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Exile From the Actual:

Delmore Schwartz and the Difficult Inheritance of T.S. Eliot

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University of Ottawa Department of English

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0-612-22014-1

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Professor Dominic Manganiello both for his patience while I sought a focus for the following study and for his energetic response once the chapters began to cross his desk. Many thanks to Professors Donald Childs and David Rampton for their enthusiasm and perceptive criticism. Professor Frans de Bruyn and Graduate Assistant Veronica Tremblay had the dubious pleasure of seeing the work through to its completion during a rather hectic few months: thanks to both.

Material from the following unpublished manuscripts of Delmore Schwartz appears by arrangement with the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University and courtesy of Curator Patricia C. Willis: *Child's Universal History*, "A Game of Tennis," "Hallmarks," "Our Poor Dead King" (from a folder of James Joyce criticism), and Schwartz's critical writings on T.S. Eliot (comprising two folders in the Beinecke Library).

Finally, Chapter Two on Schwartz's *Genesis* appears in its current form thanks to Kelly and her bargaining savvy. That this thesis appears at all is due to her constant encouragement and understanding. Thank you.

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Abstract

In his earliest work, American writer Delmore Schwartz takes his cue from the writings of T.S. Eliot. Schwartz's experience is representative of his generation's experience, but his intense devotion to Eliot's work and person is highly idiosyncratic. Eliot's legacy soon becomes troublesome. Schwartz watches Eliot create a distant, authoritative persona in exile, yet as he narrates his own family's stories of emigration, Schwartz wonders if one can ever truly transcend determined identity.

Exile for Schwartz is primarily an attitude toward experience. Eliot exemplifies that attitude. He thrives on the distance of exile; his poetry is seen by Schwartz as a striving for ideal order. Schwartz begins during the 1940s and 50s to mistrust such idealism and find value in the disorderly actuality of American life. He looks to new artistic heroes like James Joyce to replace Eliot. The new aesthetic of celebration, however, coexists uneasily with Schwartz's instinct for criticism.

Introduction

The pages which follow constitute one small episode in the history, still being both made and interpreted, of T.S. Eliot's poetic legacy to the English-speaking world. More specifically, they are an examination, through one typical case, of Eliot's impact on the American literary community. That community eagerly embraced his work during the thirties and forties, but in the fifties and sixties inevitably began, if not to question the greatness of his accomplishments, at least to question the value of Eliot as a mentor for American writers. A poet who had exiled himself from America and adopted the loyalties of the British landed aristocracy became the poetic mentor for the brightest young lights of American literature. In the course of his lifetime, Eliot's America, and more particularly New York, was transformed from a supposed cultural desert, a land which left its greatest talents no choice but self-exile, into a thriving centre of art and ideas, arguably the literary capital of the world. The protest of the expatriate was no longer a necessary act of self-preservation, and the aristocratic ideas of Eliot (and equally, of such figures as Pound and James) seemed less than congenial to the maturing literary sensibility of a thriving American scene. This growing dissatisfaction with Eliot's influence was, of course, by no means universal, and not every American poet (Williams, for instance) came under the influence of the expatriate. The shift in allegiance, however, which one may observe in the work of the American poet and short story writer Delmore Schwartz may nevertheless be said to represent the experience of a generation. In the 1930's a young poet could look with favour on Eliot's "The Waste Land" as "the actuality of American life... criticized by being compared with the culture of the Old World" (*Selected Essays* 46). By 1958, however, when the above words were written, Schwartz and a

growing number of his peers had come to feel that “America, not Europe, is now the sanctuary of culture; civilization’s very existence depends upon America, upon the actuality of American life, and not the ideals of the American Dream. To criticize the actuality upon which all hope depends thus becomes a criticism of hope itself” (46). Such extreme rhetoric must be read in the context of the Cold War, Stalinism, and the immediate wake of 1956 in Hungary, but the philosophical divide between Eliot’s ideals and Schwartz’s reconsidered views runs much deeper than the political posturing of a historical moment.

A young author takes his cue from another writer whose values are essentially opposed to the younger poet’s beliefs and natural inclinations. Such an occurrence is not unusual in literary history - perhaps it is the norm. Harold Bloom, theorizing about the “anxiety of influence”, suggests that “To divine the glory one already is becomes a mixed blessing when there is deep anxiety whether one has become truly oneself” (101). The case of Schwartz’s relationship to Eliot’s work and person reflects a manifestation of Bloom’s paradox at the level of nation and generation. The problem may be phrased in this way: what sense of dislocation would result if nearly all the poets of a certain time in a certain nation took as their model a poet whose publicly expressed philosophy ran counter to the very values and guiding principles of that nation? That question is the latent premise behind the following study.

As the son of immigrants, Schwartz has a lively sense of America as a land of promise, as well as a strong sense of his own immediate and unchosen exile from his European heritage. Eliot’s course of development is entirely at odds with Schwartz’s experience. Eliot leaves an early twentieth-century America which lacks all promise for a young poet, and seeks out the condition of exile. The elder poet makes a self-conscious effort to become European: as Robert Lowell writes, “he started with the air of an American dressed up as a Frenchman, preaching to the

