philology Recapitulates Ontology, Poetry Is Ontology") now talks "forever of forever as if forever." Poems become "throw-aways," a fact which Schwartz makes obvious with such a deliberately offhand title as "This Is a Poem I wrote at Night, Before the Dawn."<sup>118</sup> Or Schwartz refers to all of his poems as:

Shrivelled and fallen, but shrill-voiced when the wind  
whistles

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<sup>118</sup>New Republic, October 23, 1961, p. 24.





A poem moves forward,  
 Like the passages and percussions of trains in progress  
 A pattern of recurrence, a hammer of repetitive occurrence.

Most of these late poems are deficient as poetry, awkward attempts at sophisticated primitivism. Their denial is not transformed into poetry; Schwartz recognizes this, and nevertheless keeps writing. In "The Journey of a Poem Compared to All the Sad Variety of Travel," Schwartz finally finds a poetic means of "slow descent." In this poem, he speaks of "the slowed horses of Apollo." It is his sense of an ending, an ending, which Schwartz, however, as ontologist, knows can have "little conclusion, since being never concludes" ("Philology Recapitulates Ontology, Poetry Is Ontology.") The poem itself, while articulating the impossibility of an ending, does so expressively:

Of the slowed horses of Apollo  
 --Until the slowed horses of Apollo go over the horizon  
 And all things are parked, slowly or willingly  
 Into the customary or at random places

For the long span of his writing career, Schwartz has felt the allure and the pain of "beginning again and again." He has, with this final poetry, brought that pattern of recurrence to an end, consciously freeing himself from both, and, perhaps, experiencing the release and the emptiness of poetic silence.

PART V. CONCLUSION: SCHWARTZ AS NARCISSUS

During the late 1950's Schwartz worked on a long poem:  
"Studies of Narcissus Or a History of Love." As we have seen,  
Narcissus was one of those mythic figures originally to be  
included in "The Kingdom of Poetry." At first, Narcissus, with  
the other mythic characters, was exiled from that kingdom, and  
was to be placed in "The Phoenix Choir" of Summer Knowledge.  
But during the mid-fifties the Narcissus concept gained weight  
and momentum as evidenced by many notes and poetic drafts,  
such as the following, dated 10/27/54:

It must be seen also that Narcissus detested himself  
He looked long and long in the glass of the waters  
                seeking to admire himself  
He concluded that he could not love himself: hence  
                no other could love him  
He was a suicide not of self-infatuation, but self-contempt  
    the desire to destroy his own image forever.  
(Give to another self what is detestable? find another  
    what to him is repugnant?)  
Stared long at the image in the glass, not as those who  
    possess self-love's self-assurance  
And go forth to see their love reflected in the glances  
    of others' admiration / applause

Thus the Narcissus myth focussed for Schwartz (as it has for many another poet, his own position, history, and

perspectives as individual and as poet. The result was Schwartz's last long poetic work. The poem, as he left it, is included in an appendix.<sup>1</sup> It consists of 30 pages, lacking only a few problematic lines, phrases, and, most likely, final revisions. Selected passages which Schwartz felt had achieved their final form were published during 1958 and 1959 in New Republic, Poetry, and Chicago Review.<sup>2</sup> Schwartz chose three passages for inclusion in "The Phoenix Choir" of Summer Knowledge. These poems, "The Mind Is an Ancient and Famous Capital," "The Fear and Dread of the Mind of the Others," and "The River Was the Emblem of All Beauty: All," are thematically significant in terms of the long work, yet prove effective as separate poetic units.

The contention of this study has been that no central symbol underlies all of Schwartz's poetry. He did find, at times, a temporary symbol or a mythic equivalent which embodied the pattern of his poetic thought. Oedipus and Coriolanus, for example, served this function early in his career. Each of these figures, with their strongly Freudian import, dramatized

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix D.

<sup>2</sup>"The Mind Is an Ancient and Famous Capital," New Republic December 15, 1958, p. 17; "The Dread and the Fear of the Mind of the Others," New Republic February 2, 1959, p. 18; "The River Was the Emblem of All Beauty: All," Poetry (May 1959) p. 108; "Passages from the Studies of Narcissus," Chicago Review (Summer 1959), pp. 121-123.

for Schwartz the oppressive tensions between love and alienation; and, in the circumstances of their lives, exemplified for him the extreme disparities between public and private man. No such figure, however, was large enough to "contain" his work, nor did he feel the need for such a comprehensive symbol. Rather, his constant need was for new beginnings: "The repetition of yesterday and the day before will never suffice, but he must create again and again from what has been the unheard-of future. The future of time which is nothing cannot be grasped by the repetition of what has been."<sup>3</sup>

In addition to such figures as Oedipus and Coriolanus, one that recurs in the poetry is Orpheus. In a recent article, "Delmore Schwartz: Poet of the Orphic Journey," James Knapp finds that the central symbol underlying Schwartz's work is the Orpheus myth, maintaining that ". . . the journey of Orpheus into the underworld becomes the archetypal image which underlies all his poetry."<sup>4</sup> That infernal journey (involving love and death) is, according to Knapp, translated by Schwartz into psychoanalytic terms, a descent into the unconscious.

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<sup>3</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 133.

<sup>4</sup>James Knapp, "Delmore Schwartz: Poet of the Orphic Journey," Sewanee Review LXXIII (July-September 1970), 506.

In his article, Knapp refers to Elizabeth Sewell's book, The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History,<sup>5</sup> and, it is evident that Miss Sewell's understanding of the myth is what informs Knapp's emphasis and application: "Entering into the darkness of the self we will recognize that the essential togetherness of mind and body is indeed, one of the truths which Orpheus would have us learn."<sup>6</sup> In statements such as this, Knapp points up the weakness of his argument and that of Miss Sewell's book. For example, that truth, "the essential togetherness of mind and body," is indeed a truth that many voices--equally Orphic and non-Orphic-- "would have us learn." Miss Sewell considers as Orphic all writers (biologists as well as poets) who deal directly with the Orpheus myth, or who mention Orpheus, or who are concerned with any combination of the following elements from the myth: singing, reciprocal relation to the things of the natural world, love, death, infernal journey, return, transformation, dismemberment, prophecy. Under such a rubric, the writer himself need not be a singer or use his song as an instrument for interpretation of man and the natural world, or be a seer--but

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<sup>5</sup>Sewell, The Orphic Voice (New Haven, Connecticut, 1960).

<sup>6</sup>Knapp, p. 511.

simply write about these matters. Thus Miss Sewell includes as Orphic such diverse figures as Bacon, Shakespeare, Erasmus, Darwin, Goethe, Linnaeus, Ovid, Wordsworth and Rilke. The Orphic tradition ". . . lies with life and words, not with pure forms."<sup>7</sup> Miss Sewell feels that Mallarmé and Valéry (who she admits are Orphic) misunderstand this and are led astray ". . . into an impasse into which a great deal of contemporary literature has followed them."<sup>8</sup> This overly-inclusive interpretation of the term "Orphic" (less precise than its usual literary usage) is adopted by Mr. Knapp, who observes that Schwartz, at the end of his literary career, arrives at the "Orphic Journey," when, in his poetry, he understands that ". . . he must assume the vocation of poet, . . . cutting himself off from all the normal pleasures of a citizen, standing aside from happiness--assuming the task of charging an empty world with myth and meaning."<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, it is clear that such a position does not make Schwartz an Orphic poet in the stricter, literary application of the term. Neither in his earlier poetry, nor in the new understanding extolled in Summer Knowledge is he Orphic.

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<sup>7</sup>Sewell, p. 288.

<sup>8</sup>Sewell, p. 288.

<sup>9</sup>Knapp, p. 516.

Schwartz is not a seer nor a musician; he understands the powers of music, he hymns its praises, but he does not command it--Apollo never granted him that gift, nor the power to move nature by that means. Schwartz is, as we have seen, an exponent of that other mainstream of modern poetry, the dry, ironic mode, inherited from LaForgue, Corbière and Eliot --and wryly domesticated in his own poetry.

That which in Schwartz strikes Knapp as Orphic is probably best explained by Sewell's claim that ". . . Orpheus is poetry thinking about itself."<sup>10</sup> But Schwartz, in his "Studies of Narcissus," provides us with a more appropriate myth to express "poetry thinking about itself." The figure of Narcissus has occurred--no more often than other figures we have mentioned--in Schwartz's poetry. In "Coriolanus" reference is made to "our undrowned Narcissus/ Our self-regardant lion."<sup>11</sup> In Genesis the growing boy is observed "To mix Narcissan pleasures with his pride."<sup>12</sup> But more significant than literary allusion, latent within the poetry lay the ground for a more comprehensive thematic Narcissism.

Schwartz, late in his career, finds in the myth of

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<sup>10</sup>Sewell, p. 47.

<sup>11</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 102.

<sup>12</sup>Genesis, p. 156.

Narcissus what has been its perennial appeal to poets, that is, the potential for expressing one's own concerns and history as poet. The poet loves images, and as poet feels capable of recreating those images in words. To a poet those images are as real as (or more real than) that which they reflect. The myth essentializes the poet's need both to keep the object of desire unattainable and to activate the reality of the imagination. Love makes Narcissus cleave to his self-image, for, as poet, he is most pleased with what he himself conceives. Thus Echo is also a self-created lover, for what the poet-Narcissus hears is the sound of his own voice. This, then, is a celebration of love, but one that cannot earn him love; rather, as in the original myth, it leads to a negation of self, and then, possibly to transformation. The only identification of self as poet and lover lies in alienation of the self from others. The myth, then, offers a richly complex means of expressing the poet's ambivalence generated by his yearning for completion and by the necessary lack of recognition on the part of others of that overwhelming need. Narcissus lives by the esthetic principle that life is beauty, and devotes his life to the contemplation of beauty. Or, for a philosophical poet, reflection consists of the workings of the mind; in the case of such a poet, the mind's integrity is preserved by a love for what it reflects. The



modern poet tends to see in the tale of Narcissus a paradigm, not of self-love, but of self-consciousness--a vehicle for expressing modern man's pre-occupation with the suffering and rewards of self-consciousness.

The exemplar of a modern esthetic, philosophical poet-as-Narcissus is Paul Valéry. Schwartz, as we have noted, was, during the late 1950's, very much concerned with Valéry's poetry and his ideas. In criticism written during this period, Schwartz occasionally refers to Valéry's work, but the actual extent to which Valéry's poetics engaged him is more evident in drafts and typescripts of Schwartz's poems. His habitual marginal commentaries on his own poetic worksheets evince, at this time, a pre-occupation with Valéry's poetic theory. Stimulated by Valéry, Schwartz's pencilled comments return repeatedly to the theme of poetry and thought, couched in Valéry's terms, "poésie et pensée abstraite."

The Narcissus theme is, for Valéry, a kind of poetic autobiography, a means for delineating the mind watching the mind unifying poetic enthusiasm with precise, directed thought. In his earliest treatment, "Narcisse Parle," Valéry expresses the beloved reflection of the self's bodily beauty. Later Narcissus poems elaborate the nuances and ambiguities of singleness, doubleness, reflectiveness, leading, at the

end of "Cantate du Narcisse," to dissolution, death: "Il disparaît." Throughout these poems Valéry articulates what is for him the essential characteristic of man: the mind looking at itself, talking to itself, opposing itself, compelled to seek its unity through opposition. Valéry's mediations and confrontations with the self are directed toward the ultimate goal of "As much consciousness as possible."<sup>13</sup> The process is itself generated by creation, for, as the poet writes, through the detached observations of the forms of thought, he himself undergoes changes: in the interplay of mind and work, he is himself modified by that which he creates. Valéry is the poet of essential solitude, of purity. In his cold, lonely, mirror-haunted poetry, form rather than content appears to be the determinant. Like Mallarmé, Valéry would have preferred ". . . either music or pure silence over the impurity of human language."<sup>14</sup>

Schwartz obviously felt the power of Valéry's theory and practice; nevertheless, it is just as obvious that the difference in Schwartz's background, temperament and poetic situation created a very different Narcissus. The things of this

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Valéry, "Memoirs of a Poem," Art of Poetry, trans. D. Folliot (New York, 1958), p. 120.

<sup>14</sup> Sewell, p. 325.

world interest Valéry only in relation to the intellect, whereas Schwartz immerses himself in the "slip-shod circumstances" of life, enjoying the "book-ends" and "back-yard wash" as much as the workings of the intellect. All that seems to matter to Valéry is the constructions of the mind; Schwartz is equally concerned with these constructions, but, at the same time, feels "the witness of the body" and the "relations and motions of energy everywhere." Schwartz rejects Valéry's denial of the actual, his feeling that existence itself is a blot on the pure diamond of being, declaring instead that daily life and ordinary speech are miraculous, and that "Poetry magnifies and heightens reality:/ Poetry says of reality that if it is magnificent, it is also stupid."<sup>15</sup> Valéry's melancholy of imperfection, his elitist need for purity, is opposed by, yet domesticated in a naive but audacious, tough but vulnerable, open-minded, Jewish-American middle-class Platonism. Schwartz has, therefore, the problems common to these circumstances--particularly the American middle-class writer's need to justify his "idleness": his non-productive, contemplative, intellectual-esthetic activity. Yet Schwartz's development as poet stems from this situation. As self-conscious poet-intellectual,

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<sup>15</sup> Summer Knowledge, p. 187.

