Delmore Schwartz (8 December 1913 - 11 July 1966)

Delmore Schwartz was born December 8, 1913, in Brooklyn to Romanian immigrant parents. Their marriage however failed and this affected him all his life.

**Biography**

Inspite of his unhappy and unsettled childhood though he was a gifted and intellectual young student. He enrolled early at Columbia University, and also studied at the University of Wisconsin, eventually receiving his bachelor's degree in 1935 in philosophy from New York University.

In 1936 he won the Bowdoin Prize in the Humanities for his essay Poetry as Imitation. In 1937 his short story In Dreams Begin Responsibilities was published in Partisan Review a left wing following year his first book-length work, also titled In Dreams Begin Responsibilities was published and received much praise.

He never finished his advanced degree in philosophy at Harvard, but was hired as the Briggs-Copeland Lecturer, and later given an Assistant Professorship.

In 1947 Schwartz ended his twelve-year association with Harvard and returned to New York City. His book of short stories The World is a Wedding was published the following year. Time compared Schwartz to Stendhal and Anton Chekhov. By this same time his work was widely anthologized. He was publishing critical essays on other important literary figures and cultural topics, and was the poetry editor at Partisan Review, and later also at New Republic.

He took on a number of teaching positions at Bennington College, Kenyon College, Princeton University, the writer's colony Yaddo, and at Syracuse University.

In 1960 Schwartz became the youngest poet ever to win the Bollingen Prize. His friend Saul Bellow wrote a semi-fictional memoir about Schwartz called Humboldt's Gift, which won the Pulitzer Prize.

In the summer of 1966 Schwartz checked into the Times Squares hotel, to focus on his writing. He worked continuously but on July 11 he had a heart attack in the lobby of the hotel.
Tributes

One of the earliest well-known tributes to Schwartz came from Schwartz's friend, fellow poet Robert Lowell, who published the poem "To Delmore Schwartz" in 1959 (while Schwartz was still alive) in the book Life Studies. In it Lowell reminisces about the time that the two poets lived together in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1946, writing that they were "underseas fellows, nobly mad, we talked away our friends."

One year following Schwartz's death, in 1967, his former student at Syracuse University, the rock musician Lou Reed, dedicated his song "European Son" to Schwartz (although the lyrics themselves made no direct reference to Schwartz).

Then, in 1968, Schwartz's friend and peer, fellow poet, John Berryman, dedicated his book His Toy, His Dream, His Rest "to the sacred memory of Delmore Schwartz," including 12 elegiac poems about Schwartz in the book. In "Dream Song #149," Berryman wrote of Schwartz,

In the brightness of his promise,
unstained, I saw him thro' the mist of the actual
blazing with insight, warm with gossip
thro' all our Harvard years
when both of us were just becoming known
I got him out of a police-station once, in Washington, the world is tref
and grief too astray for tears.

The most ambitious literary tribute to Schwartz came in 1975 when Saul Bellow, a one-time protege of Schwartz's, published his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel Humboldt's Gift which was based on his relationship with Schwartz. Although the character of Von Humboldt Fleischer is Bellow's portrait of Schwartz during Schwartz's declining years, the book is actually a testament to Schwartz's lasting artistic influence on Bellow.

Lou Reed's 1982 album The Blue Mask included his second Schwartz homage with the song "My House". This song is much more of a tribute to Schwartz than the above-mentioned "European Son" in that the lyrics of "My House" are about Reed's relationship with Schwartz. In the song, Reed writes that Schwartz "was the first great man that I ever met".
Scott Spencer uses the final six lines of Schwartz's poem "I Am a Book I Neither Wrote nor Read" as an epigraph for his National Book Award nominated novel, Endless Love. The words "endless love" are the final two words of that poem.

In the film Star Trek Generations, the villain Tolian Soran quotes Schwartz's poem "Calmly We Walk Through This April Day", telling Picard, "Time is the fire in which we burn."

In 1996, Donald Margulies wrote the play Collected Stories, in which the aging writer and teacher Ruth Steiner (a fictional character) recounts a great affair that she had in her youth with Delmore Schwartz in Greenwich Village (during the period of time when Schwartz was in declining health from alcoholism and mental illness) to her young student, Lisa. Lisa then controversially uses the affair revelation as the basis for a successful novel. The play was produced twice off-Broadway and once on Broadway.
A Dream Of Whitman Paraphrased, Recognized And Made More Vivid By Renoir

Twenty-eight naked young women bathed by the shore
Or near the bank of a woodland lake
Twenty-eight girls and all of them comely
Worthy of Mack Sennett's camera and Florenz Ziegfield's Foolish Follies.

They splashed and swam with the wondrous unconsciousness
Of their youth and beauty
In the full spontaneity and summer of the fleshes of awareness
Heightened, intensified and softened
By the soft and the silk of the waters
Blooded made ready by the energy set afire by the nakedness of the body,

Electrified: deified: undenied.

A young man of thirty years beholds them from a distance.
He lives in the dungeon of ten million dollars.
He is rich, handsome and empty standing behind the linen curtains Beholding them.
Which girl does he think most desirable, most beautiful?
They are all equally beautiful and desirable from the gold distance.
For if poverty darkens discrimination and makes perception too vivid,
The gold of wealth is also a form of blindness.
For has not a Frenchman said, Although this is America...

What he has said is not entirely relevant,
That a naked woman is a proof of the existence of God.

Where is he going?
Is he going to be among them to splash and to laugh with them?
They did not see him although he saw them and was there among them.
He saw them as he would not have seen them had they been conscious
Of him or conscious of men in complete depravation:
This is his enchantment and impoverishment
As he possesses them in gaze only.

. . .He felt the wood secrecy, he knew the June softness
The warmth surrounding him crackled
Held in by the mansard roof mansion
He glimpsed the shadowy light on last year's brittle leaves fallen,
Looked over and overlooked, glimpsed by the fall of death,
Winter's mourning and the May's renewal.

Delmore Schwartz
A Young Child And His Pregnant Mother

At four years Nature is mountainous,
Mysterious, and submarine. Even

A city child knows this, hearing the subway's
Rumor underground. Between the grate,

Dropping his penny, he learned out all loss,
The irretrievable cent of fate,

And now this newest of the mysteries,
Confronts his honest and his studious eyes----

His mother much too fat and absentminded,
Gazing past his face, careless of him,

His fume, his charm, his bedtime, and warm milk,
As soon the night will be too dark, the spring

Too late, desire strange, and time too fast,
This estrangement is a gradual thing

(His mother once so svelte, so often sick!
Towering father did this: what a trick!)

Explained to cautiously, containing fear,
Another being's being, becoming dear:

All men are enemies: thus even brothers
Can separate each other from their mothers!

No better example than this unborn brother
Shall teach him of his exile from his mother,

Measured by his distance from the sky,
Spoken in two vowels,
I am I.

Delmore Schwartz
Albert Einstein To Archibald Macleish

I should have been a plumber fixing drains.  
And mending pure white bathtubs for the great Diogenes  
(who scorned all lies, all liars, and all tyrannies),

And then, perhaps, he would bestow on me -- majesty!  
(O modesty aside, forgive my fallen pride, O hidden majesty,  
The lamp, the lantern, the lucid light he sought for  

All too often -- sick humanity!)

Delmore Schwartz
All Night, All Night

"I have been one acquainted with the night" - Robert Frost

Rode in the train all night, in the sick light. A bird
Flew parallel with a singular will. In daydream's moods and attitudes
The other passengers slumped, dozed, slept, read,
Waiting, and waiting for place to be displaced
On the exact track of safety or the rack of accident.

Looked out at the night, unable to distinguish
Lights in the towns of passage from the yellow lights
Numb on the ceiling. And the bird flew parallel and still
As the train shot forth the straight line of its whistle,
Forward on the taut tracks, piercing empty, familiar --

The bored center of this vision and condition looked and looked
Down through the slick pages of the magazine (seeking
The seen and the unseen) and his gaze fell down the well
Of the great darkness under the slick glitter,
And he was only one among eight million riders and readers.

And all the while under his empty smile the shaking drum
Of the long determined passage passed through him
By his body mimicked and echoed. And then the train
Like a suddenly storming rain, began to rush and thresh--
The silent or passive night, pressing and impressing
The patients' foreheads with a tightening-like image
Of the rushing engine proceeded by a shaft of light
Piercing the dark, changing and transforming the silence
Into a violence of foam, sound, smoke and succession.

A bored child went to get a cup of water,
And crushed the cup because the water too was boring and merely boredom's struggle.
The child, returning, looked over the shoulder
Of a man reading until he annoyed the shoulder.
A fat woman yawned and felt the liquid drops
Drip down the fleece of many dinners.

And the bird flew parallel and parallel flew
The black pencil lines of telephone posts, crucified,
At regular intervals, post after post
Of thrice crossed, blue-belled, anonymous trees.

And then the bird cried as if to all of us:

0 your life, your lonely life
What have you ever done with it,
And done with the great gift of consciousness?
What will you ever do with your life before death's knife
Provides the answer ultimate and appropriate?

As I for my part felt in my heart as one who falls,
Falls in a parachute, falls endlessly, and feel the vast Draft of the abyss sucking him down and down,
An endlessly helplessly falling and appalled clown:

This is the way that night passes by, this
Is the overnight endless trip to the famous unfathomable abyss.

Delmore Schwartz
America, America!

I am a poet of the Hudson River and the heights above it, the lights, the stars, and the bridges
I am also by self-appointment the laureate of the Atlantic -of the peoples' hearts, crossing it to new America.