English" (*Collected Prose* 48). Schwartz, by contrast, is the son of Russian Jews eagerly and successfully learning how to "dress up" as Americans. In that unpromising milieu the young enthusiast preaches the wonders of European culture. Schwartz's parents make the choice of America on his behalf, partly by chance, and partly because Europe offers them no promise. The young poet may at times suppress that awareness, but Schwartz nevertheless inherits from his immigrant parents a lurking sense of Europe's bankruptcy. Hand in hand with this awareness is Schwartz's latent deterministic sense, his feeling that all his choices had already been made by proxy. Eliot's exile was an act of self-definition, a necessary assertion of independence, no matter how haphazardly it came about, whereas in Schwartz's case the preexistent fact of exile is itself self-defining. With Eliot as an exemplar, Schwartz came to believe that he had, in not having chosen his own exile, been somehow cheated out of a significant form of modern self-expression. In his long semi-autobiographical poem *Genesis*, Schwartz makes the tiny traumas of childhood serve such a purpose, inflating a childhood loneliness into a state of being "Exiled, humiliated, persecuted, Coriolanus, Joseph, and Caesar, the child resumes history, each enacts all that has been. / He sat upon the stairs and heard the sounds of the children in the classroom, moving and playing, / Excluded and deprived, listening to the sounds of exile" (101). Surely many of the problems readers have had with *Genesis* are traceable to this sort of inflation, which James Atlas calls in his biography "this imposing leap from the banal crises of childhood to metaphysical discourse" (221). In "Our Poor Dead King," an unpublished critical piece replying to critics of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, Schwartz comes close to identifying the problem with some of his own early work: "...such is the power of the distortion of a thesis. And it brings about a confounding of personal exile, the kind that Joyce suffered, with cultural exile, the kind which is a leading theme in Thomas Mann" [Schwartz's underlining]. I will return to this argument in the third

chapter.

Robert Flint wrote in 1962 that the young intellectuals whom Schwartz chronicled “had an especially vivid sense of the fate of their society. They knew it as tragic, hopeless, radically sick... but they accepted it as a fate and not as a weapon in a cold war or as a springboard into exotic states of being” (337). The critic is most impressed by “the frontal attack on American mores that required a historian like Delmore Schwartz”. Many of the earliest readers of Schwartz’s work seem, like Flint, to have concentrated on the protest by the immigrant’s child against the machinery of its fate. This protest is certainly strong and is traceable in large part to the young poet’s absorption in the ideas of T.S. Eliot. The contrary sense of America as a place of salvation and promise is present, however, even in Schwartz’s earliest work: “America, the deity, America, / Let us now celebrate and criticize... Would you like to start from the womb again? Here you can leave the womb a second time!” (*Genesis* 19). From his reading of Eliot, Schwartz learns to “criticize”, to recognize and explain his exile from his surroundings as well as from his heritage. As he re-examines Eliot’s legacy, Schwartz’s attitude toward America undergoes a transformation: the actuality of American life is something an author should “celebrate”. Flint is troubled by the way Schwartz comes to “patronize popular culture whose charms he both assimilates and ridicules, the dividing line between affection and ridicule becoming increasingly less visible to dull readers like myself” (339). His primary charge is that as inventive “as Schwartz may be in concocting his fables, one cannot read them without suspecting that in about five minutes reality, aided by the press, TV, etc., will provide something better”. Flint’s review of the late collection *Successful Love and Other Stories* exemplifies the charge often leveled at Schwartz, with some reason, that his work lost its way as its author became less intellectually rigorous. I will argue that the alleged decline in Schwartz’s style is the confusion of a writer who,

during the Second World War and in its aftermath, has found more to “celebrate” than to “criticize” in the reality of American life, a writer, however, whose aesthetic has developed in relation to a most unobliging model, the expatriate Eliot. Schwartz gains in perception and loses in the ordering of that perception when, in mid-career, he turns from his mentor. As Eliot’s aristocratic and traditionalist inclinations become more and more pronounced, the elitist and internationalist poses of the young Schwartz, poses of an intellectual defying his parents’ middle-class legacy, give way in turn to a qualified faith in democracy and in the possibilities of meaningful life in modern America.

I suggest that Schwartz’s experience of dislocation from his own formative ideas is representative of the experience of many modern American poets in relation to Eliot’s legacy. One example will have to stand here for a systematic study: Schwartz, in an unpublished chapter on the question of Eliot’s anti-Semitism, says that Eliot’s observations of reality are genuine, but only in a limited sense. Eliot’s vision is “the squint compelled by the circumstances of modern life in authors of a certain kind.” Elsewhere in his late unpublished criticism Schwartz credits Eliot with “goodness”, but only “a goodness hemmed-in, one-sided, and peculiar, the goodness almost of a master at bowling, chess, or statistics; and not the goodness of Shakespeare or Tolstoy.” Compare these criticisms with the following appraisal of Eliot’s religion by Robert Lowell in 1965: “Eliot’s faith seems almost willfully crooked, dry, narrow, and hard in comparison with what I would like to describe as the toleration, hope, and intuition of Matthew Arnold’s tragic liberalism.... If Christianity seems like a bypath to most of us, Eliot’s kind of Christianity seems almost worse, a bypath off a bypath” (*Collected Prose* 50). By contrast, in 1943 Lowell called *Four Quartets* “one of the very few great poems in which craftsmanship and religious depth are equal.” “The experience in these poems is dramatic and brutally genuine” (48). In his later essay,

Lowell remarks that “death and rebirth are at the heart” of Eliot’s poems, “in a rather universalist and symbolic guise that perhaps ignores any creed” (50). From Schwartz’s review of *Four Quartets* comes the strikingly similar statement that “what declares itself above all is an obsessing desire to be free from ‘birth, copulation, and death’... to be utterly out of the world. This rejection and renunciation are dominant to such an extent that the affirmation of belief seems only lyrical after-thought.... And this suggests once more that Buddhism is perhaps a doctrine just as well suited as Christianity to the poet’s mind” (“Anywhere Out” 103). I will return to Schwartz’s charge in a later chapter. I point out these parallels between Lowell’s and Schwartz’s appraisals of Eliot to suggest that the following observations on Schwartz’s changing relationship with Eliot’s poems are part of a larger picture beyond the scope of any one study of one particular author.¹ In making this comparison I am also suggesting that doubts concerning Eliot’s value as a mentor occurred relatively early to Schwartz. The contemporary responses of Lowell and Schwartz to *Four Quartets* are significant.