Schwartz is alienated from the middle-class; then (much as Freud delineated) the expression of that alienation yielded satisfaction, but also undermined his identity as one of the displaced.

In both early and middle poetry the opposition of Platon-ic idealism and dreary material existence ("two worlds separated endlessly") is expressed by the remoteness of "the sky's pure capital," and the bodily drag upon the spirit, "the central ton of every place." Schwartz portrays modern American hyper-consciousness as a devouring ego, whose only relation to reality is appetitive. Even for the poet there is nothing outside the self to justify the self. Without outside reference that isolated consciousness seeks its ground in its own reflection, attempting to objectify the self in its mirror image. "Furtive fugitive," the ego "sees his/ Ghost in the mirror, his shameful eyes, his mouth diseased."<sup>16</sup> The dissatisfied Narcissistic self converts "every feature/ Into its own and unknown nature."<sup>17</sup> Father admonishes son: "Be guilty of yourself in the full looking-glass."<sup>18</sup> Coriolanus,

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<sup>16</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 35.

<sup>17</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 42.

<sup>18</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 30.

"knowing no place to go, having no desire, attained to the emptiness for which he had striven," stops to look at himself in a clear lake:

Staring upon that face which is his own, he sees his own life, and the lives rejected and the choices chosen, and the immediacy of anger and pleasure, and the abstracted stare of memory, and the strangeness, to himself<sup>19</sup>, of his own face, the most peculiar of flowers.

There is only the self, a self that is helpless before the simultaneous necessity to love, and the impossibility of love--for if there were love there would be loss of the self. Love is a "bondage," a "weakness," "The Self-Betrayal Which Is Nothing New." Instead, the mind's conscious knowledge of itself could provide a loving relation. The consummation of that love would require the utterance of the words that define it, but no language is adequate. The spiritual imbalance consequent upon that rhetorical inadequacy makes Schwartz unable to offer resolution. But he is aware of that impasse and the strength of his early work arises from poetic strategies that faithfully (and often wittily) represent such imbalance and irresolution.

With nothing but the self, Schwartz goes back, in Genesis, to seek justification of that self and its acts in the facts

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<sup>19</sup> Summer Knowledge, p. 124.

of its own nature. As Frederick Goldin describes that process in Rilke, "The man's task is to become conscious of the truth whose existence began with his own."<sup>20</sup> Here new imbalances and irresolutions arise, but Schwartz, again fully conscious of them, shapes his work accordingly. Those irresolutions are consequent upon the search for a personal truth with no possible outside referent. Schwartz portrays the uncertainties and torments resulting from doubts about one's depth and the motives behind one's acts and desires as an interchange between himself and the ghosts that inhabit his mind. The entire book-length poem is a kind of mirror of the poet's mind in its capacity to imagine the self and its world and to inform the experiences and feelings that would otherwise engulf him. The work depends upon the insubstantiality of memory and reflection: the memory of that which was must diverge from what the reader perceives to have been the "real" situation. Yet the result is "error's fecundity," for in creating that duality, the psyche actually is laid bare.

The early poetry depends, to a great extent, upon self-contempt, but cannot accommodate an acknowledgement of the value of its poetic expression. Genesis contains self-

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<sup>20</sup> Goldin, The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric (Ithaca, New York, 1967), p. 50.

contempt, but adds the pleasure derived from one's poetic expression of that contempt. In Vaudeville for a Princess the awareness of that duality in the poet's situation becomes part of the poetic strategy. Another duality, that of self and others, once a framework in which the poetry was offered, becomes, in Vaudeville, an object of poetic scrutiny. Schwartz, Janus-like, views self and others equally as fictions within the poems. To do so, he once again employs theatrical space, but now the poet is performer and watches others (as audience) watching him. As performer-poet he is personally affected by the audience and their needs; his unease as performer stems from his consciously ambivalent sense of audience as both real and fictional.

The poet's joy in performance is undermined by a lack of confidence in the success and power of that performance, with the result that there is less emphasis on the devouring ego and more concern with the fallibility of both self and art. He greatly fears self-imitation, yet turns self-imitation into a poetic asset. As in the early works, the image in the mirror provides an "outside" referent, a validation of one's existence. Now, however, reflections of earlier poetry provide further self-reference, the validation of self as poet. Echos of earlier poetry, like the Echo of the Narcissus myth,

is the repeated voice of the self as poet-lover.

After his long poetic silence, Schwartz's poetry pours forth in a torrent to extoll his new Summer Knowledge. Absent from this new flow are the guilt, anguish and ironic wit at the center of reality. Schwartz discovers instead the joyous process of generation and his own creativity as part of that process. It is as though Schwartz has arrived at an ultimate Platonism, for, as Cassirer describes the Platonic doctrine of beauty, "The mind may devote itself to the beauty of the world without having to fear the loss of its center; for this center should not remain locked within itself, but should prove and assert itself precisely in its inclusiveness; in its universal scope and openness."<sup>21</sup>

The binding force of such universal scope and openness is Eros, and the poet who provides expression of man's relation to the world's beauty is in service to Eros. The moral uncertainties of his former poetry are dissolved in the beauty of the perpetual change to which he appeals. With Stevens, Schwartz had the possibility of achieving a "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour." For Delmore Schwartz, however,

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<sup>21</sup> Ernst Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England, trans. J.P. Pettigrove (Austin, Texas, 1953), p. 104.



"being there together" is not enough, for he never attains Stevens' equipoise and serenity. It is, in Schwartz's own rhetoric, as though he plays the Ultimate Plato on Stevens' guitar--slightly out of tune.

The mirror images of the early poetry are replaced by the flow of reflections in the river. The early look into the mirror as speculum represented the search for eternal beauty in sensible forms; but in the long gazing at the self, struggling to understand what was not clear, the poet saw only the self's mortality. The movement of the river in the late poetry reflects the world as well as movement of the mind and feeling, thus integrating inner and outer reality. In "Seurat's Sunday Afternoon along the Seine,"

The river, quivering, silver blue under the light's  
variety,  
Is almost motionless. Most of the Sunday people  
Are like flowers, walking toward the river, the sun,  
and the river of the sun.<sup>22</sup>

In "May's Truth and May's Falsehood,"

. . .the litter and ripple of the river was excited by  
the advent and descent of light upon its slow flowing:  
The river was opulence, radiance, sparkle, and shine, a  
rippling radiance dancing light dances:<sup>23</sup>

In these poems, as in "Narcissus," the river, without form itself, becomes a bearer of forms. It "explains" and

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<sup>22</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 193.

<sup>23</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 213.

glorifies change, making its reflections into the form of the world.

The impetus for this late poetry is Schwartz's search for the ground of a new poetic to combat the "ontological indignities" of his age. His concern was with the needs of his world, and, concurrently, his own need to replace former explorations in self-consciousness. He attempts to find a way out of isolated self-consciousness and to unify inner and outer reality. He requires a positive affirmation, an affirmation of life as process, and an integration of life and poetry. Paradoxically, Schwartz ends, not with a positive affirmation, but a negation; a loss of self-importance as poet.

Schwartz was writing the poems of Summer Knowledge late in the 1950's; at the same time he was also writing his long poem, "Studies of Narcissus." The sense of loss and of eventual self-denial as poet is not evident in Summer Knowledge. It is not until he explores the ramifications of his position in "Narcissus" that he discovers that the process has taken him to an unforeseen end--not just the dissolution of self-consciousness, but also of self as poet.<sup>24</sup> By

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<sup>24</sup>Though we cannot here become involved in complex cause-effect relations between psychic states and philosophic attitudes, it is interesting to note that Schwartz's late, well-known paranoia may, perhaps, be metaphysically grounded.

employing the Narcissus myth, Schwartz discovers the implications of his own life and history as poet. Nevertheless, it is still the contention of this study that Narcissus is not the "central symbol" underlying Schwartz's work. It is the last, long, comprehensive poem written by a poet who uses the self, its history and thoughts as subject. When the poet, in his awareness of the reactions of others to his work, increasingly includes that reaction, the resulting poetry seems to sum up his career.

As Schwartz declares in "The Kingdom of Poetry," "a history of poetry would be a history of joy and a history of the mystery of love."<sup>25</sup> Yet the total affirmation of the Summer Knowledge poems sounds slightly forced. These poems, celebrating change, generation, plenitude and repetition, are themselves so plentiful, so repetitious--in short, so autonomous--that even the idea of a referent, a "world," seems irrelevant, perhaps even gratuitous. It is by working through the Narcissus myth that Schwartz comes to see life as a grand fiction dominated by passive knowing with no need for deliberate action or achievement--and therefore, no motive to write poetry. Schwartz's poetry had moved from self-allusion to literary allusion to reflexive reference: to poetry being subject, medium and

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<sup>25</sup>Summer Knowledge, p. 188.

instrument of its own generative power and process. Reflections which first consisted of self-concern and self-contempt led to reflections of history of self and reactions to self; eventually Schwartz included in those reflections the process of reflection itself. Narcissus, looking long at his reflection, sees the universe reflecting itself with no need for the mediation or articulations of consciousness.

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"Studies of Narcissus" begins with a prose "Argument," one in which Schwartz explains his appropriation of the myth. Throughout the Argument, "others" are given uncharacteristic thematic and rhetorical emphasis. Schwartz as Narcissus, "speaking in the first person--or at times in the third person (in retrospect)" describes "the various forms of misunderstanding which others have committed. . . Others--all the other . . . They forgot . . . they misinterpreted. . . the eager love of all the others . . . Echo, like all the others . . ." Thus Schwartz's shaping of the myth emphasizes his own pre-occupation with the reactions of others, particularly in the form of complex relations of poet to audience. The poetic expression of this complex relation occurs at about the midpoint of the long poem. That section of the typescript was

re-written and printed in Summer Knowledge as "The Fear and Dread of the Mind of the Others."

Narcissus argues that although the others thought he was moved by self-love, "The truth was that he was entirely dissatisfied with the image of his own face." Thus Schwartz treats Narcissus's initial look at the self as dissatisfied self-contempt, analogously to his early poetic expression of the guilty, self-conscious look in the mirror. Opposing the self-contempt, Narcissus "nurtured an inexhaustible hope"; this opposition provided the tension in a great deal of Schwartz's early poetry. Schwartz's narcissism, then, is poetic narcissism. We have seen Schwartz utilize this opposition of dissatisfaction and hope to (at least) gain the satisfaction of expressive poetic form. We have also seen this process develop from self-allusion to literary allusion to self-reflexive reference. "Studies of Narcissus" becomes an instrument for recapturing that process, a structure capable of reflecting the development from lonely, alienating mirror images to flowing, all-inclusive river images.

This "History of Love," then, is not one of self-love, but of process. As Schwartz-Narcissus confidently asserts, "his father was the river god." In so relating poet to river,

Schwartz gains a force similar to that of Eliot's "I do now know much about gods; but I think that the river/ Is a strong brown god--"<sup>26</sup> Yet Schwartz's confident assertion is in direct contrast to Eliot's uncertain tone, and to what Donald Davie calls the embarrassment created in the reader by Eliot's assumption of a "vulnerable stance."<sup>27</sup> In Eliot, such an uncharacteristic stance presents a problem; Schwartz, however, had consistently created poetry from just that uneasy stance. If, in this case, Schwartz is not intentionally countering Eliot, within the poem there is a more obviously deliberate reversal of Eliot: "After utter forgiveness, what knowledge/ can be possessed by consciousness."

Schwartz, by equipping his ideal with intelligence, divinity and moral concern, has overcome a problem common to poets who attempt to celebrate a loving relation with the world, but who, therefore, lack the necessary reciprocity of love. By calling the river father-god, Schwartz endows his ideal with both the capacity for deserved devotion and reciprocity of love. Narcissus, then, is in close, loving relation

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<sup>26</sup> T.S.Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950 (New York, 1952), p. 130.

<sup>27</sup> "T.S.Eliot: The End of an Era," The Twentieth Century CLIX (April, 1956), 350-362. Reprinted in T.S.Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Hugh Kenner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962), p. 194.

with the universe. Narcissus gazes "upon the river's surface as a love of his own." This river, like that of Wallace Stevens' ("The River of Rivers in Connecticut") "is fateful,/ Like the last one," and "Is not to be seen beneath the appearances/ That tell of it."<sup>28</sup> Narcissus relates that the others remain "unaware of the meaning of his gaze upon the river at night, or when the sky was so clouded over that he could not see his own face." Thus the river, and not self-regard is the focus of the gaze and of the poem. That ". . . river, continuously changing under the continuously changing light, showed how each thing was sometimes beautiful or had had more possibilities than it appeared to have at any given moment, or was more and more contained than he had supposed." It is as Wallace Stevens' "unnamed flowing":

Space filled, reflecting the seasons, the folk-lore  
Of each of the senses; call it, again and again and again,  
The river that flows nowhere, like a sea.<sup>29</sup>

Narcissus desires "to be loved by a truly beautiful being," and simultaneously realizes that "the river itself was the most beautiful of all the beings he had ever beheld." In this poetic statement Schwartz arrives at a theory of resemblances much

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<sup>28</sup>Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (New York, 1954), p. 533.