I am burdened with the truck and chimera, hope, acquired in the sweating sick-excited passage in steerage, strange and estranged Hence I must descry and describe the kingdom of emotion.

For I am a poet of the kindergarten (in the city) and the cemetery (in the city) And rapture and ragtime and also the secret city in the heart and mind This is the song of the natural city self in the 20th century.

It is true but only partly true that a city is a "tyranny of numbers" (This is the chant of the urban metropolitan and metaphysical self After the first two World Wars of the 20th century)

--- This is the city self, looking from window to lighted window When the squares and checks of faintly yellow light Shine at night, upon a huge dim board and slab-like tombs, Hiding many lives. It is the city consciousness Which sees and says: more: more and more: always more.

Delmore Schwartz
Nothing is given which is not taken.

Little or nothing is taken which is not freely desired, freely, truly and fully.

"You would not seek me if you had not found me": this is true of all that is supremely desired and admired...

"An enigma is an animal," said the hurried, harried schoolboy:

And a horse divided against itself cannot stand;

And a moron is a man who believes in having too many wives: what harm is there in that?

O the endless fecundity of poetry is equaled
By its endless inexhaustible freshness, as in the discovery of America and of poetry.

Hence it is clear that the truth is not strait and narrow but infinite:
All roads lead to Rome and to poetry and to poem, sweet poem and from, away and towards are the same typography.

Hence the poet must be, in a way, stupid and naive and a little child;

Unless ye be as a little child ye cannot enter the kingdom of poetry.

Hence the poet must be able to become a tiger like Blake; a carousel like Rilke.

Hence he must be all things to be free, for all impersonations a doormat and a monument to all situations possible or actual
The cuckold, the cuckoo, the conqueror, and the coxcomb.

It is to him in the zoo that the zoo cries out and the hyena: "Hello, take off your hat, king of the beasts, and be seated, Mr. Bones."

And hence the poet must seek to be essentially anonymous. He must die a little death each morning. He must swallow his toad and study his vomit as Baudelaire studied la charogne of Jeanne Duval.

The poet must be or become both Keats and Renoir and Keats as Renoir. Mozart as Figaro and Edgar Allan Poe as Ophelia, stoned out of her mind drowning in the river called forever river and ever...

Keats as Mimi, Camille, and an aging gourmet. He must also refuse the favors of the unattainable lady (As Baudelaire refused Madame Sabatier when the fair blonde summoned him,

For Jeanne Duval was enough and more than enough, although she cuckolded him With errand boys, servants, waiters; reality was Jeanne Duval. Had he permitted Madame Sabatier to teach the poet a greater whiteness, His devotion and conception of the divinity of Beauty would have suffered an absolute diminution.)

The poet must be both Casanova and St. Anthony,

He must be Adonis, Nero, Hippolytus, Heathcliff, and Phaedre, Genghis Kahn, Genghis Cohen, and Gordon Martini Dandy Ghandi and St. Francis,

Professor Tenure, and Dizzy the dean and Disraeli of Death.

He would have worn the horns of existence upon his head, He would have perceived them regarding the looking-glass, He would have needed them the way a moose needs a hatrack; Above his heavy head and in his loaded eyes, black and scorched,
He would have seen the meaning of the hat-rack, above the glass
Looking in the dark foyer.

For the poet must become nothing but poetry,
He must be nothing but a poem when he is writing
Until he is absent-minded as the dead are
Forgetful as the nymphs of Lethe and a lobotomy...
("the fat weed that rots on Lethe wharf").

Delmore Schwartz
Archaic Bust Of Apollo

(After Rilke)

We cannot know the indescribable face
Where the eyes like apples ripened. Even so,
His torso has a candelabra's glow,
His gaze, contained as in a mirror's grace,

Shines within it. Otherwise his breast
Would not be dazzling. Nor would you recognize
The smile that moves along his curving thighs,
There where love's strength is caught within its nest.

This stone would not be broken, but intact
Beneath the shoulders' flowing cataract,
Nor would it glisten like a stallion's hide,

Brimming with radiance from every side
As a star sparkles. Now it is dawn once more.
All places scrutinize you. You must be reborn.

Delmore Schwartz
At This Moment Of Time

Some who are uncertain compel me. They fear
The Ace of Spades. They fear
Loves offered suddenly, turning from the mantelpiece,
Sweet with decision. And they distrust
The fireworks by the lakeside, first the spuft,
Then the colored lights, rising.
Tentative, hesitant, doubtful, they consume
Greedily Caesar at the prow returning,
Locked in the stone of his act and office.
While the brass band brightly bursts over the water
They stand in the crowd lining the shore
Aware of the water beneath Him. They know it. Their eyes
Are haunted by water

Disturb me, compel me. It is not true
That "no man is happy," but that is not
The sense which guides you. If we are
Unfinished (we are, unless hope is a bad dream),
You are exact. You tug my sleeve
Before I speak, with a shadow's friendship,
And I remember that we who move
Are moved by clouds that darken midnight.

Delmore Schwartz
Baudelaire

When I fall asleep, and even during sleep,
I hear, quite distinctly, voices speaking
Whole phrases, commonplace and trivial,
Having no relation to my affairs.

Dear Mother, is any time left to us
In which to be happy? My debts are immense.
My bank account is subject to the court’s judgment.
I know nothing. I cannot know anything.
I have lost the ability to make an effort.
But now as before my love for you increases.
You are always armed to stone me, always:
It is true. It dates from childhood.

For the first time in my long life
I am almost happy. The book, almost finished,
Almost seems good. It will endure, a monument
To my obsessions, my hatred, my disgust.

Debts and inquietude persist and weaken me.
Satan glides before me, saying sweetly:
“Rest for a day! You can rest and play today.
Tonight you will work.” When night comes,
My mind, terrified by the arrears,
Bored by sadness, paralyzed by impotence,
Promises: “Tomorrow: I will tomorrow.”
Tomorrow the same comedy enacts itself
With the same resolution, the same weakness.

I am sick of this life of furnished rooms.
I am sick of having colds and headaches:
You know my strange life. Every day brings
Its quota of wrath. You little know
A poet’s life, dear Mother: I must write poems,
The most fatiguing of occupations.
I am sad this morning. Do not reproach me.
I write from a café near the post office,
Amid the click of billiard balls, the clatter of dishes,
The pounding of my heart. I have been asked to write
“A History of Caricature.” I have been asked to write
“A History of Sculpture.” Shall I write a history
Of the caricatures of the sculptures of you in my heart?

Although it costs you countless agony,
Although you cannot believe it necessary,
And doubt that the sum is accurate,
Please send me money enough for at least three weeks.

Delmore Schwartz
By Circumstances Fed

By circumstances fed
Which divide attention
Among the living and the dead,
Under the blooms of the blossoming sun,
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, once in the drugstore,
Amid all the poppy, salve and ointment,
I suddenly saw, estranged there,
Beyond all disappointment,
My own face in the mirror.

Delmore Schwartz
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,
Between the worker and the millionaire
Number provides all distances,
It is Nineteen Thirty-Seven now,
Many great dears are taken away,
What will become of you and me
(This is the school in which we learn...)
Besides the photo and the memory?
(...that time is the fire in which we burn.)

(This is the school in which we learn...)
What is the self amid this blaze?
What am I now that I was then
Which I shall suffer and act again,
The theodicy I wrote in my high school days
Restored all life from infancy,
The children shouting are bright as they run
(This is the school in which they learn . . .)
Ravished entirely in their passing play!
(...that time is the fire in which they burn.)

Avid its rush, that reeling blaze!
Where is my father and Eleanor?
Not where are they now, dead seven years,
But what they were then?
No more? No more?
From Nineteen-Fourteen to the present day,
Bert Spira and Rhoda consume, consume
Not where they are now (where are they now?)
But what they were then, both beautiful;

Each minute bursts in the burning room,
The great globe reels in the solar fire,
Spinning the trivial and unique away.
(How all things flash! How all things flare!)
What am I now that I was then?
May memory restore again and again
The smallest color of the smallest day:
Time is the school in which we learn,
Time is the fire in which we burn.

Delmore Schwartz
Cambridge, Spring 1937

At last the air fragrant, the bird's bubbling whistle
Succinct in the unknown unsettled trees:
O little Charles, beside the Georgian colleges
And milltown New England; at last the wind soft,
The sky unmoving, and the dead look
Of factory windows separate, at last,
From windows gray and wet:
for now the sunlight
Thrashes its wet shellac on brickwalk and gutter,
White splinters streak midmorning and doorstep,
Winter passes as the lighted streetcar
Moves at midnight, one scene of the past,
Droll and unreal, stiff, stilted and hooded.

Delmore Schwartz
"Trash, trash!" the king my uncle said,
"The spirit's smoke and weak as smoke ascends.
"Sit in the sun and not among the dead,
"Eat oranges! Pish tosh! the car attends.

"All ghosts came back. they do not like it there,
"No silky water and no big brown bear,

"No beer and no siestas up above."
"Uncle," I said, "I'm lonely. What is love?"

This drove him quite insane. Now he must knit
Time and apperception, bit by tiny bit.

Delmore Schwartz
Dogs Are Shakespearean, Children Are Strangers

Dogs are Shakespearean, children are strangers.
Let Freud and Wordsworth discuss the child,
Angels and Platonists shall judge the dog,
The running dog, who paused, distending nostrils,
Then barked and wailed; the boy who pinched his sister,
The little girl who sang the song from Twelfth Night,
As if she understood the wind and rain,
The dog who moaned, hearing the violins in concert.
—O I am sad when I see dogs or children!
For they are strangers, they are Shakespearean.