Schwartz’s relationship with Eliot, then, seems typical of his generation, yet the emotions involved are peculiarly magnified. The somewhat hysterical nature of the New York poet’s

¹ Further evidence of the representative nature of Schwartz’s experience: in a study of Elizabeth Bishop, who “frequently acknowledged her absorption in [Eliot’s] poetry during her college years”, Bonnie Costello argues that Eliot’s “anti-similes, fragmented images, and shifting points of view remained essential to Bishop’s work even as she moved toward a more descriptive and anecdotal style. But she resisted Eliot’s tendency to move from broken surfaces to mythic and symbolic unities. Whatever unity Bishop claimed would remain tied to the perceptual and temporal world” (20-21). Karl Shapiro also grew up “in the shadow of T.S. Eliot”, but, as the editors of *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* argue, the mature Shapiro “has assembled his own pantheon of writers... and philosophers..., all of whom testify to the values of an inclusiveness from which Eliot shrank. Shapiro insists that the poet will find his inspiration where he can, so long as he avoids the fragmenting reason. ‘Whether the poet becomes a student of flying saucers or of the mystical doctrine of correspondences is all one; so long as he steps across the line from Reason to Intuition he is safe’” (855-56). Bishop’s fragmentation is opposed to Eliot’s “symbolic unities”. Eliot’s “fragmenting reason” is opposed to Shapiro’s unifying Intuition. Perhaps each poet of Schwartz’s generation created the Eliot which he or she required to define his or her own unique creative stance. In his late work, Schwartz celebrates the unifying intuitions of the child and the singer. He also celebrates the value of images and fragmented perceptions. Schwartz’s late celebration of the actual brings together the seemingly contradictory viewpoints of his contemporaries Shapiro and Bishop.

infatuation and then disillusionment with his famous mentor produces a sort of historical parody, a clarified picture in broad strokes and primary colours of the complicated literary history of an era. Despite being given the opportunity, Schwartz shied away from ever meeting Eliot face to face. The younger American, nevertheless, leaves a wealth of hints in his writing which, taken together, suggest that Schwartz saw the elder poet as something more than one intellectual model among many available tutors. Eliot's life itself represented an ideal. His work provided both the basic grammar upon which all modern poets must build, and the unrepeatability of that style.

To trace Delmore Schwartz's preoccupation with T.S. Eliot is to be amazed at how consistently Schwartz anticipates the vicissitudes of American opinion toward the nation's most influential poetic expatriate. The precocious Schwartz reads Eliot in high school. He portrays himself as the dutiful apostle in a letter written during his freshman year at university: he describes a "reading of *The Waste Land*, to the congregation of the amazed (my poor friends)" (*Letters* 14). That the romanticized self-portrait of these early letters to Julian Sawyer has been contested, even labeled an outright lie (Zolotow), does not change the fact that at seventeen Schwartz was "a self-styled member of the avant-garde" (Atlas, *Delmore Schwartz* 38).

Similarly, as shown by the above comparison with Lowell, reservations about the validity of Eliot as a poetic mentor came earlier to Schwartz than to most others in the American literary world. In the 1943 review of *Four Quartets* he writes that it is necessary to "speak thus of my own feeling because I know how differently, and with what unmixed admiration, many other readers have greeted these new poems" ("Anywhere Out" 102). His primary criticism is on moral grounds: he charges that Eliot uses the language of belief to justify his mistrust and renunciation of disorderly reality. This renunciation is "a necessary phase in the life of the spirit", but in Eliot's

work, Schwartz argues, renunciation is an end in itself. “The Incarnation is present for the sake of the rejection of this life, not the renunciation because of the Incarnation” (103). Aside from this criticism, Schwartz is disappointed at the weakness of much of Eliot’s imagery in *Four Quartets*. This disappointment is in fact not a side issue, but stems from the larger criticism. If the poet mistrusts his experience of actuality, where else will he turn for fresh imagery? To Schwartz, “the images seem *made*, self-imitative, forced” [Schwartz’s italics] (102). If the author is anxious to be “Out of the World,” he will have difficulty making successful connections with that world through poetic symbols and images. Michael Seidel, speaking of the literary motive of descent into the underworld, writes that “Descent is that ending which is also a telling, that exile which conjures up imaginable territory” (13). He argues that “However free, unrestrained, unencumbered, extravagant, or outlandish things appear beyond bounds, the imagination, in Kierkegaard’s phrase, vouchsafes its little revelations home” (4). To Schwartz in his later years, Eliot seems unable to vouchsafe his “revelations home” because the elder poet is too remote from that home, in exile not only from America, but from the actuality upon which poetry depends for its communicative value. Schwartz’s mature vision holds up Joyce as an exemplar, not, like Eliot, for his choice of exile, but for his attention to “actual things and actual human beings” (“The Early Joyce”), an attention which required him to discipline his genius for language and literary style. Richard Ellmann reports that a young man once asked to kiss “the hand that wrote *Ulysses*” and was told by Joyce, “No, it did lots of other things too” (*James Joyce* 110). Such is the nature of the mature Schwartz’s ideal artist: the artist is both idol and participant.