<sup>29</sup>Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens, p. 533.

like the one Stevens' had formulated in his "Three Academic Pieces":

The relations between the ego and reality must be left largely on the margin. . . . (Narcissus) sought out his image everywhere because it was the principle of his nature, as it is of ours, to expect to find pleasure in what he found. Narcissism, then, involves. . . (the) principle that as we seek out our resemblances we expect to find pleasure in doing so; that is to say, in what we find. So strong is that expectation that we find nothing else.<sup>30</sup>

Or, in Schwartz's poem, "The River Was the Emblem of All Beauty, All."

Schwartz concludes the Argument with the realization that Narcissus "could never become the river without plunging into it. . . ."--thus paralleling Stevens' understanding that "Both in nature and in metaphor identity is the vanishing-point of resemblance,"<sup>31</sup> Valéry's conclusion to "Cantate du Narcisse": "Il disparaît."

As evidenced by the typescript, Schwartz excised what he had intended as the opening stanza of his overture; in doing so he once again created a strong beginning for a poem:

The mind is a city like London,  
Smoky and populous: it is a capital  
Like Rome, ruined and eternal  
Marked by monuments of ages which no one  
Now remembers . . . . .

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<sup>30</sup>Wallace Stevens, The Necessary Angel (New York, 1951), pp. 79-80.

<sup>31</sup>Stevens, The Necessary Angel, p. 72.



Among the worksheets and drafts from those earlier plans for "The Kingdom of Poetry," we find Schwartz's initial conception of many passages for "Narcissus." The following excerpt is from a sheet dated 10/2/53 and 10/29/54:

It is true  
 That poetry begins in a famous city  
     and moves near a famous river  
 (Although it surpasses time and place  
     --which are merely the mind's forms and conditions  
         from poetry's peaks and points of view  
         in the country of the blue  
 Nevertheless poetry seeks to conquer time and place  
     sometimes it succeeds--it conquers: triumphant!  
 It grows in the great city in a mystery of vitality,  
     energy and potentiality of actuality  
 Drawing light and power from the mixing of the peoples  
     among each other  
     and the confusion of tongues  
         and orchestras and ships  
         and strangers . . . . .

That passage appears to be the first nebulous formulation of what became the powerful opening of "Narcissus."

In his opening Schwartz both exercises old talents and shows some new abilities. He has always been quick to see the ramification of ideas expressed by other poets, but -- especially in his borrowings from Stevens-- has rarely crystallized them in effective poetry. But here, in the opening lines of "Narcissus," Schwartz poetically advances Stevens' description of the begetting of public and private images:

Perhaps resemblance which seems to be related so closely to the imagination is related even more closely to the intelligence, of which perceptions of resemblance are effortless accelerations. . . . What our eyes behold may well be the text of life but one's meditations on the text and the disclosures of those meditations are no less a part of the structure of reality.<sup>32</sup>

The opening lines of "Narcissus" evoke that centrality of the mind in the structuring of reality and in the reality of the structures of monument and memory. Schwartz follows those lines with quotations from Donne and Shakespeare:

'Call us what you will: we are made such by love:  
"We are such stuff as dreams are made on. . .

Thus Schwartz provides examples of the memories and monuments of a poet's mind. Those monuments are not fragments to shore against ruin, but eternal ruins which themselves provide the basis for coherence.

Since that sense of reality did not always underlie Schwartz's poetry, Narcissus, who speaks "at times in the third person (in retrospect)" often looks back to earlier attitudes and idioms. The first abrupt and ironic recall follows the poetic monuments of the opening: "When/ Will the houselights of the universe/ Light up." Schwartz's old, obsessive onomastics are echoed in "Names: Sisyphus, Oedipus, Theseus, Heracles, Cupid and Psyche." Narcissus

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<sup>32</sup>Stevens, The Necessary Angel, pp. 75-76.

alludes retrospectively to themes, phrases and techniques of Genesis, both in his claim that he discovered the self through "falsehood's fecundity," and in his use of overblown biblical parody:

I have supped and sucked and sickened in the valley  
                                   of desperation.  
 I have been terrified--and in the darkness lost,  
 I have turned and sought despair as consolation  
                                   or agony's cessation,  
 I surrendered or thought I surrendered forever,  
                                   drawing the shades  
 Which shut out the blue rivers of morning . . .

Speaking in the first person as Narcissus, Schwartz recalls that others "mocked and marvelled at the statue which was/ A caricature, as strained and stiff, and yet/ A statue of self-love!" As the poem progresses, the reader becomes aware that although on one level the mockery is directed at Narcissus, Schwartz is also using the myth to mock himself-as-Narcissus. His strategy for making the poem operate on more than one level (speaking in both first and third persons, at times in the present and at times in retrospect) allows Schwartz to adopt a seemingly detached view of his past, seeing it as parable:

I knew the parable of trying to see  
 The truth behind the face, the mind behind  
 The surface, the radiance within  
 The radiance within the shining radiance  
 And thus I missed matchless magnificence  
 So many times! . . . .

In that guise of detachment, he can report the past as "The scenes of falsehood," and, even more strikingly, acknowledge the present, including the vehicle which purports to record the history as parable: "This too is a parable of reality."

In "Narcissus" as in Summer Knowledge, Schwartz remains wonderstruck by his new "knowledge" and the possibility of turning that knowledge into poetry. At times, the sonically dense, repetitive mode of Summer Knowledge successfully captures the involutions and infoldings of narcissism:

Within the river's folds and folding fields  
I gazed until I looked for the rippled dream  
Of seeing myself at last a being I loved  
Loved by a being beautiful enough to love--

Other sections of the poem, however, reveal those weaknesses of Summer Knowledge in their lexical and prosodic over-abundance: "the plenitude and the majesty. . . the ever-flowing process of reality. . . the majesty of the mystery/ Of the abundance of surrender." Schwartz, with his double focus, both observer and observed, can even record the embarrassment of this profusion as "an embarrassment/ Of riches. . . like Midas's gold."

Since the river reflects everything, including the past, which "Is but a version of the future which is likely to be false," Narcissus sees "many structures of reality. . .



that totality is not, then, presented as part of the poem. But through the writing of "Narcissus," Schwartz himself has undergone transformation. As we have seen, many of the late, uncollected poems express Schwartz's feeling of the futility of any further poetic creation. Poetry is no longer the necessary instrument of cohesion between world and being, but a futile, gratuitous endeavor. A poem becomes nothing more than "a pattern of recurrence, a hammer of repetitive occurrence."<sup>33</sup>

Throughout his career Schwartz has begun "again and again," finding new attitudes, responding to changing world scenes, and working out poetic means of expressing those new orders. Now, having seen the sameness and sterility of beginnings--that process which sustained him in poetic creation--Schwartz brings and end to his poetry.

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<sup>33</sup>"Journey of a Poem Compared to All the Sad Variety of Travel," Kenyon Review XXIV (Spring 1962), 304.

## APPENDIX A

Sonnets

1.

This Muse is memory and nothing else,  
 It is but what has been, it is the past,  
 Which comes in music charming, slow or fast,  
 To urge my voice until it foams and spills  
 The syntax of heaven, the grammar of night.  
 The hum about my head can but increase,  
 As time clouds floridly, blue piece by piece,  
 The time's the sky's imponderable height.

And thus I tender, giving up my will  
 To all my visitors doll-faced or dead,  
 An acquiescent shrug or bow until  
 The past has acted and the poem is said:  
 By this ballet, of such humility,  
 I show my learning and my charity.

---

2.

Such armed felicities ravage the breast,  
 The war and peace of joy will never cease,  
 Delirious blood floods face in that unrest,  
 Bomb breaks up time, delivering from ease.  
 Standing on thresholds opening South and West,  
 Stammering for deep delay, release,  
 Who is more frightened than in that strict test,  
 Who is more afraid to lose his eyes?

Midas could pitifully relate the story,  
 All being gold was merely, only gold;  
 The golden joy must drown in golden glory,  
 Binding the world in light, blinding all eyes.  
 So by her pain is the poor bride consoled,  
 Paying the dollars of joy for what she buys.

---

## 4.

Phedre and Heathcliff stand in the door  
 Grave and pathetic, as if cut in stone.  
 The clock has stopped, the calendar to the floor  
 Has fallen! and now you are alone  
 As the calm idiot assured in his dream,  
 You are that idiot assured in your big room,  
 Knowing love absolute, its things which seem,  
 Necessities, of supernatural bloom.

Who can return, even if cold and pale,  
 As if from holiday, and sleep at midnight,  
 Prune the garden, play chess through winter's gale,  
 Reading drowsily of passion in the soft lamplight?  
 No, the park is ash, where you walked before,  
 Phedre and Heathcliff stand in the door!

## 7.

The self is unlike music. They are alike  
 In staying air which flows and having sides;  
 Walking around the two, nothing abides  
 But melts before you see, flake after flake,  
 Note after note, of anger, love and pleasure.  
 The flute gets spit, the cello's string is bitten  
 By flexing finger, and the self is smitten  
 By like things: kiss and cough: and in like measure.

And yet they differ, as Africa and France.  
 For music moves to ends that all foresee  
 Assured in doubt and known in every chance,  
 While the self teeters on a tight-rope, free,  
 Step after step, and ignorant of what  
 Is safe, blue, right, cold, blind, soft, real and hot.



## 8.

## Dreaming on Things to Come

The room's entirely pink before the Flood,  
 Save for the milky bed, the color of sleep,  
 For pinkness is the old age of the blood,  
 So long ago desire ceased to leap,  
 The door's frame is no more the careful bud  
 Opening a small box limiting the deep;  
 It is the window's brink, although no rude  
 Fall threats -- merely the floor of the pillow-slip.

White toes of crushed cigarettes convene  
 In the ashtray's great arena, sunk in ash,  
 The idiot giggles, staring at the scene,  
 His fear mounts, his laughter becomes tinny:  
 He is acquiring such company, much company  
 --More than ever his solitude could wish!

---

## 9.

The morning blooming on the windowpane  
 Asserts the theme, Columbian, and speaks  
 Of one just introduced becoming known,  
 His mind's particular clear facts, and seeks  
 My little sister's birthday rosiness,  
 When future flowered on the bright sea-shore,  
 And shows such newness in my happiness  
 As promises contain, and more and more

The thought of reading on the page to come  
 Flows on undoing gifts in packages,  
 And both the darkness waiting for Spring become,  
 The music flows to deepest presages,  
 Undoes its source! my dear and mystery,  
 Full of fresh worlds untouched, unknown to me.

---

## Songs

### VI

The blueness of the sky is overhead,  
 Seen or unseen. The city's burden is  
 A screen of mountains hiding from the birds  
 The generous theatre of the lovely will. . .  
 And if I call your will a waiting bird  
 As if a natural thing, I mean to show  
 The hideous balances which wait for it  
 Flying with anguished breath the cliffs of air.

The bird must fall, the acrobat must fall  
 Daringly forth with faith to catch his partner,  
 The animal must tumble and fall down  
 To learn love's denouement and utter shame . . .  
 Stretched in the rich confusion of each lapse,  
 You learn the ground which underlies your will,  
 The dark nature thick with graves and jewels . . .

The monument, the factory stack, the tree  
 Blacken against this sunset in which all  
 All independence, and privacy must fall  
 Perfectly as the diver straightly downward  
 Into the dark sea where the first things turn.

And from that dark must rise and fly again,  
 And fall again, risking the death of the will,  
 And fly again, to win warm good once more,  
 For all must rise and fly, all must fulfill  
 The incontestable game where good is won  
 And all must lose again and once more fall  
 Because love bars the anger of the will  
 And asks the whole surrender of the fall,  
 But all must fly again, for all must win  
 From future circumstances the unborn good.  
 The blueness of the sky is overhead,  
 Seen or unseen. Love waits beneath,  
 Known or unknown, ignored or understood.

---

## VII

Existence is nervous and sick, thought Swift,  
 Ambient, inevitable! Dante, whether blind,  
 Or in his dream, or by superior staring,  
 Scarcely could tell the living from the dead,  
 And God, it seems, once died; I have heard him coughing:  
 Let Stella be witness, or Anna Karenina,  
 Fugitive Anthony, or Sigmund Freud:  
We who are in love know this.