Tell us, Freud, can it be that lovely children
Have merely ugly dreams of natural functions?
And you, too, Wordsworth, are children truly
Clouded with glory, learned in dark Nature?
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:
You too are strangers, children are Shakespearean.

Regard the child, regard the animal,
Welcome strangers, but study daily things,
Knowing that heaven and hell surround us,
But this, this which we say before we’re sorry,
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,
And we are howling or dancing out our souls
In beating syllables before the curtain:
We are Shakespearean, we are strangers.

Delmore Schwartz
Far Rockaway
"the cure of souls." Henry James

The radiant soda of the seashore fashions
Fun, foam and freedom. The sea laves
The Shaven sand. And the light sways forward
On self-destroying waves.

The rigor of the weekday is cast aside with shoes,
With business suits and traffic's motion;
The lolling man lies with the passionate sun,
Or is drunken in the ocean.

A socialist health take should 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.

O glittering and rocking and bursting and blue
-Eternities of sea and sky shadow no pleasure:
Time unheard moves and the heart of man is eaten
Consummately at leisure.

The novelist tangential on the boardwalk overhead
Seeks his cure of souls in his own anxious gaze.
"Here," he says, "With whom?" he asks, "This?" he questions,
"What tedium, what blaze?"

"What satisfaction, fruit? What transit, heaven?
Criminal? justified? arrived at what June?"
That nervous conscience amid the concessions
Is haunting, haunted moon.

Delmore Schwartz
Father And Son

Father:
On these occasions, the feelings surprise,
Spontaneous as rain, and they compel
Explicitness, embarrassed eyes—

Son:
Father, you’re not Polonius, you’re reticent,
But sure. I can already tell
The unction and falsetto of the sentiment
Which gratifies the facile mouth, but springs
From no felt, had, and wholly known things.

Father:
You must let me tell you what you fear
When you wake up from sleep, still drunk with sleep:
You are afraid of time and its slow drip,
Like melting ice, like smoke upon the air
In February’s glittering sunny day.
Your guilt is nameless, because its name is time,
Because its name is death. But you can stop
Time as it dribbles from you, drop by drop.

Son:
But I thought time was full of promises,
Even as now, the emotion of going away—

Father:
That is the first of all its menaces,
The lure of a future different from today;
All of us always are turning away
To the cinema and Asia. All of us go
To one indeterminate nothing.

Son:
Must it be so?
I question the sentiment you give to me,
As premature, not to be given, learned alone
When experience shrinks upon the chilling bone.
I would be sudden now and rash in joy,
As if I lived forever, the future my toy.
Time is a dancing fire at twenty-one,
Singing and shouting and drinking to the sun,
Powerful at the wheel of a motor-car,
Not thinking of death which is foreign and far.

Father:
If time flowed from your will and were a feast
I would be wrong to question your zest.
But each age betrays the same weak shape.
Each moment is dying. You will try to escape
From melting time and your dissipating soul
By hiding your head in a warm and dark hole.
See the evasions which so many don,
To flee the guilt of time they become one,
That is, the one number among masses,
The one anonymous in the audience,
The one expressionless in the subway,
In the subway evening among so many faces,
The one who reads the daily newspaper,
Separate from actor and act, a member
Of public opinion, never involved.
Integrated in the revery of a fine cigar,
Fleeing to childhood at the symphony concert,
Buying sleep at the drugstore, grandeur
At the band concert, Hawaii
On the screen, and everywhere a specious splendor:
One, when he is sad, has something to eat,
An ice cream soda, a toasted sandwich,
Or has his teeth fixed, but can always retreat
From the actual pain, and dream of the rich.
This is what one does, what one becomes
Because one is afraid to be alone,
Each with his own death in the lonely room.
But there is a stay. You can stop
Time as it dribbles from you, drop by drop.

Son:
Now I am afraid. What is there to be known?

Father:
Guilt, guilt of time, nameless guilt.
Grasp firmly your fear, thus grasping your self,
Your actual will. Stand in mastery,
Keeping time in you, its terrifying mystery.
Face yourself, constantly go back
To what you were, your own history.
You are always in debt. Do not forget
The dream postponed which would not quickly get
Pleasure immediate as drink, but takes
The travail of building, patience with means.
See the wart on your face and on your friend’s face,
On your friend’s face and indeed on your own face.
The loveliest woman sweats, the animal stains
The ideal which is with us like the sky ...

Son:
Because of that, some laugh, and others cry.

Father:
Do not look past and turn away your face.
You cannot depart and take another name,
Nor go to sleep with lies. Always the same,
Always the same self from the ashes of sleep
Returns with its memories, always, always,
The phoenix with eight hundred thousand memories!

Son:
What must I do that is most difficult?

Father:
You must meet your death face to face,
You must, like one in an old play,
Decide, once for all, your heart’s place.
Love, power, and fame stand on an absolute
Under the formless night and the brilliant day,
The searching violin, the piercing flute.
Absolute! Venus and Caesar fade at that edge,
Hanging from the fiftieth-story ledge,
Or diminished in bed when the nurse presses
Her sickening unguents and her cold compresses.
When the news is certain, surpassing fear,
You touch the wound, the priceless, the most dear.
There in death’s shadow, you comprehend
The irreducible wish, world without end.

Son:
I begin to understand the reason for evasion,
I cannot partake of your difficult vision.

Father:
Begin to understand the first decision.
Hamlet is the example; only dying
Did he take up his manhood, the dead’s burden,
Done with evasion, done with sighing,
Done with revery.
Decide that you are dying
Because time is in you, ineluctable
As shadow, named by no syllable.
Act in that shadow, as if death were now:
Your own self acts then, then you know.

Son:
My father has taught me to be serious.

Father:
Be guilty of yourself in the full looking-glass.

Delmore Schwartz
Faust In Old Age

"Poet and veteran of childhood, look!
See in me the obscene, for you have love,

For you have hatred, you, you must be judge,
Deliver judgement, Delmore Schwartz.

Well-known wishes have been to war,
The vicious mouth has chewed the vine.

The patient crab beneath the shirt
Has charmed such interests as Indies meant.

For I have walked within and seen each sea,
The fish that flies, the broken burning bird,

Born again, beginning again, my breast!
Purple with persons like a tragic play.

For I have flown the cloud and fallen down,
Plucked Venus, sneering at her moan.

I took the train that takes away remorse;
I cast down every king like Socrates.

I knocked each nut to find the meat;
A worm was there and not a mint.

Metaphysicians could have told me this,
But each learns for himself, as in the kiss.

Polonius I poked, not him
To whom aspires spire and hymn,

Who succors children and the very poor;
I pierced the pompous Premier, not Jesus Christ,

I picked Polonius and Moby Dick,
the ego bloomed into an octopus.
Now come I to the exhausted West at last;
I know my vanity, my nothingness,

now I float will-less in despair's dead sea,
Every man my enemy.

Spontaneous, I have too much to say,
And what I say will no one not old see:

If we could love one another, it would be well.
But as it is, I am sorry for the whole world, myself
apart. My heart is full of memory and desire, and in
its last nervousness, there is pity for those I have
touched, but only hatred and contempt for myself."

Delmore Schwartz
For The One Who Would Not Take His Life In His Hands

Athlete, virtuoso,
Training for happiness,
Bend arm and knee, and seek
The body's sharp distress,
For pain is pleasure's cost,
Denial is route
To speech before the millions
Or personal with the flute.

The ape and great Achilles,
Heavy with their fate,
Batter doors down, strike
Small children at the gate,
Driven by love to this,
As knock-kneed Hegel said,
To seek with a sword their peace,
That the child may be taken away
From the hurly-burly and fed.

Ladies and Gentlemen, said
The curious Socrates,
I have asked, What is this life
But a childermass,
As Abraham recognized,
A working with the knife
At animal, maid and stone
Until we have cut down
All but the soul alone:
Through hate we guard our love,
And its distinction's known.

Delmore Schwartz
For The One Who Would Take Man's Life In His Hands

Tiger Christ unsheathed his sword, 
Threw it down, became a lamb. 
Swift spat upon the species, but 
Took two women to his heart. 
Samson who was strong as death 
Paid his strength to kiss a slut. 
Othello that stiff warrior 
Was broken by a woman's heart. 
Troy burned for a sea-tax, also for 
Possession of a charming whore. 
What do all examples show? 
What must the finished murderer know?

You cannot sit on bayonets, 
Nor can you eat among the dead. 
When all are killed, you are alone, 
A vacuum comes where hate has fed. 
Murder's fruit is silent stone, 
The gun increases poverty. 
With what do these examples shine? 
The soldier turned to girls and wine. 
Love is the tact of every good, 
The only warmth, the only peace.

"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."

Delmore Schwartz
From The Graveyard By The Sea

(After Valery)

This hushed surface where the doves parade
Amid the pines vibrates, amid the graves;
Here the noon’s justice unites all fires when
The sea aspires forever to begin again and again.
O what a gratification comes after long meditation
O satisfaction, after long meditation or ratiocination
Upon the calm of the gods
Upon the divine serenity, in luxurious contemplation!

What pure toil of perfect lightning enwombs, consumes,
Each various manifold jewel of imperceptible foam,
And how profound a peace appears to be begotten and begun
When upon the abyss the sunlight seems to pause,
The pure effects of an eternal cause:
Time itself sparkles, to dream and to know are one....