Eliot is incomplete as a visionary, because he fails to report his visions in images which partake successfully of human experience. In Seidel’s words, “Only those with special visionary powers, either powers possessed or powers granted, can negotiate these depths. As Poe writes: ‘It is all

very well to talk about the *facilis descendus Averni*; but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down” (13). Eliot, in his 1950 essay “What Dante Means to Me,” makes exactly this point: the poet must “capture those feelings which people can hardly feel, because they have no words for them”, but at the same time “the explorer beyond the frontiers of ordinary consciousness will only be able to return and report to his fellow-citizens, if he has all the time a firm grasp upon the realities with which they are already acquainted” (*To Criticize* 134). Schwartz, even in his later years, praised Eliot for his “unerring sense of the actual”, for the ability of his style to unite discrete objects “to each other and to human thought and emotion” (from unpublished drafts), which is nothing if not Eliot’s praise of Dante. Schwartz, however, feels that the example of Eliot in style outstrips the accomplishment of Eliot in true insight. Eliot, in the same essay on Dante, credits Baudelaire with showing him “the poetical possibilities, *never developed by any poet writing in my own language*, of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis, of the possibility of the fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric” (126) [my italics]. Schwartz may have had this passage in mind when he wrote that “A poet does not achieve a new apprehension of experience merely because he writes about new experience”.² Schwartz maintains in the same unpublished piece that “the sense of the actual is narrow and deceptive when the actual is identified or limited to the sordid, the squalid, and the dirty.” He praises Eliot for paying steady attention to such things where others would look away. Yet such apprehension is insufficient. Eliot was not wrong, as far as he went, but he was unable to see actuality as anything but sordid. Harold Bloom’s *tessera* seems to describe this phase of Schwartz’s relationship with Eliot’s work: “the later poet provides what his

² This unpublished chapter from Schwartz’s abandoned book on Eliot seems to respond very directly to “What Dante Means to Me,” countering as it does both Eliot’s claim of being first to make an English poetry out of sordid urban scenes and the casual wedding of the word “realistic” with its qualifier, “sordidly”. James Atlas, however, says Schwartz abandoned the book on Eliot in the “late 1940’s” (230).

imagination tells him would complete the otherwise 'truncated' precursor poem and poet" (66).

The philosophical divide between Schwartz and Eliot was widening, but the break was to become still more pronounced.

By 1952, Schwartz is declaring in a strangely apologetic letter to Van Wyck Brooks that he still thinks "James and Eliot are great authors" yet feels "that the leading social attitudes in their work are vicious and destructive too often" (*Letters* 260). The nature of these "social attitudes" is more narrowly defined in Eileen Simpson's memoir *Poets in Their Youth* as anti-Semitism, with which Schwartz was "seriously charging Eliot" (215) by the time of his Gauss lectures at Princeton in 1949-50. Those who questioned his evidence, such as John Berryman and R.P. Blackmur, "did so because they weren't Jewish", and those nay-sayers who were themselves Jewish were "the wrong kind of Jew". In his unpublished writing concerning this question, Schwartz is both more generous to Eliot the poet and more damning to Eliot the thinker: "from the point of view of the criticism of poetry, we must recognize the poet is expressing a genuine and significant feeling, however immoral, one which springs from observation and not from a received idea, although that may be present too." Eliot's expressions of anti-Semitism are legitimate expressions of feeling and observation, but as suggested above, "The genuineness of the observation is that of the squint."

Schwartz lays bare the philosophical foundations of his debate with Eliot when he writes that "The sense of the actual in Eliot is not strong enough, it may be said, to perceive what the actual present and likely future of any landed aristocracy, in England or elsewhere, has been and will be." The language of "the actual" versus "the ideal" which Schwartz employs in his unpublished criticism suggests that he was gradually coming to feel, with his old teacher Alfred North Whitehead, that no system could claim the title of philosophy without making appeals both to

realized fact and to unrealized aspiration. In Whitehead's words, "actuality and potentiality require each other in the reciprocal roles of example and character" (71). Eliot's sense of potential and his criticism of the actual, which the young Schwartz had valued so highly, turn out to be Eliot's greatest limitations. Eliot is so preoccupied with glimpsing a hidden order behind experience that he mistakes certain of his perceptions and is led into immoral public pronouncements.

Just as Schwartz, then, had been an early and precocious disciple of Eliot, his was now one of the earliest voices expressing reservations concerning Eliot's possible legacy to modern poets, and especially to modern American poets. He leveled moral criticism at his former hero and anticipated by some years the widespread questioning, often on similar grounds, of Eliot's poetic preeminence. There has always been a perception, typified by the Flint review of *Successful Love* and repeated so as to become a truism, that Schwartz's work declined through the fifties and sixties. Could this opinion be related to the prevailing taste for Eliot and to the fact that Schwartz had, contrary to the prevailing taste of the literary world, turned from his former idol? Perhaps the disappointment of his peers at this turning away was responsible for some of the decline in Schwartz's reputation, but the truth is more complicated than that. Schwartz's poetic style developed as it did largely in consequence of his admiration for Eliot, and thus the more the elder poet was discredited in the eyes of the younger, the more Schwartz was necessarily separated from many of his most fundamental beliefs about and attitudes toward literature.