Existence is a rose; the worm i' the rose,  
 Objective or subjective, Othello saw;  
 Tragic or romantic, such is the mixture,  
 East and West, Iago i' the rose,  
 An adorable fixation or a black ram tugging  
 A pure white ewe, and I have seen,  
 From the open bathroom window, urinating,  
 The abstract moonlight and the perfect stars:  
We who are in love know this.

Father Plato, the Platonic moonlight  
 Cannot straighten these slipshod circumstances,  
 Overlapping time, uneven life and death,  
 Both are laid bare in the justice of the sun,  
 The backyard's wash, the ivory bookends,  
 The kiss and the cough, the set of Dickens,  
 --Call Tannhauser from the south of sleep,  
 Call Desdemona and all the suite of love:  
 What have they learned between heaven and hell?  
 Existence is a rose, but it is unwell:  
We who are in love know this.

---

## VIII

When suburbs' dripping sewers take  
Used condoms and burnt matches, Spring  
Makes Winter seem a dreamed mistake:  
Thick, thin, gold, null, flashes each thing,

Shifts, turns, odd and even, lost and found,  
Drugged and sentient, obscurely  
Well and unwell: ambiguous the heart's sound  
Sounds, does it not,  
and unsurely.

## XIII

If you could be wholly taken  
By attitudes in the abstract mirror,  
Detached from care's dress,  
Framed, no nearer,  
So, the blood stopped,  
The eyes in peace, the breast cold,  
The hair stiff, the mouth in bands,  
It might not be true  
That whatever you do  
You take your life in your hands.

## XIV

Rest upon the silent shore,  
My timid darling, questioning and concerned  
Rest hands upon the bite of sand, before  
The wave curves down, I will be learned,  
Before the wave falls down I will be learned,  
Instantly will I know the secret which you await,  
Your back turned on the boardwalk, deaf to that  
Gay carousel's emotion, whereon the children ride,  
And still perplexed, worry on a fate,  
Dark-blue, like the sky, and inexhaustible.  
We are of Zion: this exile is innate.

## XVIII

Fog in stony December; it is well,  
 The season's character being clear,  
 That every shape of error veil  
 Building and transient street-car. War  
 Is made in summer fitly, since it takes  
 The class of 1913 when they are  
 Immortal June. But still the buyer buys  
 His town-car, fur-coat, Corona, and such cakes,  
 Even while the wind pursues its idiot fate,  
 Bearing the knife-edged cold and the radio's lies.

Beaded or smoky, much comfort is in fog,  
 Russia and Germany are near and far,  
 Dim in the subway, thunder and horror wait,  
 And all turn in their sleep to question where they are.

---

 XXV

What ought one to do?  
 Be useful, be the teacher  
 Of the young. And from them  
 Gained the unmarked blue  
 Which so soon will harm them,  
 The hope which, looking up,  
 Will often make them trip.

Then study all delight  
 Until you nicely see  
 Responsibility,  
 And fluttering like a kite,  
 Yet often a dark bird,  
 The mind which, looking up,  
 Is blinded at the top.

Take wife, get child, and show  
 That love's wet fruits stay south  
 Though every brother go  
 To break his brother's mouth,  
 And show that time is frozen  
 In the house's warmth:  
 Then, a governor in reason,  
 And learned in all breath,  
 Go north to study death.

---

## APPENDIX B

From Genesis: Book II, unpublished, no page numbers

The arithmetic which brought about this sickness brought about another. Reduced Hershey to the sick depths where he felt anger and self-pity.

As persecution deliberate, going back to the kindergarten where he would not return from his exile on the stair,

In the enchainment of past and future. The teacher marked all the papers after the test,

Each row of pupils came to her in succession. Hershey came with his row to be marked for the answer to the first question,

And was marked wrong, although he thought that this time he had done perfectly. Mrs. Curtis hurriedly showed the class how one arrived at the correct answer.

Her explanation made Hershey sure that she was wrong and he was right. He raised his hand and was denied because she was impatient to get finished.

Immediately arose his self-righteous anger, inspired by her brusque gesture. He refused to come with his row for the marking of the other answers,

But stayed in seat and bent his head under the desk and began to write

A letter to the teacher! saying that she ought not to ask pupils to come to school to have their papers marked incorrectly.

As he scrawled his self-righteous letter, murmurs arose at his daring. He heard the other correct answers, and saw that he was wrong very often,

And began to doubt if he had been right to begin with, and began to wish he had not begun and committed himself so much to so much anger

As the teacher came to his desk, commanded him to show her the letter. He refused, choked and inarticulate with tears, although the letter was addressed to her.

And then gave her the letter. She read it and grew white-furious. Not the sympathy he had hoped for in his foolishness,

But with the utmost harshness she reprimanded him. Afraid of her job, for Hershey had touched the need beneath the flesh, in saying she was unfair to her pupils,

Hershey was utterly defeated; half-hidden, his face in his hands, and hopeless, he looked now at Una. But she would not look at him, and he saw that she disapproved of his hysterical abandon.

And was not impressed by it, as he had hoped, profoundly inspired by his mother in the roadhouse.

-- But soon this black day faded in the passage of days, although it seemed first obsessive and overwhelming.

For this was not all, this was only part, this was not even half of Hershey, there were many other things.

He returned to his part of courtier and comedian. His anguished striving love strove to exist in the aisle between the two desks at the back of the room amid the teacher's teaching.

When he came to school in cold bright November wearing his new brown sweater, and when he did not take it off and hang it up,

Mrs. Curtis said, "Now Hershey, put away your sweater, everyone has seen it by now,"

Hershey blanched and blushed and wondered how she was able to know his mind so perfectly.

## APPENDIX C

Transcription of handwritten letter from W.H. Auden with  
author's corrections and emendations indicated

26.8.42

As from c/o Mr. James Stern  
207 E. 52  
N.Y.C.

Dear Delmore Schwartz,

I have ~~been~~ taken an unconscionable time with your mss, I fear;  
but I had to go off to the Middle West for a bit, and then be-  
cause it raises questions of great importance which are very  
difficult for me to express without misunderstanding, I have  
been trying to get clear in my mind just how to explain to my-  
self and you why I feel you would be wise not to publish a  
poem on which you have spent so much time and thought.

To state my opinion in a sentence, I feel that you have ad-  
vanced along the road of consciousness until you have now  
approached the frontier where the question of religious faith  
is inescapable (p. 190. "All my life/ I felt my self's lack  
of necessity"), the point at which you have become aware that  
ahead of you lies either faith or despair, but that you are  
still ~~under-a~~ confused about what faith is: because the road  
that has led to this point has been that of ~~self-awareness~~,  
aesthetic and ethical consciousness, you still cling to the



hope that it crosses the frontier-- but it doesn't; it stops on a precipice and you have to jump, ie ~~your poem~~ you have written this poem, I think, with the hope that ~~by~~ in the process you would find your answer given you, when as a matter of fact the poem could only be written after you had first taken the decisive jump. You say (p. 196) that Augustine and Rousseau 'need to blurt out all, being oppressed/by what they lived like, nausea'. This may be true of Rousseau, but it is completely false as regards Augustine. Augustine isn't oppressed, nor does he try to tell all. He has a perfectly definite purpose in mind in writing his confessions, which governs his selection of memories. Believing that he has been led by the grace of God from error to truth, ~~he tells~~ what he tells about himself is what in the light of this truth he finds significant; he is not, (as I think Rousseau is) trying to be 'interesting.'

The aesthetic success of any work of art in which the subject matter is personal recollection, depends on the ~~degree-of~~ memories being viewed in the light of a decision already taken. eg. Un saison en Enfer presupposes Rimbaud's rejection of Poetry as Religion. La Recherche

du Temps Perdu presupposes Proust's decision that to exist is to despair,

~~The decision, of course may not always be quite conscious~~  
 hence, (if one does not take a the same decision) his extremely one-sided picture of love. The Prelude presupposes Wordsworth's conviction, the opposite of Rimbaud's, that the poetic imagination and the religious revelation are one. (in my opinion a false conviction which brought its appropriate punishment in the drying-up of his imaginative faculty).

When I ask myself why Genesis doesn't seem to come off aesthetically while The Prelude does, I think it is because Wordsworth really managed to believe this, while you are trying to, but are too advanced to succeed. To begin with you have an insight that Wordsworth lacked, and which to me is <sup>significance</sup> essential, into the ~~unique-importance~~ of suffering. (p. 135. A Jew, born to the long habit of pain/ and alienation, of the people chosen for pain). The use of the word chosen implies a great many things that I think you run away from.

What I think you know, has been succinctly put by Kierkegaard.

"One must never desire suffering. No, you have only to remain in the condition of praying for happiness on earth. If a man desire suffering, then it is as though he were able by himself to solve this terror: --that suffering is the characteristic of God's love. And that is precisely what he cannot do; it is 'the spirit' which witnesses with him that it is so; and consequently he must not himself have desired suffering."

What the 'neurotic' individual compared with the 'normal' individual or the Jews collectively compared with the 'Aryans' collectively, see clearly is that suffering has value. For this reason qua neurotic and qua Jew they are tempted to desire suffering; --hence the tenacity with which the neurotic clings to his neurosis and the Jew to his race-consciousness. (the aesthetic temptation).

On the other hand what people in the modern 'scientific' age in general compared with earlier ages, and in America in particular compared with other countries, see clearly is that one must not desire suffering, but strive for happiness on earth. For this reason qua modern and qua American, they are tempted to be ashamed of suffering as a something

disgraceful and vulgar. Hence Freudianism, Marxism, Positivism etc. as religions (instead of techniques of unmasking).  
(The ethical temptation).

You seem to me to be torn between these two insights and not yet to have fully reduced the paradox.

eg. Pride like the sand-colored lion stalks through  
the heart (p. 69)

Sexual Pleasure was the only stray vice which  
attracted him. (p. 71)

til the avenging angel

Drives innocence from childhood and from Eden

Having once man performed original sin. (p. 122)

Freely sinning with all . . . (p. 162)

O teach him of the causes of his life,

Showing the guilt of that sufficient cause his  
independent will (p. 174)

I saw corruption seize the playing boys. (p. 201)

Pride, sexual Pleasure as a vice, sin, the guilt of the independent will, corruption, are religious concepts ~~or else~~  
~~meaningless.~~

On the other hand you play around with the Freudian mythology to which such concepts are neuroses produced by the Super-Ego,

or else produce God as a convenient aesthetic or metaphysical metaphor.

My God! whoever he is  
By what name justly known, as the chorus says,  
in the Agamemnon.

Absalom's Ahhh hhh, or Moses burning bush,  
The nothing of the saints, or Aristotle's thinker. (p.229)

O infinite God  
If such a being exists. (243)

O Father of all hearts. . . O Dream behind the Dream (260)

It isnt that I think ~~Freud-and~~ Psychoanalysis or Metaphysical speculation are without value, but that their use presupposes a religious faith, and that they become destructive when they presuppose nothing but themselves, ie human consciousness.

The value of the Freudian technique is as a weapon against Greek and Eastern Dualism against the pride which makes finiteness the source of evil. (as against the Judiac-

Christian view that the source of evil is the human pride that refuses to accept its finiteness).

eg. It ~~infers~~ implies, for instance, that going to the toilet is a religious act, and that the earliest expression of human pride that a baby can make is constipation. But when, as they usually do, Freudians deny such an attitude, their dialectic is destroyed and freezes into a monism, which in practice means that the ultimate arbiter of values is the collective super-ego of the community at any given moment. (see Frued's identification of artology and teleology in his treatment of art.). Similarly metaphysics is important as work of clarification 'once' it can presuppose a faith to clarify; but in so far as it attempts to remove the necessity of faith by proving the existence of God as a logical necessity, it deserves the attack made on it by the Positivists, for it can only produce an As-If God, about whom one can argue after dinner but on whom one's eternal happiness can not possibly depend.

I find your preface To The Reader very significant.

"Some authors are fortunate . . . they do not have to bring in their beliefs and values from the

outside; they have only to examine their experience in order to find particular beings and actions which are significant of their beliefs and values. I cannot think of any author who has had this advantage and good fortune to the utmost unless it be the authors of the Gospels who perhaps had only to look up or remember."

This seems to me an extraordinary statement. The disciples of Jesus were put in the most difficult situation conceivable. It is one thing to recognize another as a Führer, or a guru, because one judges by results; if they fail to produce results or one outgrows them, one can go on to another; their authority lies in its manifestation. It is quite another thing to accept a person who is as human as subject to exactly the same physical limitations as the only begotten son of God, because that is something that it is impossible to manifest (Jesus does not behave like Superman). How difficult it is, one can see from the aesthetic impossibility for Christian painters of representing Jesus as an individual;

he must be represented either as the child, or dead on the Cross.

It must have been precisely their experience which was the disciples' greatest difficulty.

The central fault in your poem is, in my opinion, just the false hope that if you only look up and remember enough, significance and value and belief will appear of themselves. To look up and remember is good because it brings one in time to despair, and it is only when that part is reached that it is possible to submit to something that one cannot find for oneself by scientific experiments, or by writing poems, or ferret out of books, parents, churches, the past or what-have-you.

i.e. the wish to be able to say I done it has first to be annihilated.