Delmore Schwartz
Come, let us rejoice in James Joyce, in the greatness of this poet, 
king, and king of poets 
For he is our poor dead king, he is the monarch and Caesar of English, 
he is the veritable King of the King's English 

The English of the life of the city, 
and the English of music; 

Let them rejoice because he rejoiced and was joyous; 
For his joy was superior, it was supreme, for it was accomplished 
After the suffering of much evil, the evil of the torment of pride, 
By the overcoming of disgust and despair by means of the confrontation of 
them 
By the enduring of nausea, the supporting of exile, the drawing from 
the silence of exile, the pure arias of the 
hidden music of all things, all beings. 
For the joy of Joyce was earned by the sweat of the bow of his mind 
by the tears of the agony of his heart; 
(hence it was gained, mastered, and conquered, 
(hence it was not a gift and freely given, 
a mercy often granted to masters, 
as if they miraculous were natural -) 
For he earned his joy and ours by the domination of evil by 
confrontation and the exorcism of language 
in all its powers of imitation and 
imagination and radiance and delight.... 

Delmore Schwartz
In The Naked Bed, In Plato's Cave

In the naked bed, in Plato's cave,
Reflected headlights slowly slid the wall,
Carpenters hammered under the shaded window,
Wind troubled the window curtains all night long,
A fleet of trucks strained uphill, grinding,
Their freights covered, as usual.
The ceiling lightened again, the slanting diagram
Slid slowly forth.

Hearing the milkman's clop,
his striving up the stair, the bottle's chink,
I rose from bed, lit a cigarette,
And walked to the window. The stony street
Displayed the stillness in which buildings stand,
The street-lamp's vigil and the horse's patience.
The winter sky's pure capital
Turned me back to bed with exhausted eyes.

Strangeness grew in the motionless air. The loose
Film grayed. Shaking wagons, hooves' waterfalls,
Sounded far off, increasing, louder and nearer.
A car coughed, starting. Morning softly
Melting the air, lifted the half-covered chair
From underseas, kindled the looking-glass,
Distinguished the dresser and the white wall.
The bird called tentatively, whistled, called,
Bubbled and whistled, so! Perplexed, still wet
With sleep, affectionate, hungry and cold. So, so,
O son of man, the ignorant night, the travail
Of early morning, the mystery of the beginning
Again and again,

while history is unforgiven.

Delmore Schwartz
In The Slight Ripple, The Mind Perceives The Heart

In the slight ripple, the fishes dart
Like fingers, centrifugal, like wishes
Wanton. And pleasures rise
as the eyes fall
Through the lucid water. The small pebble,
The clear clay bottom, the white shell
Are apparent, though superficial.
Who would ask more of the August afternoon?
Who would dig mines and follow shadows?
"I would," answers bored Heart, "Lounger, rise"
(Underlip trembling, face white with stony anger),
"The old error, the thought of sitting still,
"The senses drinking, by the summer river,
"On the tended lawn, below the traffic,
"As if time would pause,
    and afternoon stay.

"No, night comes soon,
"With its cold mountains, with desolation,
    unless Love build its city."

Delmore Schwartz
Late Autumn In Venice

(After Rilke)

The city floats no longer like a bait
To hook the nimble darting summer days.
The glazed and brittle palaces pulsate and radiate
And glitter. Summer's garden sways,
A heap of marionettes hanging down and dangled,
Leaves tired, torn, turned upside down and strangled:
Until from forest depths, from bony leafless trees
A will wakens: the admiral, lolling long at ease,
Has been commanded, overnight -- suddenly --:
In the first dawn, all galleys put to sea!
Waking then in autumn chill, amid the harbor medley,
The fragrance of pitch, pennants aloft, the butt
Of oars, all sails unfurled, the fleet
Awaits the great wind, radiant and deadly.

Delmore Schwartz
Love And Marilyn Monroe

(after Spillane)

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
Wincing, 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 a great lady, she is more than a lady,
She continues the tradition of Dolly Madison and Clara Bow
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
(Who says also: "A woman is like a motor car:
She needs a good body."
And: "I sun bathe in the nude, because I want
to be blonde all over.")

This is spiritual piety and physical ebullience
This is vivid glory, spiritual and physical,
Of Miss Marilyn Monroe.

Delmore Schwartz
I looked toward the movie, the common dream,
The he and she in close-ups, nearer than life,
And I accepted such things as they seem,

The easy poise, the absence of the knife,
The near summer happily ever after,
The understood question, the immediate strife,

Not dangerous, nor mortal, but the fadeout
Enormously kissing amid warm laughter,
As if such things were not always played out

By an ignorant arm, which crosses the dark
And lights up a thin sheet with a shadow's mark.

Delmore Schwartz
THE MIND IS AN ANCIENT AND FAMOUS CAPITAL

The mind is a city like London,
Smoky and populous: it is a capital
Like Rome, ruined and eternal,
Marked by the monuments which no one
Now remembers. For the mind, like Rome, contains
Catacombs, aqueducts, amphitheatres, palaces,
Churches and equestrian statues, fallen, broken or soiled.
The mind possesses and is possessed by all the ruins
Of every haunted, hunted generation’s celebration.

“Call us what you will: we are made such by love.”
We are such studs as dreams are made on, and
Our little lives are ruled by the gods, by Pan,
Piping of all, seeking to grasp or grasping
All of the grapes; and by the bow-and-arrow god,
Cupid, piercing the heart through, suddenly and forever.

Dusk we are, to dusk returning, after the burbing,
After the gold fall, the fallen ash, the bronze,
Scattered and rotten, after the white null statues which
Are winter, sleep, and nothingness: when
Will the houselights of the universe
Light up and blaze?
For it is not the sea
Which murmurs in a shell,
And it is not only heart, at harp o’clock,
It is the dread terror of the uncontrollable
Horses of the apocalypse, running in wild dread
Toward Arcturus—and returning as suddenly ...

THE FEAR AND DREAD OF THE MIND OF THE OTHERS

—The others were the despots of despair—
The river’s freshness sailed from unknown sources—

... They snickered giggled, laughed aloud at last,
They mocked and marvelled at the statue which was
A caricature, as strained 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,
And this belief became the night-like obstacle
To understanding all my unbroken suffering,
My studious self-regard, the pain of hope,
The torment of possibility:
How then could I have expected them to see me
As I saw myself, within my gaze, or see
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, how could I have
Told them what was in me, within my heart, trembling and passionate
Within the labyrinth and caves of my mind, which is
Like every mind partly or wholly hidden from itself?
The words for what is in my heart and in my mind
Do not exist. But I must seek and search to find
Amid the vines and orchards of the vivid world of day
Approximate images, imaginary parallels
For what is my heart and dark within my mind:
Comparisons and mere metaphors: for all
Of them are substitutes, both counterfeit and vague:
They are, at most, deceptive resemblances,
False in their very likeness, like the sons
Who are alike and kin and more unlike and false
Because they seem the father’s very self: but each one is
—Although begotten by the same forbears—himself,
The unique self, each one is unique, like every other one,
And everything, older or younger, nevertheless
A passionate nonesuch who has before has been.
Do you hear, do you see? Do you understand me now, and how
The words for what is my heart do not exist?

THE RIVER WAS THE EMBLEM OF ALL BEAUTY: ALL

... 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 freshening—
A self anew, another self, or self renewed
At every tick of eternity, and by each glint of light
Mounting or sparkling, descending to shade and black
—Had I but told them my heart, told how it was
Taunted at noon and pacified at dusk, at starfall midnight
Strong in hope once more, ever in eagerness
Jumping like joy, would they have heard? How could they?
How, when what they knew was, like the grass,
Simple and certain, known through the truth of touch, another form and fountain
of falsehood’s fecundity—
Gazing upon their faces as they gazed
Could they have seen my faces as whores who are
Holy and deified as priestesses of hope
—the sacred virgins of futurity—
Promising dear divinity precisely because
They were disfigured ducks who might become
And be, and ever beloved, white swans, noble and beautiful.
Could they have seen how my faces were
Bonfires of worship and vigil, blazing adoration and hope
—Surely they would have laughed again, renewed their scorn,
Giggled and snickered, cruel. Surely have said
This is the puerile mania of the obsessed,
The living logic of the lunatic:
I was the statue of their merriment,
Dead and a death, Pharoah and monster forsaken and lost.

...
My faces were my apes: my apes became
Performers in the Sundays of their parks,
Buffoons or clowns in the farce or comedy
When they took pleasure in knowing that they were not like me.
I waited like obsession in solitude:
The sun’s white terror tore and roared at me,
The moonlight, almond white, at night,
Whether awake or sleeping, arrested me
And sang, softly, haunted, unlike the sun
But as the sun. Withheld from me or took away
Despair or peace, making me once more
With thought of what had never been before——

Delmore Schwartz
News Of The Gold World Of May

News of the Gold World of May in Holland Michigan:
"Wooden shoes will clatter again
on freshly scrubbed streets--"

The tulip will arise and reign again from awnings and windows
of all colors and forms
its vine, verve and valentine curves

upon the city streets, the public grounds
and private lawns
(wherever it is conceivable
that a bulb might take root
and the two lips, softly curved, come up
possessed by the skilled love and will of a ballerina.)

The citizens will dance in folk dances.
They will thump, they will pump,
thudding and shoving
elbow and thigh,
bumping and laughing, like barrels and bells.