In a review of work by the poet Karl Shapiro, Schwartz describes the trajectory of an ideal poetic career:

Most poets begin by taking fire from other poets, and most poets end, sadly enough, in self-imitation. But between the time when the poet is an echoing novice and the time when he is a self-infatuated

and tired master, there occurs, if the poet has genuine gifts, a period during which the borrowed or imitated style is gradually altered into something new and strange - as the glove is shaped by the hand, day by day - through the constant pressure of the poet's own and unique subject matter, his own experience. ("The Poet's Progress" 63)

In an unpublished draft of Eliot criticism Schwartz claims that "... what is necessary to the poet at the beginning of his career is some overpowering contagion, and usually one not too distant from him in time or in feeling. This was provided by Laforgue...." Schwartz is offering here not only an ideal, abstract model of a writer's career but is describing his own progress in relation to Eliot. In Schwartz's case, however, the ideal trajectory is violently interrupted before the poet has had time to reach the second stage and make a creative synthesis of his model with his own experience. That model, in the person of Eliot, is discredited before the poet has reached the age of thirty.

As Schwartz repudiates Eliot's example he also destroys a crucial element of self-identity. The process resembles Harold Bloom's *askesis*, in which the poet "yields up part of his own human and imaginative endowment, so as to separate himself from others, including the precursor" (15). Certain elements of imaginative and ideal life are rejected in order that the actuality of life be accepted.

Not only was Schwartz forced to reconsider his devotion to Eliot, but the young author also arrived at similar doubts concerning several other crucial literary models, including both Henry James and Ezra Pound. This disillusionment with his modernist literary heroes was, naturally, exceedingly paralyzing to Schwartz precisely because he had invested those role models with unreal hopes and expectations. He had attempted to make a distinction between the passing of ethical and of aesthetic judgment. Schwartz, however, was ultimately forced to reconsider his position as the uncomfortable public pronouncements of both Eliot and Pound made such a

reconsideration all but inevitable.

The concept of “actuality”, adopted from A.N. Whitehead and applied to literary criticism in the above passages by Schwartz, is, in ways besides those I have already suggested, central to the younger poet’s dissatisfaction with Eliot. At first in his critical writing, Schwartz praises Eliot for having the courage and ability to make the actual, especially its sordid and disorderly elements, come to life in his poetry. Later, as we have seen, Schwartz criticizes Eliot for insufficiently perceiving or negligently recording the “actuality upon which all hope depends”. The elder poet places excessive faith in an ideal and romanticized order and therefore errs in representing the disorderly actual world. As a young man, Schwartz values the critical perspective of an exiled Eliot, that of the artist who holds himself psychologically aloof or who, in Eliot’s exemplary case, physically removes himself from his surroundings and from the land of his birth. A mature Schwartz decides that the more valuable and difficult task is the artist’s immersion in and his sympathy with his milieu. The towering figure of the exile (the “international hero”, as one of Schwartz’s essays labels Eliot) dominates the poet’s apprentice years, whereas the poet’s later years are marked by a mistrust of all towering figures. He has been tutored by Eliot in the twin attitudes of idealism and criticism of sordid actuality. Now the former student must find an appropriate new poetic style to represent the embrace of actuality. The student must, in fact, recast not merely his style, but many of his basic assumptions about both life and literature.

Further complicating matters in Schwartz’s case and perhaps in all cases, the student is never really a *former* pupil. To the end, Eliot’s American disciple never entirely disavowed the master’s influence, in private or even in his public rhetoric (which included telling fantastic stories of Eliot’s sex life). In fact, Schwartz returns, late in his career, to Eliot’s manner in the three Biblical monologues. These works exemplify for me Harold Bloom’s final stage of poetic development,

that of *apophrades*, the “return of the dead”. The Eliot of “Journey of the Magi” and “A Song for Simeon” seems, as if in a “hallucination” (Bloom 142) to “return in our colours” and speak “in our own voices” (141). Eliot’s tone has been captured by the successor poet yet his verse has been invested with rather different content.

Schwartz was, in cases other than that of Eliot, capable of disavowing an old enthusiasm, of publicly proclaiming himself independent; witness the brash “letter of resignation” which he addressed to Ezra Pound: “Without ceasing to distinguish between past activity and present irrationality, I should like you to consider this as a letter of resignation: I want to resign as one of your most studious and faithful admirers” (*Letters* 68). Anthony Julius compares this rejection of Pound with Schwartz’s strange silence (in his writings - his conversation was a different matter) on the topic of Eliot’s anti-Semitism: “all Schwartz was capable of was the private and essentially childish gesture of copying out the anti-Semitic passage in his notebook, substituting ‘Anglo-Catholics’ for ‘Jews’” (56). I will examine Schwartz’s response (or lack thereof) to Eliot’s anti-Semitism more fully in chapter four.

Schwartz attempted to remain Eliot’s stylistic disciple while shaking off his mentor’s ideas. He tried to cut himself off from Eliot the thinker while remaining in debt to Eliot the writer. One often finds Schwartz in a similarly difficult bind. Schwartz’s remarks concerning Eliot as racist seem appropriate to Schwartz himself: “This is indeed a having and an eating of one’s cake on a large scale” (“Anti-Semitism,” unpublished). Schwartz’s early romanticism of himself as an exile from American life, for example, is purely an act of the mind. His body and involuntary sympathies always remained with that country which his parents had chosen for him. Complicating the picture, however, is Schwartz’s remarkable degree of self-awareness concerning these contradictions, one might even say a delight in his paradoxical situation.