This is a muddled and priggish letter I fear, but I really am both interested and hopeful and anxious about your future development, as you have obviously been given great gifts



which, like us all, you are turning against yourself.

I expect to go into the Army on Sept 1st, but the above address will reach me eventually.

Yours ever

Wystan Auden

## APPENDIX D

Photo copy of Schwartz's typescript of  
Studies of Narcissus

STUDIES OF MARCIANUS  
Or a History of Love

Delmore Schwartz

## ARGUMENT

Narcissus, speaking in the first person -- or at times in the third person (in retrospect) describes his passion and the various forms of misunderstanding which others have committed, regarding his behavior. Others -- all the others, including the nymph, Echo -- thought Narcissus was moved by self-love and looked in the river only to see his own beloved face. They forgot that his father was the river god; and they misinterpreted the devotion and concentration, excluding all other things, with which he gazed upon the river's surface as a love of his own which rejected the offered and eager love of all the others, remaining unaware of the meaning of his gaze upon the river at night or when the sky was so clouded over that he could not see his own face. Echo, like all the others, believed that he had fallen in love with himself so much that, being in love with him and misconceiving the nature of love, she imitated his voice and his very words, thinking that this was what he desired and what would make her desirable. The truth was that he was entirely dissatisfied with the image of his own face, yet the river, continuously

*thing, was sometimes beautiful or had had more possibilities than it appeared to have at any given moment, or was more and contained more than he had supposed; and this perception was waiting and promising so much to Narcissus that it nurtured an inexhaustible hope in him, and hence: the hope that he would be satisfied, and*

beautiful enough, as an image, a face and a being, to be able to be loved by a truly beautiful being. But the river itself was the most beautiful of all the beings he had ever beheld. *AND HE COULD NEVER BECOME THE RIVER WITHOUT PLUNGING INTO IT.*

### Overture

Love is destiny: childhood is an illness  
Which lasts throughout a lifetime  
-- With, perhaps, certain intermissions,  
Intervals regarded as flowering heights,

. . . . .

The mind is a city like London,  
Smoky and populous: it is a capital  
Like Rome, ruined and eternal  
Marked by monuments of ages which no one  
Now remembers, containing catacombs,  
Arenas, aqueducts, amphitheatres, church and palace,  
equestrian statues . . .

"Call us what you will: we are made such by love:

"We are such stuff as dreams are made on and

Our lives are ruled by the gods: by Pan

Piping of all, and grasping all grapes,

And by the low-and-arrow boy and

Cupid, piercing the heart suddenly, . . .

. . . . .

Dusk we are to dusk returning: when

Will the houselights of the universe

Light up

. . . for it is not the sea

Which rurs in a shell

## NARCISSUS

It is not only the heart  
 But the fearful hooves of the uncontrollable  
 Horses of the apocalypse, running wildly away  
 Beyond Arcturus -- and returning as suddenly

\* \* \* \* \*

Alone, obsessed as the devout, I waited:  
 Under the mast of my head, my  
 Fed by an abundance so multitudinous  
 I knew it must be infinite:  
 Between the sleek, rippling and glittering silks  
 Delight in the light mounted and rounded in me  
                                           and doubt itself  
                                           and doubt  
 Fathered the dolls of possibility  
 Until they shone as the progeny of hope,  
 The dazzling diamonds my demon denied and loved  
 -- Distant or hidden sources nurtured the sorcery  
 And miracles of radiance, floated out of ceotils  
 Or struck, like lightning from heights I merely guessed  
 . . . . .  
 Now the sky shone: look how my leaves are  
 And black, now they possess and are possessed  
 By every brilliance, radiance, and vivacious --

## NARCISSUS

-- How could they know I had discovered the self?

By studying the marvels of my hope

And all the variety and poverty of my face

Within the supple marble where the leaves

Of swirling waters were more numerous

as various

As falsehood, more fecund than fantasy

And infinite as numbers . . . space was a colosseum,

And infinite as numbers . . .

The silence was the drum, and drums, of space,

Waiting and beating

Throbbing, expectant, before all triumph, all miracles

to come. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Within the river's folds and folding fields

I gazed until I looked for the rippled dream

Of seeing myself at last a being I loved

Loved by a being beautiful enough to love --

. . . The river holds the summer's bride, the sum

Of sun and summer, cold and cold in love:

Love is reality -- as in the beginning it was

And love is destiny. The reality of the ecstasy

## NARCISSUS

Riding into the womb begot the city,  
 Planted or sowed the future's flowers and powers  
     . . . again, again . . .

Inmost was utmost:

Under the mast of my head

My eyes sailed forth and searched

The sleek silks and curving softnesses:

The river was reality and various plurality

And made me other than I was at each

Ripple of its irresistible flowing:

I thought: God is in love, in love with possibility,

His love are his loves, his love is enough

To make the promiscuity of actuality . . .

-- The river was full of bells as the sun rose,

Shuddering ripples gave to the radiance

Of chandeliers at noon, the blazing sun

Became a jewel of inexhaustible opulence. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

The blazing sunlight is the world itself:

The black heart of the ego shines and shines in vain,

Weak as the moonlight, like a kind of moonlight --

\* \* \* \* \*

The river rose from covered sources, secret streams



Until, under the sun, it was a dream of diamonds  
 Or in the winter, frozen, within  
 The snows hushed infinite  
 It was a kind of moonlight  
 A pathos of white silence, white  
 And silent, lighted by the moon's white silence --

\* \* \* \* \*

How blend the light of summer is, how round  
 And how profound the blue he contained and loved  
 Within the river's flowing glass, flinting and glittering --  
 Brightening and darkening, freshening, shadowing  
 In its irresistible going and going holding  
 Glowing and flowing being's immense plurality!

\* \* \* \* \*

The game of the mystery of reality  
 Began when the first thing it concealed itself,  
 When the speech of ripened lips  
 Hid what was already hidden, or not yet known  
 . . .  
 For long, as love, desire was narrative,  
 Gratified in imagination's will,  
 And longer still I read the hampered story  
 Lends an absolute in life's fall story!

. . .

Eternity is the roar you hear  
When you hold a sea shell close to your ear

It is not the sound of the knock of the pounding heart,  
It is not the roar of the insatiable sea, erupting upon  
the shore,  
It is <sup>the</sup> eternal roar of eternity, the lightning and the  
thunder

Each moment's subjection and rejection -- the eternal  
roar of judgment and resurrection --

. . . After utter forgiveness, what knowledge  
Can be possessed by consciousness.  
Forgive: do not forget. Remember and live,  
For life is rooted in memory's immolation and blessedness.

. . .

Look: I looked at the dancers, swaying,  
Under the lanterns, in the olive garden,  
the fat vineyard, the apple orchard,  
Or very near the river where the boats are anchored,  
Bound to the shore and lolling, like the dancers:  
They do not know the secret of summer,  
They do not possess the eternal knowledge of the river,  
Yet they sit and quicken, murmur to the music,

## NARCISSUS

Delighted that they exist, for all love's agony  
 and all love's ecstasy,

They are not ashamed they touch each other, nor afraid  
 They are beautiful enough to touch and love,  
 They wish to touch each, touching and touched,  
 Before the cause because the truth, before the root  
 Becomes the fruit, because

\* \* \* \* \*

We are all -- look! -- the figments of the imagination's  
 aspiration!

Are the follies or follies of intense and hot infatuation:

Each heart is liege to Venus, queen and empress of the  
 seas and ports of consciousness;

And thus, as Venus from the sea arose and came to be,

The self I know, Narcissus as he is known, was born,

within the river, arising shocked --

Gazing or gazing at the river's ever-being, ever-becoming:

The river was my mother: it was my school

and is the only school because

Knowledge is only the knowledge of love,

And every story is the story of love,

And every storyteller is a ghost!

. . .

The river was the abundant belly of beauty itself  
 the river was the dream space where I walked,  
 the river was itself and yet it was -- flowing and  
                   refreshing --

A self that, another self, or self renewed  
 at every tick of eternity, and by each glint of light  
 floating or                   , descending to shade and black:  
 -- Had I but told them my heart, told how it was  
 changed as rain on earth, like to dust, as a child's heart, like  
 Sorrow, in love and                   , in                     
 Su ping like joy, I wish they have heard. How could they?  
 Now, when the                   , like the                   ,  
 Simple and                   , there were a whole world of                   ,  
                   speaking love and                    of                     
                   singing --

Gazing upon their                   , they                     
 Could they have seen my face as theirs who are  
 Holy and                   ,                    of hope.

                  --                    of                    --  
 Perhaps,                   ,                   ,                     
 they were disfigured,                   ,                     
 And he, and even beloved, white swans, noble and beautiful  
                   Could she have seen my face as  
 simple                   ,                   ,                   ,                     
                   --

WITCHAMERE

-- Surely they would have laughed again, renewed  
their scorn,

Giggled and snickered, said. Surely have said

his is the ruler's son of the abandoned,

The living, love of the human:

I was the source of their sorrows,

Dead and a death, the end of sorrow and lost.

...

ly faces were a part of my life

London and in the streets of the city,

children or others in the street or away

when they were glad and when they were not

little

...

The love of the human:

The world of the human, the world of the

The world of the human, the world of the

The world of the human, the world of the

The world of the human, the world of the

The world of the human, the world of the

The world of the human, the world of the

With the love of the human, the world of the

(Fear and hatred of the others)

-- The others were the despots of despair --

. . .

The river's freshness sailed from unknown sources --

. . . They anchored giggled, laughed aloud at last,  
they mocked and marvelled at the statue which was  
a caricature, as stunted and stiff, and yet  
a statue of self-love! -- Since self-love was  
to them, truly my true love, how, then, was I

a stillness of nervousness

So nervous a caricature: did they suppose

Self-love was unrequited, or betrayed?

They thought I had fallen in love with my own face

-- Thinking, that I had fallen in love with my own face,

And this belief became the night-like obstacle

To understanding all my unbroken suffering

My studious self-regard, the pain of hope,

The torments of conceivability:

Not then could I have expected them to see

to me

That being thus seemed as a toad, a frog

a wen,

a mole.

Knowing their certainty that I was only

A monument, a monster who had fallen in love

With himself alone, now right I have  
 Told them what was in me, trembling, and passionate  
 Within the labyrinth of my mind, my heart:  
 The words for what is in my heart  
 Is not mine: for I must finally find  
 Some metaphor, comparison, although  
 All substitutes are counterfeit and vague  
 Or are at most the resemblances  
 So near, and hence so false of sense

who are

Alike and yet unlike because they seem -- and are --  
 Forgotten by the same story

~~there~~

father and mother,

older and younger -- each and other, unique

like everything and everyone.

\* \* \* \* \*

(The Feasts of Identity)

Once far from me in the distance, in a grove,

concealed

Hidden, she shrank, I heard a girl

Screaming with joy, joy absolute,

Joy unheard of before, and never known,

And given to me or given

By me to her: I had never been

The cause of that boundless ecstasy in which  
A man had plunged that screaming girl,  
-- A triumph so triumphant all is lost  
Save for the sweetness at the source  
Within, intense, of such an intensity  
That blessed in the loss of consciousness  
It seems, at first, a kind of death -- so much  
Like death that the fearful self, beholds  
                  beholding

Upon the brink, all of the terror of love,  
Draws back and the first time never is endured!

\* \* \* \* \*

I knew the parable of trying to see  
The truth behind the face, the mind behind  
The surface, the radiance within  
The radiance within the shining radiance  
And thus I missed matchless magnificence  
So many times! Since, at times,  
Appearance is reality and not a mask  
                  neither secret nor masked.

The apple is the apple which is red  
And ripe upon the tree -- but only then  
During the time of ripening, before



## NARCISSUS

The fall, long long after the flower  
 -- The times of flowering and the flowers are  
 The scenes of falsehood most of all!  
 This too is a parable of reality,  
 It is as well a parable of love,  
 And love's reality, after the flowers  
 After the green and roving fruit,

I was for a long time, every kind  
 Of shining angel: kind of angle,  
 And kind of light: each point of view  
 Lighted up something new, or some which  
 I never knew. Every picture possessed  
 Four sides, and four thousand sides and sights  
 Each time I looked or read between the lines  
 I saw the mount of Venus suddenly  
 I found myself upon the island named  
 Cytherea -- the lake of summer capital.

\* \* \* \* \*

I visited the house of Orpheus,  
 His house, his garden and his park,  
 The horses which he loved and which he lost . . .  
 Binding the beasts of hell, to which he sang  
 Not to retain his lost Eurydice,  
 But to be free of the ice-like pain and stone of loss.

## NARCISSUS

## (Endless Sentences)

How many thoughts, like lightning strokes, occurred  
And seemed more true than any truth I knew!