Vast fields of tulips in full bloom,
the reproduction of a miniature Dutch village,
part of a gigantic flower show.

Delmore Schwartz
Now He Knows All There Is To Know. Now He Is Acquainted With The Day And Night

(Robert Frost, 1875-1963)

Whose wood this is I think I know:
He made it sacred long ago:
He will expect me, far or near
To watch that wood immense with snow.

That famous horse must feel great fear
Now that his noble rider's no longer here:
He gives his harness bells to rhyme
--Perhaps he will be back, in time?

All woulds were promises he kept
Throughout the night when others slept:
Now that he knows all that he did not know,
His wood is holy, and full of snow,
and all the beauty he made holy long long ago
In Boston, London, Washington,
And once by the Pacific and once in Moscow:
    and now, and now
    upon the fabulous blue river ever
    or singing from a great white bough

And wherever America is, now as before,
    and now as long, long ago
He sleeps and wakes forever more!

    "O what a metaphysical victory
        The first day and night of death must be!"

Delmore Schwartz
O Love, Sweet Animal

O Love, dark animal,
With your strangeness go
Like any freak or clown:
Appease tee child in her
Because she is alone
Many years ago
Terrified by a look
Which was not meant for her.
Brush your heavy fur
Against her, long and slow
Stare at her like a book,
Her interests being such
No one can look too much.
Tell her how you know
Nothing can be taken
Which has not been given:
For you time is forgiven:
Informed by hell and heaven
You are not mistaken

Delmore Schwartz
Occasional Poems

I Christmas Poem for Nancy

Noel, Noel
We live and we die
Between heaven and hell
Between the earth and the sky
And all shall be well
And all shall be unwell
And once again! all shall once again!
All shall be well
By the ringing and the swinging
of the great beautiful holiday bell
Of Noel! Noel!

II Salute Valentine

I'll drink to thee only with my eyes
When two are three and four,
And guzzle reality's rise and cries
And praise the truth beyond surmise
When small shots shout: More! More! More! More!

III Rabbi to Preach

Rabbi Robert Raaba will preach
on "An Eye for an Eye"
(an I for an I?)
(Two weeks from this week: "On the Sacred Would")
At Temple Sholem on Lake Shore Drive
- Pavel Slavensky will chant the liturgical responses
And William Leon, having now thirteen years
will thank his parents that he exists
To celebrate his birthday of manhood, his chocolate
Bar Mitzvah, his yum-yum kippered herring, his Russian
Corona.

Delmore Schwartz
Out Of The Watercolored Window, When You Look

When from the watercolored window idly you look
Each is but and clear to see, not steep:
So does the neat print in an actual book
Marching as if to true conclusion, reap
The illimitable blue immensely overhead,
The night of the living and the day of the dead.

I drive in an auto all night long to reach
The apple which has sewed the sunlight up:
My simple self is nothing but the speech
Pleading for the overflow of that great cup,
The darkened body, the mind still as a frieze:
All else is merely means as complex as disease!

Delmore Schwartz
Parlez-Vous Francais?

Caesar, the amplifier voice, announces
Crime and reparation. In the barber shop
Recumbent men attend, while absently
The barber doffs the naked face with cream.
Caesar proposes, Caesar promises
Pride, justice, and the sun
Brilliant and strong on everyone,
Speeding one hundred miles an hour across the land:
Caesar declares the will. The barber firmly
Planes the stubble with a steady hand,
While all in barber chairs reclining,
In wet white faces, fully understand
Good and evil, who is Gentile, weakness and command.

And now who enters quietly? Who is this one
Shy, pale, and quite abstracted? Who is he?
It is the writer merely, with a three-day beard,
His tiredness not evident. He wears no tie.
And now he hears his enemy and trembles,
Resolving, speaks: "Ecoutez! La plupart des hommes
Vivent des vies de desespoir silencieux,
Victimes des intentions innombrables. Et ca
Cet homme sait bien. Les mots de cette voix sont
Des songes et des mensonges. Il prend choix,
Il prend la volonté, il porte la fin d'ete.
La guerre. Ecoutez-moi! Il porte la mort."
He stands there speaking and they laugh to hear
Rage and excitement from the foreigner.

Delmore Schwartz
Faithful to your commandments, o consciousness, o

Holy bird of words soaring ever whether to nothingness or
to inconceivable fulfillment slowly:

And still I follow you, awkward as that dandy of ontology
and as awkward as his albatross and as

another dandy of ontology before him, another shepherd
and watchdog of being, the one who

Talked forever of forever as if forever of having been
and being an ancient mariner,

Hesitant forever as if forever were the albatross

Hung round his neck by the seven seas of the seven muses,

and with as little conclusion, since being never concludes,

Studying the sibilance and the splashing of the seas and of
seeing and of being's infinite seas,

Staring at the ever-blue and the far small stars and
the faint white endless curtain of the
twinkling play's endless seasons.

Delmore Schwartz
Phoenix Lyrics

I

If nature is life, nature is death:
It is winter as it is spring:
Confusion is variety, variety
And confusion in everything
Make experience the true conclusion
Of all desire and opulence,
All satisfaction and poverty.

II

When a hundred years had passed nature seemed to man
   a clock
Another century sank away and nature seemed a jungle
   in a rock
And now that nature has become a ticking and hidden
   bomb how we must mock
Newton, Democritus, the Deity
The heart's ingenuity and the mind's infinite
   uncontrollable
   insatiable curiosity.

III

Purple black cloud at sunset: it is late August
and the light begins to look cold, and as we look,
listen and look, we hear the first drums of autumn.

Delmore Schwartz
Poem Faithful to your commands, o consciousness, o

Beating wings, I studied

the roses and the muses of reality,

the deceptions and the deceptive elation of the redness of the growing morning,

and all the greened and thomed variety of the vines of error, which begin by promising

Everything and more than everything, and then suddenly,

At the height of noon seem to rise to the peak or dune-like moon of no return

So that everything is or seems to have become nothing, or of no genuine importance:

And it is not that the departure of hope or its sleep has made it inconceivable

That anything should be or should have been important:

It is the belief that hope itself was not, from the beginning, before believing, the most important of all beliefs.

Delmore Schwartz
In the morning, when it was raining,
Then the birds were hectic and loudy;
Through all the reign is fall's entertaining;
Their singing was erratic and full of disorder:
They did not remember the summer blue
Or the orange of June. They did not think at all
Of the great red and bursting ball
Of the kingly sun's terror and tempest, blazing,
Once the slanting rain threw over all
The colorless curtains of the ceaseless spontaneous fall.

Delmore Schwartz
Old man in the crystal morning after snow,
Your throat swathed in a muffler, your bent
Figure building the snow man which is meant
For the grandchild's target,

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.

You build his comic head, you place his comic hat;
Old age is not so serious, and I
By the window sad and watchful as a cat,
Build to this poem of old age and of snow,
And weep: you are my snow man and I know
I near you, you near him, all of us must die.

Delmore Schwartz
Poem (Remember Midsummer: The Fragrance Of Box)

Remember midsummer: the fragrance of box, of white roses
And of phlox. And upon a honeysuckle branch
Three snails hanging with infinite delicacy
-- Clinging like tendril, flake and thread, as self-tormented
And self-delighted as any ballerina,

just as in the orchard,
Near the apple trees, in the over-grown grasses
Drunken wasps clung to over-ripe pears
Which had fallen: swollen and disfigured.
For now it is wholly autumn: in the late Afternoon as I walked toward the ridge where the hills begin,

There is a whir, a thrashing in the bush, and a startled pheasant, flying out and up,
Suddenly astonished me, breaking the waking dream.

Last night
Snatches of sleep, streaked by dreams and half dreams
- So that, aloft in the dim sky, for almost an hour,
A sausage balloon - chalk-white and lifeless looking--

floated motionless
Until, at midnight, I went to New Bedlam and saw what I feared

the most - I heard nothing, but it had all happened several times elsewhere.

Now, in the cold glittering morning, shining at the window,
The pears hang, yellowed and over-ripe, sodden brown in erratic places, all bunched and dangling,
Like a small choir of bagpipes, silent and waiting. And I rise now,
Go to the window and gaze at the fallen or falling country
-- And see! -- the fields are pencilled light brown
or are the dark brownness of the last autumn
-- So much has shrunked to straight brown lines, thin as the bare thin trees,
Save where the cornstalks, white bones of the lost forever dead,
Shrivelled and fallen, but shrill-voiced when the wind
whistles,
Are scattered like the long abandoned hopes and ambitions
Of an adolescence which, for a very long time, has been
merely
A recurrent target and taunt of the inescapable mockery of
memory.

Delmore Schwartz
Poem (You, My Photographer, You, Most Aware)

You, my photographer, you, most aware,
Who climbed to the bridge when the iceberg struck,
Climbed with your camera when the ship's hull broke,
And lighted your flashes and, standing passionate there,
Wound the camera in the sudden burst's flare,
Shot the screaming women, and turned and took
Pictures of the iceberg (as the ship's deck shook)
Dreaming like the moon in the night's black air!

You, tiptoe on the rail to film a child!
The nude old woman swimming in the sea
Looked up from the dark water to watch you there;
Below, near the ballroom where the band still toiled,
The frightened, in their lifebelts, watched you bitterly -
You hypocrite! My brother! We are a pair!

Delmore Schwartz
Prothalamion

"little soul, little flirting,
    little perverse one
    where are you off to now?
little wan one, firm one
    little exposed one...
    and never make fun of me again."