Schwartz would embrace the actual and reject the exile's criticism of actuality, yet he could not and would not forget the lessons he learned from the works of T.S. Eliot. I want to trace Schwartz's successes and failures in this impossible effort, keeping in view both the fact that as he rejected Eliot's uncomfortable ideas Schwartz's work benefited from an increased honesty and fidelity to the poet's full humanity, and the perception, which has some validity, that Schwartz's style seldom struck the proper chord to match his mature philosophy. I would attempt a similarly impossible effort in this study, both a justification of the changes in Schwartz's poetics and a criticism of their effectiveness. I will first examine the young poet's earliest efforts and point to the coexistence in the early work of a self-conscious emulation of Eliot, at times to the extremes of hero-worship reminiscent of a baseball fan (Schwartz's other passion),³ and an equally self-conscious mistrust of Eliot's influence.

³ Both poetry and baseball oppose the chaos of actual events: "The painfulness of actuality far exceeded the disappointments I suffered when the Giants lost an imaginary game or when a new poem seemed very poor. It was possible to cope with the painfulness of... defeat by immediately playing the next scheduled game. And it was often just as easy to begin a new poem" (*The Ego* 134-35). The boys do not just follow baseball, they must play out an imaginary pennant race in the schoolyard. The poet, likewise, does not just read Eliot. Schwartz must compose his own imaginative order and, as in "SCREENO" (see following chapter), become his hero.

Chapter I

Holy Relics: A Doubting Disciple of T.S. Eliot

In "SCREENO," an early story which was published posthumously in 1977, Schwartz's alter-ego Cornelius Schmidt recites lines from T.S. Eliot's "Gerontion" to a movie-house crowd as if they were his own words. The young poet of the story not only models himself after the elder poet, but actually masquerades as the great author before the bewildered theatregoers. The lines quoted also seem to foreshadow Schwartz's turning from Eliot, which would not become fully evident to Schwartz himself for six more years:

Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
What's not believed in, or if still believed,
In memory only, reconsidered passion... (*In Dreams* 194).

Schwartz masters his early poetic manner just in time to lose his confidence in that perfected style. In the very moment that Schwartz makes T.S. Eliot's style his own (in Schwartz's words, quoted in the previous chapter, the moment the "glove is shaped by the hand"), the young disciple begins to question the value of the adopted manner. The young poet's idiom has been given him "too late". It is something "not believed in, or if still believed, / In memory only", a "reconsidered passion" for Schwartz's early hero. Even in this early story, Schwartz seems aware of the difficult position in which he finds himself because of his devotion to Eliot's poetry. His hero-worship is described as a secret vice which the poet must inevitably and fearfully make public: Cornelius,

having finished his poetry recital, is “appalled at himself, as if he had made a shocking confession. But he saw that his effort was a failure for his tone had been false, too serious.” That unfortunate tone is described as “one of serious and dramatic import, and permitting a certain implication of tiredness, illness, and despair to creep into his voice”. This description carries a dual significance for the student of Schwartz's style. Cornelius responds most deeply both to the prophetic tone of Eliot's poetry and to its suggestion of world-weariness. The seriousness and sense of ennui which Cornelius responds to in Eliot's work may be amplified or distorted by the young man's reading, but they are undeniably qualities of Eliot's poetic voice. Schwartz is not claiming that “tiredness, illness, and despair” are the only ingredients of Eliot's style, but those are the elements which speak most directly to the young poet: they are, consequently, the elements which Cornelius emphasizes in his lecture. Using the techniques of fiction, Schwartz describes his own impressions, both positive and negative, of Eliot's style. He criticizes its excesses and, safely entrenched behind the mask of Cornelius Schmidt, reveals the strong and involuntary appeal that style holds for him: Cornelius's reading is both a caricature of Eliot's tone and a fair representation of what troubles Schwartz about Eliot's verse. Schwartz criticizes both Eliot's and Cornelius's over-emphasis on the negation of life and its “vanities”. The short passage in “SCREENO” about “Gerontion” is one of Schwartz's most telling critical statements on the work of T.S. Eliot. It is, furthermore, an honest piece of self-criticism on Schwartz's part.

Eliot could not be faulted for honestly expressing his own view of existence, however disturbing that view might be: in 1937, at least, Schwartz was not yet prepared to fault Eliot for doing so. The burden of criticism must therefore fall on Cornelius's overly serious reading of his mentor's lines. “SCREENO” provides proof that Schwartz, even at the earliest stage of his career, was troubled by the shadow of Eliot's influence. Eliot is, in Harold Bloom's terminology,

Schwartz's "Covering Cherub" (39). Armed with this example of painful self-awareness, one can, when studying Schwartz's earliest poems, dispense with any question of the young poet's conscious intention to imitate versus his unconscious absorption of Eliot's style. Conscious and unconscious motivations converge. Schwartz's borrowings of tone and style must not be seen as at all accidental, yet must not be looked on as well-calculated strategies either. The young poet was surprisingly well aware, at least two years before his celebrated debut, of both the dangers and the inevitability of his borrowings from Eliot. The elder author is labeled by Cornelius Schmidt "the best of modern poets... whom all of you should read", yet even "in saying this, Cornelius [and Schwartz] knew that this advertisement was a foolish thing".