Came with no concentration, no  
Concern or effort, toiling up the path,  
Sparkled like the radiance or stood like the oars  
Whence all the radiance arrives, the sunlight's swords:

Each then at an intuition, instant,  
Spontaneous, coherent in the mind  
Of words: and seemed and were and are  
-- As first I named them -- endless sentences  
Proven abundantly in all the instances  
Experience unveiled, although it was  
-- In so many other ways -- astonishing!

This was an endless sentence which I learned  
Or recognized in the fluent river's school:  
Everything is always somewhere else; or it is  
Present -- when unexpressed -- in an embarrassment  
of riches, a profusion prolific and inexhaustible,  
An oppression of luxury, like Midas' gold.

This is an endless sentence which I saw  
As student at the river's universal school:

## NARCISSUS

The present is the future. We are there  
 -- Or going where we wished to be -- the past  
 Is but a version of the future which  
 Is likely to be false. The present is  
 The future twice: first it is the future of the hope  
 By which we live and die, direct or drive the will  
 Of toil, the mind of effort; second, it is  
 The comparison of the present as it is  
 And as it was conceived by hope, before,  
 When past was present still, not yet unmasked.

How many structures of reality  
 I saw within the river: light which was at once  
 Insight, the sweet access of being which  
 The radiance of knowledge gives and gives  
 With a purity and freedom which no other thing,  
 Consumed, confers, neither the bread nor wine  
 On which we fed on the dark god's holidays.

\* \* \* \* \*

Height:

Light:

the river of all rivers, the region of erection

The feeling of the real and

## NARCISSUS

The feast of reality and  
Your holy word  
An infinite bliss, given as  
infinitely as  
It is infinitely gifted:  
Let it be, let your kingdom  
Descend in all splendor  
When we ring  
The bells of morning and the bells of mortality  
Swinging and singing  
                        as the ever freshness  
Which flowers forever in the dark patience  
Of the strength of hope and the truth  
Of the heart which the heart itself  
Seldom knows, and never wholly believes.

\* \* \* \* \*

You would not have found  
What is so precious to you, if you had not  
Been seeking it. And: If you had sought it,  
You would not have found it: Let it come! Let it come!

This is true too: if you find only  
what you bring in your seeking,

## NARCISSUS

-- Yet: you would not have found it,  
If you had not been able to recognize it!

-- This is the dynasty of discovery:  
It is ruled by a dialectic of poles apart

The synthesis is thus:

It is true. It is not real:

You find what you possess: you seek  
What you do not know you have  
that you possess.

. . .

The river sang: there are many truths,  
Look: how <sup>l</sup>they glitter and ripple, radiant,  
And the river chanted: many truths -- did you know?  
do you believe?

Are better than one truth. This is  
The doctrine of the musician and rustician:  
But reality is musical and rustic.  
It comprehends the stones and the hearts of men.  
And all the variety between these two  
Extremes completes the comparison  
Which rates all means poor and inadequate  
Once set in contrast with reality's infinity

## NARCISSUS

Those who knew passion and compassion after me  
 Misunderstood my purity, my poverty  
 The elation through privation, the motion of devotion.

Names: Sisyphus, Oedipus, Theseus, Heracles,  
 Cupid and Psyche . . .

They never knew -- or knew for the first time,  
 The                    of the rain,  
                          nor for the first time  
 Knew the new flow of the heartbeats of love  
 A thing -- and experience -- which, never having been  
                          known before  
 Did not possess the status of what exists  
                          the dusk of doubt  
 But merely the status of hope, the state of dusk  
 And doubt, and fear, rising and falling,

. . . It is not true: it never has been true.  
 The moon smiles on the loved and the unloved  
 As who should. The music mounted to the minds  
 Of those who could, and those who could not hear  
 The music blooming, blossoming, flowering and flowing  
                          forth

And there you have fallen or are falling in love  
 Behold it -- behold that host of sentiment --

that host of

## NARCISSUS

21.

What blooms after the lapping, linear dimnesses  
 When night in all its formless vagueness is over all  
 The beauty of the body of the river?

The roses are pink because of the weight of fragrance.  
 The leaves are green because green aspires to <sup>the</sup> rises  
 to radiance.

The river is the ripening or the ripened  
 Harvest of all the passing snows which move and shine  
 Between the soil, the sun, and the brilliant or dark sky.

The river is the hymn wherein  
 The ultimate vision of reality  
 Becomes the plain and simple of dawn and dusk  
 In a splendor so multitudinous  
 It must be infinite and infinitely generous.  
 It is the dance in which abundance falls and follows,  
 Forever moving  
 In all the years, the cycles of fertility and fruitfulness.

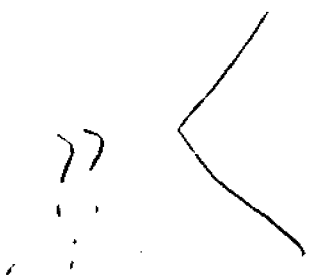
## NARCISSUS

-- Branches, trees, brooded over the pool:

Salmon slipped lithely under the ripples, in grooves

And the salmon of the sunlight still gleamed until

All became





## NARCISSUS

O the brio, o presto, o allegro of the river when  
                                   the sun

Blazes down on it, and it sang, mingling brights and  
                                   blues:

What ghost a sovereign ruled the sources, distant,  
                                   concealed,

Changing the depths under the merrying light,  
                                   so furious: so joyous:  
                                   so spontaneous!

. . .

A suave lush.

I was in the presence of the mystery  
 Of the amplitude of abundance, dancing,  
 Multitudinous abundance, the majesty  
 Of ample infinitude, flowing and overflowing.

I was in the presence of the mystery  
 Of the plenitude and the majesty  
 Of the gifts and the giving and the grant  
 Of the ever-flowing process of reality:  
 Love is knowing in unknowing  
 Love is the majesty of the mystery  
 Of the abundance of surrender

## NARCISSUS

When suddenly all the senses chant,  
And the mind, caught in the anthem,

\* \* \* \* \*

Who but the fallen angel of consciousness  
Sings with so much radiance of the clarity of reality?  
The mastery of victory? The reality of hope?

I have supped and sucked and sickened in the valley  
of desperation.

I have been terrified -- and in the darkness lost,  
I have turned and sought despair as consolation  
or agony's cessation,

I surrendered or thought I surrendered forever,  
drawing the shades

Which shut out the blue rivers of morning, ending  
my vigil,

Telling myself that the self was nothing and all was  
nothingness

Nature was nothingness, and desire was nothing but  
passage,

The passage from darkness to nothingness to dark

NARCISSUS

-- Then I was almost glad that it was thus, thinking  
it must be thus,

Thinking; that all my other thoughts had been (how else  
must it seem, might it seem, must it be?)  
to most of us.

Deceptions, illusions, delusions, satanic imaginations,  
hideous

In the end, as the snake -- like convolutions  
of the brain -

Which was the source and force of hallucination

And I knew the rise and the return after the failure  
and the fall

[illegible]

\* \* \* \* \*

Placidly at dusk -- in hushed serenity

the hushed serene

Arose above the green

The waters were choirs wherein the sunlight chanted

the silence of space was a great blue balloon

Mounted aloft, valiant and attentive

## NARCISSUS

The noon of turquoise diamonds diamonding  
                                   and gold golding  
                                   and radiance entranced and ringing  
                   dancing in all the kinds of lances.

. . . Thou art confessed!

The roots of riverhood  
                                   are not in rain

A brass of gleaming

A pewter reticence

A lucency a transparency

The passing shows of

                                  plangent passions . . . starlings,  
                                   star-winged  
                                   starwings

Tapered.

. . . Had there been other lovers? How, since I  
 Discovered the self or -- to vary again  
 Invented it, by staring in a glass  
 And misconceiving the image of my face:  
 Of those who have fallen in love since then,

— — —

## NARCISSUS

The river sang again of truth's variety,  
Which is the light's plurality and ingenuity.  
Lighting up, and misleading if too long believed.

The light

Lolling upon the river's flow, descanted  
On how all things are magnified and multiplied  
How emulation is an exaltation. The trees  
Became a grove, a slowly curving orchard,  
The river's tree became the , immense  
of goddesses.

The river sang and said:

Death is not a spectacle nor a catastrophe,  
It is a distant eminence, far off, powerless

Having nothing to do with love and victory  
Nor with Dionysus, nor Apollo . . .  
Phoenix fulfillment and fatherhood  
Are other and otherwise to be understood.

-- The poet is a shepherd of being,  
The poet is he who keeps the archives of the stones,  
And makes immortal the lady among the rocks  
And is the cryin' of the rocks, draws in his flock  
To the fertility of the acceptance of experience.

## NARCISSUS

The river possesses and continually blesses  
 Dreams of the sky in many disguises  
 The sessions of its processions discover  
 All glittering radiance within the exaltation  
 Of the visual and visible imagination!

\* \* \* \* \*

Under the meadows of the milky way  
 Under the marvels of the marble blue  
 The faint and bonewhite moonlight, faintly shining,  
 Seemed and sustained the mystery, or apparition  
 Glimpsed and guessed all day in the sun's glory  
 And all the stories  
 Rippled and sparkled moreently to me  
 -- For first, I thought, the flowers existed only  
 In the contemplation of the stars. And then  
 The stars became the petals of the flowers  
 Of powers hidden, infinite and generous,  
 Flowing over, overflowing, in boundless plenty,  
 Possessing and possessed, blessing and blessed --  
 All luxury, fulfillment and largesse.  
 The river's coat -- which half-concealed, and half-revealed  
 The curves of the body, the shape of the limbs  
 As the current rose and flowed, provided a tenderness  
 By these at once, and as all the other things of the

## NARCISSUS

Another's face allure and desire, fixed on me,  
 And that was why I looked and looked,  
 Was why the others laughed until they shook  
 Rollicking, looking into their own  
 Perfected self-deception, dark and sweet as the bone.

-- Other than all the others and my self

    The river was  
 Sleekness and silk and supple,

    -- The infinite blue above became, I saw,  
 Tender and infinite --

    An arch, contained yet magnified, within the flow,  
 Curving and curved, upon the river's face  
 The beauties of the stream supported my utmost dream!

\* \* \* \* \*

A simple door opens upon an abyss . . .

    Contained reality, or mere ended?

When I stare with much desire, my face becomes  
 A squint, a frown, and something falsified by hope  
 Impatience, eagerness: and what I see  
 Is neither what I desire nor ~~xxx~~ what is there  
 My grasping hand seizes that is a blur  
 And looks a lighted end the light and my desire,

## NARCISSUS

I heard:

"The engine sighed softly,"

I listened to the machine's persistent drone, moan

"He commanded real fear,"

And felt the state fright of guilt

The sweat of sympathy. . . .

: death to ones

The gods demanded, required, commanded

Instead of a cock, a pigeon,

a doe, a goat, or a pig

The sacrifice of a culprit, a cupid

"She ruffled the cards: she shuffled them

She shuffled them awayne,"

"Those who deserve to die,

Die the death they deserve,"

Drums: white drums: the white round drums

Of the slowly swaying buttocks of drunken girls,



## NARCISSUS

A fiction and distortion of the uniqueness of reality.

. . .

Art thou not fortunate? Hast thou not seen  
The foetus-like, the hideous, the obscene?  
Yet equally, the admirable and the beautiful  
In the leaves, darkened, but glittering and green  
Within the river's glass fallen but supernatural --

. . . My faces were my apes: my apes became  
Idolatrous . . .

. . . The sunlight became canaries in jubilee  
Its genius rose in the joy and fury of blaze

Nor mystery nor bitterness

Love's bitter ~~xxx~~ mystery was all no more,

but this:

The heart of sunlight's vivid and lucid blaze  
Deathless summer, summer  
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ And luminous:

The phoenix is the summer and holds everything

The deathless summer is all, a brilliant ball

And there is nothing more: it is enough:

and it is all

\* \* \* \* \*

## APPENDIX E

The collection of Delmore Schwartz's papers is temporarily deposited in the Special Collection division of Hofstra University Library, Hempstead, New York. A preliminary sorting has been completed, although the collection is, as yet, far from final archival form. It now consists of:

11 manuscript boxes

- 1) Notes and journals, 1942-1959
- 2) Notes and journals, undated
- 3) Personal documents; collections of aphorisms
- 4) Letters to and from Delmore Schwartz
- 5) Rough drafts of poems
- 6) Drafts and typescripts of poems
- 7) Drafts and typescripts of short stories
- 8) Drafts and typescripts of stories and novels
- 9) Typescripts of literary criticism
- 10) Papers of Elizabeth Pollett
- 11) Various papers currently being used

3 cartons

Unsorted clippings, cancelled checks, bills,  
envelopes, jottings on book jackets, menus, etc.

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Congress, 1958. pp. 15-31.
- A14. "Recent Literary Criticism." Arts at Mid-Century,  
Edited by R. Richman. New York: Horizon Press,  
1954, pp. 257-261.

## BOOKS EDITED

- A15. Syracuse Poems 1964. Edited and selected by Delmore  
Schwartz. Syracuse, New York: Department of  
English, 1965.