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 in hand, glance and glance, care and care,
None may wear masks or enigmatic clothes,
For weakness blinds the wounded face enough.
In sense, see my shocking nakedness.

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.

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.

For thus it is that I betray myself,
Passing the terror of childhood at second hand
Through nervous, learned fingertips.
At thirteen when a little girl died,
I walked for three weeks neither alive nor dead,
And could not understand and still cannot
The adult blind to the nearness of the dead,
Or carefully ignorant of their own death.
--This sense could shadow all the time's curving fruits,
But we will taste of them the whole night long,
Forgetting no twelfth night, no fete of June,
But in the daylight knowing our nothingness.

Let Freud and Marx be wedding guests indeed!
Let them mark out masks that face us there,
For of all anguish, weakness, loss and failure,
No form is cruel as self-deception, none
Shows day-by-day a bad dream long lived
And unbroken like the lies
We tell each other because we are rich or poor.
Though from the general guilt not free
We can keep honor by being poor.

The waste, the evil, the abomination
Is interrupted. the perfect stars persist
Small in the guilty night,
    and Mozart shows
The irreducible incorruptible good
Risen past birth and death, though he is dead.
Hope, like a face reflected on the windowpane,
Remote and dim, fosters a myth or dream,
And in that dream, I speak, I summon all
Who are our friends somehow and thus I say:

"Bid the jewellers come with monocles,
Exclaiming, Pure! Intrinsic! Final!
Summon the children eating ice cream
To speak the chill thrill of immediacy.
Call for the acrobats who tumble
The ecstasy of the somersault.
Bid the self-sufficient stars be piercing
In the sublime and inexhaustible blue.
"Bring a mathematician, there is much to count,
The unending continuum of my attention:
Infinity will hurry his multiplied voice!
Bring the poised impeccable diver,
Summon the skater, precise in figure,
He knows the peril of circumstance,
The risk of movement and the hard ground.
Summon the florist! And the tobacconist!
All who have known a plant-like beauty:
Summon the charming bird for ignorant song.

"You, Athena, with your tired beauty,
Will you give me away? For you must come
In a bathing suit with that white owl
Whom, as I walk, I will hold in my hand.
You too, Crusoe, to utter the emotion
Of finding Friday, no longer alone;
You too, Chaplin, muse of the curbstone,
Mummer of hope, you understand!"

But this is fantastic and pitiful,
And no one comes, none will, we are alone,
And what is possible is my own voice,
Speaking its wish, despite its lasting fear;
Speaking of its hope, its promise and its fear,
The voice drunk with itself and rapt in fear,
Exaggeration, braggadocio,
Rhetoric and hope, and always fear:

"For fifty-six or for a thousand years,
I will live with you and be your friend,
And what your body and what your spirit bears
I will like my own body cure and tend.
But you are heavy and my body's weight
Is great and heavy: when I carry you
I lift upon my back time like a fate
Near as my heart, dark when I marry you.
"The voice's promise is easy, and hope
Is drunk, and wanton, and unwilled;
In time's quicksilver, where our desires grope,
The dream is warped or monstrously fulfilled,
In this sense, listen, listen, and draw near:
Love is inexhaustible and full of fear."

This life is endless and my eyes are tired,  
So that, again and again, I touch a chair,  
Or go to the window, press my face  
Against it, hoping with substantial touch,  
Colorful sight, or turning things to gain once more  
The look of actuality, the certainty  
Of those who run down stairs and drive a car.  
Then let us be each other's truth, let us  
Affirm the other's self, and be  
The other's audience, the other's state,  
Each to the other his sonorous fame.

Now you will be afraid, when, waking up,  
Before familiar morning, by my mute side  
Wan and abandoned then, when, waking up,  
You see the lion or lamb upon my face  
Or see the daemon breathing heavily  
His sense of ignorance, his wish to die,  
For I am nothing because my circus self  
Divides its love a million times.

I am the octopus in love with God,  
For thus is my desire inconclusible,  
Until my mind, deranged in swimming tubes,  
Issues its own darkness, clutching seas  
---O God of my perfect ignorance,  
Bring the New Year to my only sister soon,  
Take from me strength and power to bless her head,  
Give her the magnitude of secular trust,  
Until she turns to me in her troubled sleep,  
Seeing me in my wish, free from self-wrongs.

Delmore Schwartz
Saint, Revolutionist

Saint, revolutionist,
God and sage know well,
That there is a place
Where that much-rung bell,
The well-beloved body,
And its sensitive face
Must be sacrificed.

There is, it seems, in this
A something meaningless,
Hanging without support
And yet too dear to touch,
That life should seek its end
Where no will can descend,
Facing a gun to see
Long actuality.

What is this that is
The good of nothingness,
The death of Socrates
And that strange man on the cross
Seeking out all loss?
For men love life until
It shames both face and will.

Neither in hell nor heaven
Is the answer given,
Both are a servant's pay:
But they wish to know
how far the will can go,
Lest their infinite play
And their desires be
Shadow and mockery.

Delmore Schwartz
Socrates Ghost Must Haunt Me Now

Socrates ghost must haunt me now,
Notorious death has let him go,
He comes to me with a clumsy bow,
Saying in his disused voice,
That I do not know I do not know,
The mechanical whims of appetite
Are all that I have of conscious choice,
The butterfly caged in eclectic light
Is my only day in the world's great night,
Love is not love, it is a child
Sucking his thumb and biting his lip,
But grasp it all, there may be more!
From the topless sky to the bottomless floor
With the heavy head and the fingertip:
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!

Delmore Schwartz
Someone is harshly coughing on the next floor,
Sudden excitement catching the flesh of his throat:
Who is the sick one?
Who will knock at the door,
Ask what is wrong and sweetly pay attention,
The shy withdrawal of the sensitive face
Embarrassing both, but double shame is tender
--We will mind our ignorant business, keep our place.

But it is God, who has caught cold again,
Wandering helplessly in the world once more,
Now he is phthisic, and he is, poor Keats
(Pardon, O Father, unknowable Dear, this word,
Only the cartoon is lucid, only the curse is heard),
Longing for Eden, afraid of the coming war.

The past, a giant shadow like the twilight,
The moving street on which the autos slide,
The buildings' heights, like broken teeth,
Repeat necessity on every side,
The age requires death and is not denied,
He has come as a young man to be hanged once more!

Another exile bare his complex care,
(When smoke in silence curves
   from every fallen side)
Pity and Peace return, padding the broken floor
With heavy feet.
   Their linen hands will hide
In the stupid opiate the exhausted war.

Delmore Schwartz
Sonnet On Famous And Familiar Sonnets And Experiences

(With much help from Robert Good, William Shakespeare, John Milton, and little Catherine Schwartz)

Shall I compare her to a summer play?
She is too clever, too devious, too subtle, too dark:
Her lies are rare, but then she paves the way
Beyond the summer's sway, within the jejune park
Where all souls' aspiration to true nobility
Obliges Statues in the Frieze of Death
And when this pantomime and Panama of Panorama Fails,
"I'll never speak to you agayne" -- or waste her panting breath.

When I but think of how her years are spent
Deadening that one talent which -- for woman is --
Death or paralysis, denied: nature's intent
That each girl be a mother -- whether or not she is
Or has become a lawful wife or bride
-- 0 Alma Magna Mater, deathless the living death of pride.

Delmore Schwartz
Sonnet Suggested By Homer, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Edgar Allan Poe, Paul Vakzy, James Joyce, Et Al.

Let me not, ever, to the marriage in Cana
Of Galilee admit the slightest sentiment
Of doubt about the astonishing and sustaining manna
Of chance and choice to throw a shadow's element
Of disbelief in truth -- Love is not love
Nor is the love of love its truth in consciousness
If it can be made hesitant by any crow or dove or
    seeming angel or demon from above or from below
Or made more than it is knows itself to be by the authority
    of any ministry of love.

O no -- it is the choice of chances and the chancing of
    all choice -- the wine
which was the water may be sickening, unsatisfying or
    sour
A new barbiturate drawn from the fattest flower
That prospers green on Lethe's shore. For every hour
Denies or once again affirms the vow and the ultimate
tower
Of aspiration which made Ulysses toil so far away from
    home
And then, for years, strive against every wanton desire,
    sea and fire, to return across the.
    ever-threatening seas
A journey forever far beyond all the vivid eloquence
    of every poet and all poetry.

Delmore Schwartz
Sonnet: O City, City

To live between terms, 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.

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.

Delmore Schwartz
Sonnet: The Ghosts Of James And Peirce In Harvard Yard

In memory of D. W. Prall

The ghosts of James and Peirce in Harvard Yard
At star-pierced midnight, after the chapel bell
(Episcopalian! palian! the ringing soared!)
Stare at me now as if they wish me well.
In the waking dream amid the trees which fall,
Bar and bough of shadow, by my shadow crossed,
They have not slept for long and they know all,
Know time's exhaustion and the spirit's cost.

"We studied the radiant sun, the star's pure seed:
Darkness is infinite! The blind can see
Hatred's necessity and love's grave need
Now that the poor are murdered across the sea,
And you are ignorant, who hear the bell;
Ignorant, you walk between heaven and hell."

Delmore Schwartz
Spiders

Is the spider a monster in miniature?
His web is a cruel stair, to be sure,
Designed artfully, cunningly placed,
A delicate trap, carefully spun
To bind the fly (innocent or unaware)
In a net as strong as a chain or a gun.