The most telling fact of all is the way that Cornelius "becomes" Eliot. When asked what he does, the young writer does not wish to tell the truth about his work because "he was an unknown writer, and besides the profession always appeared to him as seeming peculiar and anomalous to others" (193). Equally afraid, however, of betraying his "noble calling" by lying, he decides to tell the crowd he is a poet. Cornelius is cut off from the theatre crowd by being a poet and therefore "bohemian", but he is, on the other hand, so sensitive to the crowd's reaction that he fears to publicize that which most comprises his identity. If Cornelius's artistic bent makes him an outcast in American society, his identification with that society threatens to keep him quiet and acquiescent. The promised crowd reaction is always presented in terms of Cornelius's self-consciousness. He is always very aware of the opinions of certain unnamed members of the audience: being a writer seems to Cornelius to be peculiar to others. He "knew" his admission "would be equivalent to sissy or bohemian for some of the audience." The young man's insights are, however, simplistic and flawed. Cornelius thinks he can understand the audience's thoughts, but Schwartz's irony does not spare his alter-ego. The crowd is in fact an "intrigued audience"

which wishes to hear him recite his poetry. The spectators are indeed “silenced and puzzled by the verses” (194), but they are not hostile in the way that Cornelius had feared, and the young contest announcer “curiously enough, had been impressed.” Schwartz’s late fiction repeatedly exploits this type of situation, that of the exile who cannot accept being genuinely welcomed into what he has always taken to be a hostile milieu. Cornelius, however, lacks the insight of some of Schwartz’s later protagonists, such as Roger in “Successful Love”: here the narrator must provide the ironic context.

Cornelius calls his choice of “Gerontion” “some appropriate verses” for his audience. The passage criticizes the “vanities” of human wishes. Cornelius turns his recital into a sermon on the crass desires of his fellow contest participants. For one moment, while the audience believes “Gerontion” to be the young poet’s own work, Cornelius has, if not respect, at least an authority which silences most and impresses at least one. He truly stands apart from his surroundings and possesses for an instant an odd moral stature. His admission that the verses belong to someone else shatters that illusion of distance and brings the pontificating exile back among his fellows. Cornelius remains a moralist, but his pulpit is taken away. The crowd begins to turn against the poet from that point on. The several sermons which follow carry no weight: Cornelius is bothersome when he tells the crowd they “ought to read” Eliot; when he argues that the management owe Mr. Weingarten a second jackpot he is told to “go home and give us a chance” (198); when he calls the spectators “hopelessly middle class” (199), he is taunted as a “C.I.O” radical. Moral stature appears to derive from one’s remoteness from everyday existence. This point will reemerge and be taken up in more detail in my study of *Genesis*. As a poet, Cornelius silences the room. As a practical joker, a mere man masquerading as a T.S. Eliot, he is tiresome and without authority. For one moment, nevertheless, Cornelius becomes Eliot, at least as far as

the spectators are concerned. If “SCREENO” is a dream fantasy with all the elements of public embarrassment common to nightmares, it is also the fulfillment of some of its author’s deepest desires. Cornelius, standing in for Schwartz, possesses the stature and even the very language of an Eliot. He stands apart from his fellows yet communicates to them the most essential moral truths, advising them to “Think now / History has many cunning passages”. Hero-worship and emulation are carried to the point of masquerade. The chameleon act is a failure. As we shall see in the next chapter, the attempts of those who aim for escape and metamorphosis are, if not always failures, at best very flawed successes in Schwartz’s writing, especially in his long poem *Genesis*.

In “SCREENO,” Schwartz hides behind the character of Cornelius Schmidt in order to launch his criticisms of Eliot and of his own envious hero-worship. Schwartz is much less artful, however, in two other pieces, “Fun With the Famous, Stunned By the Stars” and “A Game of Tennis,” which anatomize his ambivalent attitude toward his mentor. “A Game of Tennis” remains justly unpublished. The title suggests, of course, “A Game of Chess” from “The Waste Land,” the poem which was the primary literary obsession of Schwartz’s undergraduate years. Both the collegiate setting and the title reference to “The Waste Land” make it clear that the story is a portrait of Schwartz as a “freshman poet.” Concerning his emotions toward the successful elder author, the young Schwartz (Simon) is both self-conscious and self-critical. “A Game of Tennis” gives an honest and embarrassingly raw glimpse of both the young man’s compulsions and of his uncanny self-knowledge: that which lies beneath the text of “SCREENO” is here brought clumsily to the surface. The hero is antagonized by the persona of “one of the seniors in the house, who was respected and admired by everyone... president of the senior class, captain of the football team, the son of a family which ruled in state politics, handsome, assured, popular, the

most popular man on campus, everyone said.” Although the title refers to “The Waste Land,” Eliot’s early success, it is the Eliot of later years, editor, arbiter of taste, and public figure, whom Schwartz has in mind. The older boy’s name carries ludicrously strong resonances of Eliot: “Lancelot Emerson. Lance, as everyone called him”. Coming from Schwartz, one so absorbed in Freud’s thought, the nickname Lance can certainly be read as a symbol for sexual prowess and for an intimidating paternal presence. The youthful Schwartz seems to envy Eliot the public adoration which makes his nicknames, T.S., Tom, and Old Possum, common knowledge (the familiarity with which critics and biographers use the given name “Delmore” to identify the author is the childish desire of the young poet belatedly and terribly fulfilled, awful retribution for this particular brand of envy). In his choice of the surname “Emerson”, Schwartz turns Eliot’s satire back upon its creator, much as he will do with the character Ferdinand Harrap in “The World is a Wedding” (see chapter four). Eliot had countered Emerson’s faith in man with the spectacle of Sweeney’s “lengthened shadow” (*Collected Poems* 45). He had satirized Emerson’s drawing-room preeminence as America’s guardian “of the faith” (32). Now Eliot himself has become a literary lion and idealist guru like his antagonist, and thus joins “Matthew and Waldo” upon Cousin Nancy’s genteel “glazen shelves”, or in this case upon the tennis court.