## POEMS

1934

- A16. "Aubade," Mosaic, I (November-December 1934), 9.
- A17. "Poem," Mosaic, I (November-December 1934), 9. Col-  
lected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities as  
"The Beautiful American Dream, Sure," and in  
Summer Knowledge.

1937

- A18. "At This Moment of Time," New Directions in Prose and  
Poetry, 1937 Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk,  
Connecticut: New Directions, 1937, p. 243. Col-  
lected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and  
Summer Knowledge.

- A19. "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer," New Directions in Prose and Poetry. Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1937, p. 237.
- A20. "Song," New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1937, Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1937, p. 244. Collected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Summer Knowledge as "O Love, Sweet Animal."
- A21. "Poem," Poetry, XLIX (February 1937), 252. First line is "You, My Photographer."
- A22. "Poem," Poetry, XLIX (February 1937), 252-253. First line is "Old Man in the Crystal Morning After Snow."

## 1938

- A23. "The Ballad of the Children of the Czar," Partisan Review, IV (January 1938), 28-31. Collected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Summer Knowledge.
- A24. "Heart, A Black Grape Gushing Hidden Streams," Poetry, LI (January 1938), 199.
- A25. "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave," Poetry, LI (January 1938), 198-199. Collected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Summer Knowledge.
- A26. "Poem," Partisan Review, IV (February 1938), 21. Collected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Summer Knowledge as "Someone is Harshly Coughing as Before."
- A27. "Sonnet: The Philosophers," Common Sense 7 (Spring 1938), 20.
- A28. "For One Who Would Not Take His Life in His Own Hands," New Republic, XCV (July 13, 1938), 273. Collected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Summer Knowledge.
- A29. "Imitation of A Fugue," Twentieth Century Verse, Nos. 12-13 (September-October 1938), London, 97.
- A30. "Parlez-Vous Francais?" New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1938, Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1938, p. 265. Collected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Summer Knowledge.

- A31. "Poem," New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1938, Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1938, p. 267. Collected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Summer Knowledge as "Socrates Ghost Must Haunt Me Now."
- A32. "Poem," New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1938, Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1938, pp. 267-268. Collected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Summer Knowledge as "By Circumstances Fed."
- A33. "The Sin of Hamlet," New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1938, Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1938, p. 269. Collected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Summer Knowledge.
- A34. "A Young Child and His Pregnant Mother," New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1938, Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1938, p. 266. Collected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Summer Knowledge.

## 1941

- A35. "Paris and Helen, An Entertainment," New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1941, Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1941, pp. 193-218. A verse drama.
- A36. "Shenandoah, Or the Naming of the Child," Kenyon Review, III (Summer 1941), 271-292. Expanded and reprinted as a book; see A3.

## 1944

- A37. "The Starlight's Intuitions Pierced the Twelve," Kenyon Review, VI (Summer 1944), 383-385. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess and Summer Knowledge as "Starlight Like Intuition Pierced the Twelve."

## 1947

- A38. "He Heard the Newsboys Shouting 'Europe! Europe!'," Partisan Review, XIV (March-April 1947), 146. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A39. "The Silence Answered Him Accusingly," Partisan Review, XIV (March-April 1947), 147. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

A40. "Such Answers Are Cold Comfort to the Dead," Partisan Review, XIV (March-April 1947), 148. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

A41. "The Silence in Emptiness Accused Him Thus," Partisan Review, XIV (March-April 1947), 149. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

1950

A42. "My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is," Accent, X (Winter 1950), 100-101. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

A43. "Dusk Shows Us What We Are and Hardly Mean," Partisan Review, XVII (January 1950), 66. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

A44. "On a Sentence by Pascal," Partisan Review, XVII (January 1950), 66. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

A45. "Winter Twilight Glowing Black and Gold," Partisan Review, XVII (January 1950), 65. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess and Summer Knowledge.

A46. "I Did Not Know the Spoils of Joy," Partisan Review, XVII (January 1950), 65-65. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

A47. "Today Is Armistice, A Holiday," Commentary, IX (March 1950), 228. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

A48. "One in a Thousand Years of the Nights," Commentary, IX (March 1950), 228. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

A49. "Look, In the Labyrinth of Memory," Commentary, IX (March 1950), 227. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

A50. "Cartoons of Coming Shows Unseen Before," Commentary, IX (March 1950), 227-228. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

A51. "Don't Speak, Remember Once It Happened, So It May Again," Commentary, IX (March 1950), 227-228. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

A52. "The Morning Light for One with Too Much Luck," Commentary, IX (March 1950), 228. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.

- A53. "Chaplin Upon the Cliff, Dining Alone," Poetry, LXXVI (April 1950), 4. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A54. "The Desperanto of Willy Nully," Poetry, LXXVI (April 1950), 3. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A55. "Why Do You Write an Endless History?," Poetry, LXXVI (April 1950), 6. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A56. "Twelfth Night, Next Year, A Weekend in Eternity," Poetry, LXXVI (April 1950) 7-8. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A57. "True Recognition Is Often Refused," Poetry, LXXVI (April 1950), 8-9. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A58. "The Self Unsatisfied Runs Everywhere," Poetry, LXXVI (April 1950), 3-4. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A59. "The Self-Betrayal Which Is Nothing New," Poetry, LXXVI (April 1950), 7. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A60. "The Rumor and the Whir of Unborn Wings," Poetry, LXXVI (April 1950), 5. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A61. "The Heart Flies Up, Erratic As a Kite," Poetry, LXXVI (April 1950), 5-6. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A62. "My Love, My Love, My Love, Why Have You Left Me Alone," Poetry, LXXVI (April 1950), 2. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A63. "Hope Like the Phoenix Breast Rises Again," Poetry, LXXVI (April 1950), 1-2. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A64. "The Early Morning Light," Kenyon Review, XLL (Spring 1950), 243-245. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.
- A65. "Lunas Are Tempting to Old Consciousness," Nation, CLXXI (September 16, 1950), 251. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess.



## 1954

- A66. "Baudelaire," Partisan Review, XXI (March 1954), 174-175. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A67. "Holderlin," Partisan Review, XXI (March 1954), 174. Collected in Summer Knowledge.

## 1955

- A68. "The Innocence and Windows of Children and Childhood," New Republic, CXXXII (January 10, 1955), 19.
- A69. "All of the Fruits Had Fallen," New Republic, CXXXII (January 31, 1955), 22. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A70. "The Children's Innocent and Infinite Window," New Republic, CXXXII (January 31, 1955), 19.
- A71. "Yorick," New Republic, CXXXII (January 31, 1955), 20. Rewritten and collected under the title "Sterne," in Summer Knowledge.
- A72. "The First Morning of the Second World," Kenyon Review, XVII (Autumn 1955), 575-580. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A73. "Fulfillment," Art News Annual, XXIX (1955), 90-91. Collected in Summer Knowledge.

## 1958

- A74. "A Little Morning Music," Mutiny, II (Early Winter 1958), 17. Collected in Summer Knowledge as "A Small Score."
- A75. "Praise of Creation," Mutiny, II (Early Winter 1958), 17. Collected in Summer Knowledge as "How Strange Love Is in Every State of Consciousness."
- A76. "Poem," Partisan Review, XXV (Spring 1958), 225-226. Collected in Summer Knowledge as "'I am Cherry Alive,' the Little Girl Sang."
- A77. "Jacob," Commentary, XXV (May 1958), 398-399. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A78. "Poem," Commentary, XXV (May 1958), 400. Collected in Summer Knowledge as "I Waken to a Calling."
- A79. "Sonnet," Commentary, XXV (May 1958) 400. Collected in Summer Knowledge as "I Am a Book I Neither Wrote Nor Read."

- A80. "The Kingdom of Poetry," Poetry, XCII (May 1958), 63-66. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A81. "Candlelight and the Heart of Fall," The New York Times, (May 22, 1958), 28.
- A82. "Sonnet," Kenyon Review, XX (Summer 1958), 440. Collected in Summer Knowledge as "The World Was Warm and White When I Was Born."
- A83. "Sequel," Kenyon Review, XX (Summer 1958), 44. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A84. "Poem," Kenyon Review, XX (Summer 1958), 443-444. Collected in Summer Knowledge as "The Foggy, Foggy Blue."
- A85. "Poem," Kenyon Review, XX (Summer 1958), 440. Collected in Summer Knowledge as "O Child, Do Not Fear the Dark and Sleep's Dark Possession."
- A86. "Poem," Partisan Review, XXV (Summer 1958), 373. Collected in Summer Knowledge as "In the Green Morning, Now, Once More."
- A87. "Once and for All," Kenyon Review, XX (Summer 1958), 441. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A88. "At a Solemn Musick," Kenyon Review, XX (Summer 1958), 442-443. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A89. "Rumorous Dusk, Ominous Rain," The New York Times, July 2, 1958, p. 28.
- A90. "Dark and Falling Summer," New Yorker, XXXIV (September 6, 1958), 121. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A91. "Kilroy's Carnival; a poetic prologue for t.v.," New Republic, CXXXIX (December 1, 1958), 15-16.
- A92. "Vivaldi," New Yorker, LXXI (December 6, 1958), 50. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A93. "The Mind Is an Ancient and Famous Capital," (from The Studies of Narcissus) New Republic, CXXXIX (December 15, 1958), 17. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A94. "During December's Death," New Yorker, XXXIV (December 20, 1958), 32. Collected in Summer Knowledge.

1959

- A95. "The Dread and the Fear of the Mind of the Others,"  
(from The Studies of Narcissus) New Republic, CXL  
(February 2, 1959), 18. Collected in Summer  
Knowledge.
- A96. "Abraham," Commentary, XXVII (March 1959), 221-222.  
Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A97. "Sarah," Commentary, XXXVII (March 1959), 222. Col-  
lected in Summer Knowledge.
- A98. "Conclusion," Partisan Review, XXVI (Winter 1959),  
56-57. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- A99. "A Little Morning Music," New Yorker, XXXV (April 16,  
1959), 44. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- Al00. "Gold Morning, Sweet Prince," New Republic, CXL (May 25,  
1959), 15. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- Al01. "The Mounting Summer, Brilliant and Ominous," Poetry, XCIV  
(May 1959), 104. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- Al02. "The River Was the Emblem of All Beauty: All," Poetry,  
XCIV (May 1959), 108. Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- Al03. "Summer Knowledge," Poetry, XCIV (May 1959), 109-110.  
Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- Al04. "Swift," Poetry, XCIV (May 1959), 105-107. Collected  
in Summer Knowledge.
- Al05. "Spiders," New Republic, CXLI (July 6, 1959) 18.
- Al06. "Cupid's Chant," New Republic, CXLI (July 27, 1959), 29.  
Collected in Summer Knowledge.
- Al07. "Passages from the Studies of Narcissus," Chicago Review,  
XIII (Summer 1959), 121-123.
- Al08. "Philology Recapitulates Ontology, Poetry is Ontology,"  
Prairie Schooner, XXXIII (Summer 1959), 154.
- Al09. "Poem," Prairie Schooner, XXXIII (Summer 1959), 155.  
First line is "Faithful to your command, O con-  
sciousness."
- Al10. "Song," Prairie Schooner, XXXIII (Summer 1959), 156.

A111. "The Choir and Music of Solitude and Silence," New Republic CXLI (September 28, 1959), 27.

A112. "Poem," New Republic, CXLI (October 19, 1959), 24. First line is "On that day of summer, blue and gold."

1960

A113. "All Night, All Night," New Republic, CXLII (March 21, 1960), 18.

A114. "Speaking at Twilight, Singing in the Morning," Prairie Schooner, XXXIV (Summer 1960), 123-127.

1961

A115. "This Is a Poem I Wrote At Night, Before the Dawn," New Republic, CXLV (October 23, 1961), 24.

A116. "Words for a Trumpet Chorale Celebrating the Autumn," New Republic, CXLV (November 13, 1961), 12.

1962

A117. "To Helen (After Valery)," New York Times, February 6, 1962, p. 34.

A118. "Aria," New Republic, CXLVI (April 23, 1962) 26. From "Kilroy's Carnival."

A119. "Journey of a Poem Compared to All the Sad Variety of Travel," Kenyon Review, XXIV (Spring 1962), 304.

A120. "Poem: Remember Midsummer: The Fragrance of Box, of White Roses," New Republic, CXLVII (July 16, 1962), 21.

A121. "Two Lyrics from Kilroy's Carnival, a Masque," Sewanee Review, LXX (Winter 1962), 12-13.

A122. "Poem: In the Morning, When it Was Raining," New York Times, October 27, 1962, p. 24.

A123. "Apollo Musagete, Poetry, and the Leader of the Muses," Poetry, CI (October-November 1962), 108-111.

A124. "The First Night of Fall and Falling Rain," New York Times, November 6, 1962, p. 32.