There are far more spiders than the man in the street supposes
And the philosopher-king imagines, let alone knows!
There are six hundred kinds of spiders and each one
Differs in kind and in unkindness.
In variety of behavior spiders are unrivalled:
The fat garden spider sits motionless, amidst or at the heart
Of the orb of its web: other kinds run,
Scuttling across the floor, falling into bathtubs,
Trapped in the path of its own wrath, by overconfidence drowned and undone.

Other kinds - more and more kinds under the stars and the sun -
Are carnivores: all are relentless, ruthless
Enemies of insects. Their methods of getting food
Are unconventional, numerous, various and sometimes hilarious:
Some spiders spin webs as beautiful
As Japanese drawings, intricate as clocks, strong as rocks:
Others construct traps which consist only
Of two sticky and tricky threads. Yet this ambush is enough
To bind and chain a crawling ant for long enough:
The famished spider feels the vibration
Which transforms patience into sensation and satiation.
The handsome wolf spider moves suddenly freely and relies
Upon lightning suddenness, stealth and surprise,
Possessing accurate eyes, pouncing upon his victim with the speed of surmise.

Courtship is dangerous: there are just as many elaborate
and endless techniques and varieties
As characterize the wooing of more analytic, more
introspective beings: Sometimes the male
Arrives with the gift of a freshly caught fly.
Sometimes he ties down the female, when she is frail,
With deft strokes and quick manoeuvres and threads of silk:
But courtship and wooing, whatever their form, are
informed
By extreme caution, prudence, and calculation,
For the female spider, lazier and fiercer than the male
suitor,
May make a meal of him if she does not feel in the same
mood, or if her appetite
Consumes her far more than the revelation of love's
consummation.
Here among spiders, as in the higher forms of nature,
The male runs a terrifying risk when he goes seeking for
the bounty of beautiful Alma Magna Mater:
Yet clearly and truly he must seek and find his mate and
match like every other living creature!

Delmore Schwartz
The Ballad Of The Children Of The Czar

1

The children of the Czar
Played with a bouncing ball

In the May morning, in the Czar's garden,
Tossing it back and forth.

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

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

Like Papa's face, said Sister,
Hurling the white ball forth.

2

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.

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.

3
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.

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

But seeing that so much is past
And that history has no ruth

For the individual,
Who drinks tea, who catches cold,

Let anger be general:
I hate an abstract thing.

4

Brother and sister bounced
The bounding, unbroken ball,

The shattering sun fell down
Like swords upon their play,

Moving eastward among the stars
Toward February and October.

But the Maywind brushed their cheeks
Like a mother watching sleep,

And if for a moment they fight
Over the bouncing ball

And sister pinches brother
And brother kicks her shins,

Well! The heart of man in known:
It is a cactus bloom.

5

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

The wheeling, whirling world
Makes no will glad.

Spinning in its spotlight darkness,
It is too big for their hands.

A pitiless, purposeless Thing,
Arbitrary, and unspent,

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

The innocent are overtaken,
They are not innocent.

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

6

Now, in another October
Of this tragic star,

I see my second year,
I eat my baked potato.

It is my buttered world,
But, poked by my unlearned hand,

It 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.

Even a bouncing ball
Is uncontrollable,

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

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

Delmore Schwartz
The Ballet Of The Fifth Year

Where the sea gulls sleep or indeed where they fly
Is a place of different traffic. Although I
Consider the fishing bay (where I see them dip and curve
And purely glide) a place that weakens the nerve
Of will, and closes my eyes, as they should not be
(They should burn like the street-light all night quietly,
So that whatever is present will be known to me),
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,
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.

Delmore Schwartz
The Beautiful American Word, Sure

The beautiful American word, Sure,
As I have come into a room, and touch
The lamp's button, and the light blooms with such
Certainty where the darkness loomed before,

As I care for what I do not know, and care
Knowing for little she might not have been,
And for how little she would be unseen,
The intercourse of lives miraculous and dear.

Where the light is, and each thing clear,
separate from all others, standing in its place,
I drink the time and touch whatever's near,

And hope for day when the whole world has that face:
For what assures her present every year?
In dark accidents the mind's sufficient grace.

Delmore Schwartz
The Choir And Music Of Solitude And Silence

Silence is a great blue bell
Swinging and ringing, tinkling and singing,
In measure’s pleasure, and in the supple symmetry
    of the soaring of the immense intense wings
glinting against
All the blue radiance above us and within us, hidden
Save for the stars sparking, distant and unheard in their singing.
And this is the first meaning of the famous saying,
The stars sang. They are the white birds of silence
And the meaning of the difficult famous saying that the sons and daughters of morning sang,
Meant and means that they were and they are the children of God and morning,
Delighting in the lights of becoming and the houses of being,
Taking pleasure in measure and excess, in listening as in seeing.

Love is the most difficult and dangerous form of courage.
Courage is the most desperate, admirable and noble kind of love.

So that when the great blue bell of silence is stilled and stopped or broken
By the babel and chaos of desire unrequited, irritated and frustrated,
When the heart has opened and when the heart has spoken
Not of the purity and symmetry of gratification, but action of insatiable distraction’s dissatisfaction,

Then the heart says, in all its blindness and faltering emptiness:
There is no God. Because I am hope. And hope must be fed.
And then the great blue bell of silence is deafened, dumbed, and has become the tomb of the living dead.
Delmore Schwartz
The First Night Of Fall And Falling Rain

The common rain had come again
Slanting and colorless, pale and anonymous,
Fainting falling in the first evening
Of the first perception of the actual fall,
The long and late light had slowly gathered up
A sooty wood of clouded sky, dim and distant more and more
Until, at dusk, the very sense of selfhood waned,
A weakening nothing halted, diminished or denied or set aside,
Neither tea, nor, after an hour, whiskey,
Ice and then a pleasant glow, a burning,
And the first leaping wood fire
Since a cold night in May, too long ago to be more than Merely a cold and vivid memory.
Staring, empty, and without thought
Beyond the rising mists of the emotion of causeless sadness,
How suddenly all consciousness leaped in spontaneous gladness,
Knowing without thinking how the falling rain (outside, all over)
In slow sustained consistent vibration all over outside
Tapping window, streaking roof,
running down runnel and drain
Waking a sense, once more, of all that lived outside of us,
Beyond emotion, for beyond the swollen distorted shadows and lights
Of the toy town and the vanity fair
of waking consciousness!

Delmore Schwartz
The Foggy, Foggy Blue

When I was a young man, I loved to write poems
And I called a spade a spade
And the only 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.

Now I am older and tireder too
And the tasks with the masks are quite trying.
I’d gladly gladly stop if I only only knew
A better way to keep from lying,
And not get nervous and blue
When I said something quite untrue:
I looked all around and all over
To find something else to do:
I tried to be less romantic
I tried to be less starry-eyed too:
But I only got mixed up and frantic
Forgetting what was false and what was true.

But tonight I am going to the masked ball,
Because it has occurred to me
That the masks are more true than the faces:
—Perhaps this too is poetry?
I no longer yearn to be naïve and stern
And masked balls fascinate me:
Now that I know that most falsehoods are true
Perhaps I can join the charade?
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!

Delmore Schwartz
This is the greatest thing in North America:
Europe is the greatest thing in North America!
High in the sky, dark in the heart, and always there
Among the natural powers of sunlight and of air,
Changing, second by second, shifting and changing the light,
Bring fresh rain to the stone of the library steps.

Under the famous names upon the pediment:
   Thales, Aristotle,
Cicero, Augustine, Scotus, Galileo,
Joseph, Odysseus, Hamlet, Columbus and Spinoza,
Anna Karenina, Alyosha Karamazov, Sherlock Holmes.

And the last three also live upon the silver screen
Three blocks away, in moonlight's artificial day,
A double bill in the darkened palace whirled,
And the veritable glittering light of the turning world's
Burning mind and blazing imagination, showing, day by day
And week after week the desires of the heart and mind
Of all the living souls yearning everywhere
From Canada to Panama, from Brooklyn to Paraguay,
From Cuba to Vancouver, every afternoon and every night.

Delmore Schwartz
The Heavy Bear Who Goes With Me

‘the withness of the body’ --Whitehead

The heavy bear who goes with me,
A manifold honey to smear his face,
Clumsy and lumbering here and there,
The central ton of every place,
The hungry beating brutish one
In love with candy, anger, and sleep,
Crazy factotum, dishevelling all,
Climbs the building, kicks the football,
Boxes his brother in the hate-ridden city.

Breathing at my side, that heavy animal,
That heavy bear who sleeps with me,
Howls in his sleep for a world of sugar,
A sweetness intimate as the water's clasp,
Howls in his sleep because the tight-rope
Trembles and shows the darkness beneath.
--The strutting show-off is terrified,
Dressed in his dress-suit, bulging his pants,
Trembles to think that his quivering meat
Must finally wince to nothing at all.