## PROSE FICTION

- A125. "The Commencement Day Address," New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1937, Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1937, pp. 231-242.
- A126. "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," Partisan Review, IV (December 1937), 5-11. Collected in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and The World Is a Wedding.
- A127. "The Statues," Partisan Review, IV (May 1938) 11-18. Collected in The World Is a Wedding.
- A128. "America! America!," Partisan Review, VII (Winter 1940), 112-134. Collected in The World Is a Wedding.
- A129. "An Argument in 1934," Kenyon Review, IV (Winter 1942), 62-74. Collected in The World Is a Wedding.
- A130. "New Year's Eve," Partisan Review, XII (Summer 1945), 327-344. Collected in The World Is a Wedding.
- A131. "A Bitter Farce," Kenyon Review, VIII (Spring 1946), 245-261. Collected in The World Is a Wedding.
- A132. "The Child Is the Meaning of This Life," Partisan Review, XIV (May-June 1947), 255-277. Collected with Part II (A133), in The World Is a Wedding.
- A133. "The Child Is the Meaning of This Life," Partisan Review, (July-August 1947), 352-370. (This is Part II.)
- A134. "The World Is a Wedding," Partisan Review, XV (March 1948), 279-287. Collected in The World Is a Wedding.
- A135. "The Fabulous Twenty-Dollar Bill," Kenyon Review, XIV (Summer 1952), 378-405. Collected in Successful Love.
- A136. "Tales from the Vienna Woods: An Inside Story," Partisan Review, XX (May-June 1953), 267-281. Collected in Successful Love.

- A137. "Successful Love," in William Phillips and Philip Rahv, ed. Avon Book of Modern Writing, no. 2. New York: Avon Publications, Inc., 1954, pp. 119-151. Collected in Successful Love.
- A138. "An American Fairy Tale," Commentary, XXVI (November 1958), 420-424. Collected in Successful Love.
- A139. "The Track Meet," New Yorker, XXXV (February 28, 1959), 28-34. Collected in Successful Love.
- A140. "The Gift," Partisan Review, XXVI (Summer 1959), 453-460. Collected in Successful Love.

#### ESSAYS AND CRITICAL ARTICLES

1935-1940

- A141. "The Stars of Joseph Gordon Macleod," Mosaic, I (Spring 1935), 8-17.
- A142. "Poetry as Imitation," Bowdoin Prize Essay, Harvard, June 2, 1936.
- A143. "A Note on the Nature of Art," Marxist Quarterly, I (April-June 1937), 305-310.
- A144. "Ernest Hemingway's Literary Situation," Southern Review III (Spring 1938), 769-782.
- A145. "Critical Method of R.P. Blackmur," Poetry, LIII (October 1938), 28-39.
- A146. "The Politics of William Butler Yeats," (letter) New Republic vol. XCV (October 12, 1938), 272.
- A147. "Rimbaud in Our Time," Poetry, LV (December, 1939) 148-154.
- A148. "The Two Audens," Kenyon Review, I (Winter 1939), 34-45.
- A149. "The Poet As Poet," Partisan Review, VI (Spring 1939), 52-59. About William Butler Yeats.

- A150. "The Criterion, 1922-1939," Kenyon Review, I (Autumn 1939), 437-449.
- A151. "Poetry and Belief in Thomas Hardy," Southern Review, VI (Summer 1940), 64-77.
- A152. "The Ultimate Plato with Picasso's Guitar," Harvard Advocate, CXXVII (December 1940), 11-16.

1941-1945

- A153. "The Isolation of Modern Poetry," Kenyon Review, III (Spring 1941), 209-220.
- A154. "The Fiction of William Faulkner," Southern Review, VII (Summer 1941), 145-160.
- A155. "The Writing of Edmund Wilson," Accent, II (Spring 1942), 177-186.
- A156. "An Unwritten Book," Southern Review, VII (Winter 1942), 471-491. On William Butler Yeats.
- A157. "Under Forty," Contemporary Jewish Record, VII (February 1944), 12-14. For "A Symposium on American Literature and the Younger Generation of Jews."
- A158. "T.S. Eliot As the International Hero," Partisan Review, XII (Spring 1945), 199-206.
- A159. "A Literary Provincial," Partisan Review, XII (Winter 1946), 138-142. On Yvor Winters.
- A160. "Two Chapters from 'The Myth of Sisyphus' by Albert Camus," (translation) Partisan Review, XII (Spring 1946), 181-191. In collaboration with William Barrett.
- A161. "Instructed of Much Mortality," Sewanee Review, LIV (July 1946), 439-448.
- A162. "Unpleasant and Important Fact," American Scholar, XV (October 1946), 553-554. About the contribution of the quarterly to American Society.

- A163. "Does Existentialism Still Exist?" Partisan Review XV (December 1948), 1361-1363. Collected in Vaudeville for a Princess as "Existentialism: The Inside Story."
- A164. "Views of a Second Violinist," Partisan Review, XVI (December 1949), 1250-1255. On two problems in writing poetry.
- A165. "Literary Dictatorship of T.S. Eliot," Partisan Review, XVI (February 1949), 119-137.
- A166. "Introduction to Turgenev," Fathers and Sons, translated by Constance Garnett. Harper's Modern Classics. New York: Harper's, 1951.
- A167. "Grapes of Crisis," Partisan Review, XVII (January 1951), 7-15. On "Happy endings" in movies and books.
- A168. "Vocation of the Poet in the Modern World," Poetry, LXXVIII (July 1951), 223-232.
- A169. "Masterpieces as Cartoons," Partisan Review, XIX (July 1952), 461-471.
- A170. "Our Country and Our Culture," Partisan Review, XIX (September-October 1952), 593-597.
- A171. "The Dutchess' Red Shoes," Partisan Review, XX (January-February 1953), 55-73. On criticism, myth, manners. See A 172, B1, and B58.
- A172. "Manners and Morals," Partisan Review, XX (May-June 1953), 365-366, 368. An answer to Paul Ramsey's letter (B58).
- A173. "Speaking of Books," New York Times Book Review, January 17, 1954, p. 2. On the increasing popularity of pocketbooks.
- A174. "Our Literary Critics: An Appreciation," New Republic, CXXX (May 24, 1954), 17-18.
- A175. "Speaking of Books," New York Times Book Review, June 13, 1954, p. 2. On William Butler Yeats.



- A176. "T.S. Eliot's Voice and His Voices," Poetry, LXXXV (December 1954), 170-176. Part I: see A 177.
- A177. "T.S. Eliot's Voice and His Voices," Poetry, LXXXV (January 1955), 232-242. Part II.
- A178. "Speaking of Books," New York Times Book Review, July 17, 1955, p. 2. On the relations between life and literature.
- A179. "Wallace Stevens--An Appreciation," New Republic, CXXXII (August 22, 1955), 20-22.
- A180. "Fiction of Ernest Hemingway," Perspectives USA, XIII (August 1955), 70-88.
- A181. "French Taste in American Writing," New Republic, CXXXIII (September 5, 1955), 21-23.
- A182. "William Faulkner's 'A Fable,'" Perspectives USA, X (Winter 1955), 126-126.
- A183. "Graves in Dock: The Case for Modern Poetry," New Republic, CXXXIV (March 19, 1956), 20-21.
- A184. "Omnibus and the Egg-Heads," New Republic, CXXXIV (January 23, 1956), 22. A defense of Dwight Macdonald in reply to comments on Macdonald's "Profile" of Omnibus in the New Yorker.
- A185. "Survey of Our National Phenomena," New York Times Magazine, April 15, 1956, p. 28-29, 59, 60. On people who have "seized the public imagination."
- A186. "The Present State of Poetry," (Library of Congress Lecture, 1958) American Poetry at Mid-Century, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1958.
- A187. "Novels and the News," New Republic, CXL (April 13, 1959), 16-17. On the present and the future of the novel.

## BOOK REVIEWS

1936-1940

- A188. "Adroitly Naive," Poetry, XLVIII (May 1936), 115-117.  
Review of Poems by Louis MacNeice.
- A189. "Defective Sincerity," Poetry, L (July 1937), 233-236.  
Review of Straight or Curly? by Clifford Dymont.
- A190. "Primitivism and Decadence," Southern Review, III  
(Winter 1938), 597-614. Review of Primitivism and  
Decadence: A Study of American Experimental Poetry  
by Yvor Winters. See A191.
- A191. "Correspondence," Southern Review, III (Apring 1938)  
830-831. A reply to a letter from Winters (B71)  
concerning D.S. review (A190).
- A192. "New Verse," Partisan Review, IV (February 1938) 49-52.  
Review of The Man with the Blue Guitar and Other  
Poems by Wallace Stevens.
- A193. "Ezra Pound's Very Useful Labors," Poetry, LI (March  
1938), 324-329. Review of The Fifth Decade of  
Cantos by Pound.
- A194. "Review of Mr. Witt Among the Rebels," by Ramon J.  
Sender, Common Sense, VII (April 1938), 24.
- A195. "John Dos Passos and the Whole Truth," Southern Review,  
IV (Autumn 1938), 351-367. Review of U. S. A. by  
Dos Passos.
- A196. Review of William Carlos William's Collected Poems:  
1906-1938, Common Sense, VII (February 1939), 24.
- A197. "Light Verse Omnibus," Partisan Review, VI (Winter 1939),  
122-123. Review of The Oxford Book of Light Verse,  
Edited by W. H. Auden.
- A198. "Orestes in England," Nation CLXVII (June 10, 1939),  
676. Review of T.S. Eliot's The Family Reunion.

- A199. "A Great Poem, In English," Partisan Review, VI (Summer 1939), 119-121. Review of Duino Elegies by Rilke, translated by J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender.
- A200. "The Enigma of Robinson Jeffers, Sources of Violence," Poetry, LV (October 1939), 30-38. Review of The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers.
- A201. "Mr. Eliot and Old Possum," Nation, CXLIX (December 30, 1939), 737-738. Review of T.S. Eliot's Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats.
- A202. "Poetry of Allen Tate," Southern Review, V (Winter 1940), 419-438. Review of Selected Poems by Allen Tate.

1941-1945

- A203. "Neither Historian Nor Critic," Kenyon Review, III (Winter 1941), 119-123. Review of New England: Indian Summer by Van Wyck Brooks.
- A204. "Poet's Progress," Nation, CLIV (January 9, 1943), 63-64. Review of Person, Place, and Thing by Karl Shapiro.
- A205. "Merry-Go-Round of Opinion," New Republic, CVIII (March 1, 1943), 292-293. Review of Conrad Aiken's Brownstone Eclogues.
- A206. "Anywhere Out of the World," Nation, CLVII (July 24, 1943), 102-103. Review of T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets.
- A207. "New Writing in Wartime," Nation, CLIX (August 12, 1944), 190-191. Review of Cross Section, Edited by Edwin Seaver.
- A208. "The Shock of Unrecognition," Partisan Review, X (September-October 1943), 439-442. Review of an anthology, The Shock of Recognition, Edited by Edmund Wilson.
- A209. "The Poetry of Millay," Nation, CLVII (December 18, 1943), 735-736. Review of Collected Lyrics by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

- A210. "A Man In His Time," Partisan Review, XI (Summer 1944), 348-350. Review of The Dangling Man by Saul Bellow.
- A211. "Delights and Defects of Experience," Nation, CLIX (October 21, 1944), 476-477. Review of New Directions, 1944, Edited by James Laughlin IV.
- A212. "The Embattled Muse," Contemporary Jewish Record, VII (October 1944), 536-539. Review of V-Letter and Other Poems by Karl Shapiro and The Hitleriad by A.M. Klein.
- A213. "The Hero in Russia," Kenyon Review, VI (Winter 1944), 126-129. Review of The Hero in History by Sidney Hook.
- A214. "The Early Joyce," Nation, CLX (January 27, 1945), 106. Review of Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Stephen Hero.
- A215. "Gertrude Stein's Wars," Nation, CLX (March 24, 1945), 339-340. Review of Wars I Have Seen by Gertrude Stein.
- A216. "A Poet and His Prose," Nation, CLXI (September 22, 1945), 289-290. Review of the Viking Portable Whitman, Edited by Mark Van Doren.
- A217. "Virginia Woolf's Fiction," Nation, CLXI (October 13, 1945), 378. Review of Joan Bennett's Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist.
- A218. "Aldous Huxley's Philosophy," Nation, CLXI (October 27, 1945), 438-439. Review of Huxley's The Perennial Philosophy.
- A219. "A Middle Western Anthology," Nation, CLXI (November 3, 1945), 468. 470. Review of America Is West, Edited by Joseph T. Flanagan.
- A220. "He Too Lived in Arcadia," Partisan Review, XII (Winter 1945), 128-130. Review of The World of Washington Irving by Van Wyck Brooks.

- A221. "Karl Shapiro's Poetics," Nation, CLXI (November 10, 1945), 498. Review of Essay on Rime by Karl Shapiro. See A223.
- A222. "The Dream From Which No One Wakes," Nation, CLXI (December 1, 1945), 590-591. Review of Little Friend, Little Friend by Randall Jarrell.
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