That inescapable animal walks with me,
Has followed me since the black womb held,
Moves where I move, distorting my gesture,
A caricature, a swollen shadow,
A stupid clown of the spirit's motive,
Perplexes and affronts with his own darkness,
The secret life of belly and bone,
Opaque, too near, my private, yet unknown,
Stretches to embrace the very dear
With whom I would walk without him near,
Touches her grossly, although a word
Would bare my heart and make me clear,
Stumbles, flounders, and strives to be fed
Dragging me with him in his mouthing care,
Amid the hundred million of his kind,
the scrimmage of appetite everywhere.
The Journey Of A Poem Compared To All The Sad Variety Of Travel

A poem moves forward,
Like the passages and percussions of trains in progress
A pattern of recurrence, a hammer of repetetiveoccurrence

a slow less and less heard
low thunder under all passengers

Steel sounds tripping and tripled and
Grinding, revolving, gripping, turning, and returning
as the flung carpet of the wide countryside spreads out on
each side in billows

And in isolation, rolled out, white house, red barn, squat silo,
Pasture, hill, meadow and woodland pasture
And the striped poles step fast past the train windows
Second after second takes snapshots, clicking,
Into the dangled boxes of glinting windows
Snapshots and selections, rejections, at angles, of shadows
A small town: a shop's sign - GARAGE, and then white gates
Where waiting cars wait with the unrest of trembling
Breathing hard and idling, until the slow~descent
Of the red cones of sunset: a dead march: a slow tread and heavy

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.

Delmore Schwartz
The Poet

The riches of the poet are equal to his poetry
His power is his left hand
   It is idle weak and precious
His poverty is his wealth, a wealth which may destroy him
   like Midas Because it is that laziness which is a form of impatience
And this he may be destroyed by the gold of the light
   which never was
On land or sea.
He may be drunken to death, draining the casks of excess
That extreme form of success.
He may suffer Narcissus' destiny
Unable to live except with the image which is infatuation
Love, blind, adoring, overflowing
Unable to respond to anything which does not bring love
   quickly or immediately.

...The poet must be innocent and ignorant
But he cannot be innocent since stupidity is not his strong
   point
Therefore Cocteau said, "What would I not give
To have the poems of my youth withdrawn from
   existence?
I would give to Satan my immortal soul."
This metaphor is wrong, for it is his immortal soul which
   he wished to redeem,
Lifting it and sifting it, free and white, from the actuality of
   youth's banality, vulgarity,
   pomp and affectation of his early
   works of poetry.

So too in the same way a Famous American Poet
When fame at last had come to him sought out the fifty copies
of his first book of poems which had been privately printed
by himself at his own expense.
He succeeded in securing 48 of the 50 copies, burned them
And learned then how the last copies were extant,
As the law of the land required, stashed away in the national capital,
at the Library of Congress.
Therefore he went to Washington, therefore he took out the last two
Placed them in his pocket, planned to depart
Only to be halted and apprehended. Since he was the author,
Since they were his books and his property he was reproached
But forgiven. But the two copies were taken away from him
Thus setting a national precedent.

For neither amnesty nor forgiveness is bestowed upon poets, poetry and poems,
For William James, the lovable genius of Harvard
spoke the terrifying truth: "Your friends may forget, God
    may forgive you, But the brain cells record
your acts for the rest of eternity."
What a terrifying thing to say!
This is the endless doom, without remedy, of poetry.
This is also the joy everlasting of poetry.

Delmore Schwartz
The Sin Of Hamlet

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 the sharp declaration!

And when it comes, escape is small; the door
Creaks; the worms of fear spread veins; the furtive
Fugitive, looking backward, sees his
Ghost in the mirror, his shameful eyes, his mouth diseased.

Delmore Schwartz
The Spring

(After Rilke)

Spring has returned! Everything has returned!
The earth, just like a schoolgirl, memorizes
Poems, so many poems. ... Look, she has learned
So many famous poems, she has earned so many prizes!

Teacher was strict. We delighted in the white
Of the old man's beard, bright like the snow's:
Now we may ask which names are wrong, or right
For "blue," for "apple," for "ripe." She knows, she knows!

Lucky earth, let out of school, now you must play
Hide-and-seek with all the children every day:
You must hide that we may seek you: we will! We will!

The happiest child will hold you. She knows all the things
You taught her: the word for "hope," and for "believe,"
Are still upon her tongue. She sings and sings and sings.

Delmore Schwartz
The True-Blue American

Jeremiah Dickson was a true-blue American,
For he was a little boy who understood America, for he felt that he must
Think about everything; because that’s all there is to think about,
Knowing immediately the intimacy of truth and comedy,
Knowing intuitively how a sense of humor was a necessity
For one and for all who live in America. Thus, natively, and
Naturally when on an April Sunday in an ice cream parlor Jeremiah
Was requested to choose between a chocolate sundae and a banana split
He answered unhesitatingly, having no need to think of it
Being a true-blue American, determined to continue as he began:
Rejecting the either-or of Kierkegaard, and many another European;
Refusing to accept alternatives, refusing to believe the choice of between;
Rejecting selection; denying dilemma; electing absolute affirmation: knowing
in his breast
The infinite and the gold
Of the endless frontier, the deathless West.

“Both: I will have them both!” declared this true-blue American
In Cambridge, Massachusetts, on an April Sunday, instructed
By the great department stores, by the Five-and-Ten,
Taught by Christmas, by the circus, by the vulgarity and grandeur of
Niagara 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,
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.

Delmore Schwartz
This Is A Poem I Wrote At Night, Before The Dawn

This is a poem I wrote before I died and was reborn:
- After the years of the apples ripening and the eagles soaring,
After the festival here the small flowers gleamed like the first stars,
And the horses cantered and romped away like the experience of skill; mastered and serene
Power, grasped and governed by reins, lightly held by knowing hands.

The horses had cantered away, far enough away
So that I saw the horses' heads farther and farther away
And saw that they had reached the black horizon on the dusk of day
And were or seemed black thunderheads, massy and ominous waves in the doomed sky:
And it was then, for the first time, then that I said as I must always say
All through living death of night:
It is always darkness before delight!
The long night is always the beginning of the vivid blossom of day.

Delmore Schwartz
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.
    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 in the coffee, the children go to bed,
Elder and younger yawn and go to bed,
The coals fade and glow, rose and ashen,
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 building 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!

Delmore Schwartz
To Helen

(After Valery)

O Sea! ... 'Tis I, risen from death once more
To hear the waves' harmonious roar
And see the galleys, sharp, in dawn's great awe
Raised from the dark by the rising and gold oar.

My fickle hands sufficed to summon kings
Their salt beards amused my fingers, deft and pure.
I wept. They sang of triumphs now obscure:
And the first abyss flooded the hull as if with falling wings.

I hear the profound horns and trumpets of war
Matching the rhythm, swinging of the flying oars:
The galleys' chant enchains the foam of sound;
And the gods, exalted at the heroic prow,
E'en though the spit of spray insults each smiling brow,
Beckon to me, with arms indulgent, frozen, sculptured,
and dead long long ago.

Delmore Schwartz
Two Lyrics From Kilroy's Carnival: A Masque

I Aria

"--Kiss me there where pride is glittering
Kiss me where I am ripened and round fruit
Kiss me wherever, however, I am supple, bare and flare
(Let the bell be rung as long as I am young:
    let ring and fly like a great bronze wing!)

"--I'll kiss you wherever you think you are poor,
Wherever you shudder, feeling striped or barred,
Because you think you are bloodless, skinny or marred:
    Until, until
    your gaze has been stilled--
Until you are shamed again no more!
I'll kiss you until your body and soul
    the mind in the body being fulfilled--
Suspend their dread and civil war!"

II Song

Under the yellow sea
Who comes and looks with me
For the daughters of music, the fountains of poetry?
Both have soared forth from the unending waters
Where all things still are seeds and far from flowers
And since they remain chained to the sea's powers
May wilt to nonentity or loll and arise to comedy
Or thrown into mere accident through irrelevant incident
Dissipate all identity ceaselessly fragmented by the ocean's
    immense and intense, irresistible and insistent
    action,
Be scattered like the sand is, purposely and relentlessly,
Living in the summer resorts of the dead endlessly.

Delmore Schwartz
What Curious Dresses All Men Wear

What curious dresses all men wear!
The walker you met in a brown study,
The President smug in rotogravure,
The mannequin, the bathing beauty.

The bubble-dancer, the deep-sea diver,
The bureaucrat, the adulterer,
Hide private parts which I disclose
To those who know what a poem knows.

Delmore Schwartz
What Is To Be Given

What is to be given,
Is spirit, yet animal,
Colored, like heaven,
Blue, yellow, beautiful.

The blood is checkered by
So many stains and wishes,
Between it and the sky
You could not choose, for riches.

Yet let me now be careful
Not to give too much
To one so shy and fearful
For like a gun is touch.

Delmore Schwartz
Words For A Trumpet Chorale Celebrating The Autumn

"The trumpet is a brilliant instrument." - Dietrich Buxtehude

Come and come forth and come up from the cup of Your dumbness, stunned and numb, come with The statues and believed in, Thinking this is nothing, deceived.

Come to the summer and sun, Come see upon that height, and that sum In the seedtime of the winter's absolute, How yearly the phoenix inhabits the fruit. Behold, above all, how the tall ball Called the body is but a drum, but a bell Summoning the soul To rise from the catacomb of sleep and fear To the blaze and death of summer,

Rising from the lithe forms of the pure Furs of the rising flames, slender and supple, Which are the consummation of the blaze of fall and of all.

Delmore Schwartz
Yeats Died Saturday In France

Yeats died Saturday in France.
Freedom from his animal
Has come at last in alien Nice,
His heart beat separate from his will:
He knows at last the old abyss
Which always faced his staring face.

No ability, no dignity
Can fail him now who trained so long
For the outrage of eternity,
Teaching his heart to beat a song
In which man's strict humanity,
Erect as a soldier, became a tongue.

Delmore Schwartz