For Schwartz, a name is a powerful metaphor for the self. The process by which one is named or, ideally, by which one chooses one’s own name, is a measure of self-authorization versus determinism: Schwartz devotes an entire play, “Shenandoah,” to the process resulting in his own strange name. Lance Emerson, like T.S Eliot, has been given a good name: like the Eliots, the Emersons are well-established as an American aristocracy. He has also, which is more important, made his own public name, successfully forging a persona on the campus.

Lancelot Emerson’s family’s preeminence, then, is one source of jealousy for Simon, while

Lance's accomplishments are another: Lance has been given everything, yet has made still more of a name for himself. The insecure freshman of the story accuses himself "of being a snob who was extremely impressed by Lance's collegiate eminence, and was shy for that reason." Such an easy explanation, however, is quickly dispensed with: "later Simon would be sure that Lance's accomplishments had nothing to do with his shyness, for being of grandiose ambition, Simon was not easily impressed." Eliot's literary accomplishments are, this fable suggests, perhaps secondary objects of Schwartz's devotion. The elder poet's personality exerts an appeal which is somewhat independent of any professional admiration. In "A Game of Tennis," as in "SCREENO," there is a strong element of wish-fulfillment and role-playing on Schwartz's part. Lance turns out to be a terrible tennis player and Simon comes to feel sorry for the great upperclassman, showing Lance how one does it on the court. Harold Bloom quotes Freud on the childhood rescue fantasy, in which the son imagines "saving his father's life on some dangerous occasion by which he becomes quits with him", by which he becomes "the father of himself" (64). Bloom de-emphasizes "phallic fatherhood" and focuses upon "priority" among poets. Schwartz's rescue fantasy conforms to Bloom's theory, but the tennis court setting shows that Schwartz had ambivalent feelings about the worth of such literary gamesmanship, even as he played his part. Bloom's struggle is to the death. Schwartz's fiction acknowledges it to be merely absurd, no matter how seriously Schwartz himself takes the struggle. Schwartz was right not to publish this story. In its very rawness of envy and ambition, however, "A Game of Tennis" suggests, better than could any more artful fiction or considered criticism, the peculiar extent to which Eliot fascinated the young author.

"Fun With the Famous" is a more playful and much more successful attempt to describe the difficult relationship between mentor and poetic disciple. It is a posthumously published confessional piece written in Schwartz's persona as literary gossip which, when read alongside

Schwartz's journals, seems, if not to name the names of the particular "famous", at any rate to leave no doubt as to the identities of Eliot and Wallace Stevens. The sketch describes Schwartz's encounters with three unidentified "famous poets" (*The Ego* 139) and a "celebrated metaphysician" (137). One of the poets certainly looks to be Eliot, while the third poet is undoubtedly Stevens, whom Schwartz consistently described as "resembling Jupiter" (143): in this case he is "on his way home to Juno". The comparison between the two anecdotes is significant. Whereas Schwartz's evenings with Stevens are idyllic and full of warmth, his encounter with Eliot is an anxious non-encounter, in which the younger man follows after the great man perplexed over how he should address his hero. Schwartz finally "turned about and went away and left the great poet in peace" (141). Trying to understand and explain the significance of "this strange encounter", Schwartz admits that his "admiration for this author was so great that I could no more bear to converse with him than to look into the dazzling sun." Stevens is a great god, indeed Jove himself, but he is a literary type of deity, Greek or Roman, powerful but essentially of human shape.¹ Eliot is all-pervasive in Schwartz's consciousness, the Biblical God who cannot be pictured or viewed directly without harm.

The memoir was composed nearly thirteen years after "SCREENO." The Schwartz of this playful sketch is no longer the intimidated freshman of "A Game of Tennis" or the evangelizing disciple Cornelius Schmidt. "Fun With the Famous" indicates, however, that even in middle and later life the legacy of Eliot was almost unbearable for the younger man. The terms in which he praises Eliot are ethical: Eliot "in addition to becoming a great poet had tried very hard all his life to be a good human being. Perhaps some sense of this goodness made me afraid to meet him"

¹ Stevens himself writes that "When we think of Jove, while we take him for granted as the symbol of omnipotence, the ruler of mankind, we do not fear him. He does have a superhuman size, but at least not so superhuman as to amaze and intimidate us" (*Opus Posthumous* 205).

(141). Schwartz's praise of Eliot the man is, however, tempered by his difficulty in finding the proper terms of address to the great poet: "The first thing that came into my head was that I am very glad to meet you and your work has been deteriorating for the past fifteen years. This did not seem the proper beginning and suggested that I had been warped by being forced to earn my living as a literary critic" (140). The disciple attempts to separate the work from the man, and finds to his horror that it is almost impossible. In Eliot's life there is an ongoing struggle to be "a good human being", but in the work there is only decline, and it is as a poet that Eliot must ultimately be judged.

The meaning of the word "good" as a description of Eliot bears further examination. In an unpublished draft of the introduction to his proposed book on Eliot, from which I quoted a passage above, Schwartz elaborates this ethical term of praise. After the mature Schwartz is finished with the term "goodness", the description comes to seem quite a backhanded compliment. Goodness is not equivalent to greatness, at least not in the mind of the mature critic: "Perhaps one should say goodness and not greatness to avoid the resistance imposed by connotations in an age not of the laurel or the true academy, but of [the] advertisements" ("the" canceled on typescript). Once goodness is adopted in place of greatness, Schwartz must further limit the laudatory implications of his language. "Let us then say goodness," allows the critic, but bear in mind that it is "a goodness hemmed-in, one-sided, and peculiar, the goodness almost of a master at bowling, chess, or statistics; and not the goodness of Shakespeare or Tolstoy." Lest his praise now seem too watered down, Schwartz reminds us that "Especially for this reason such goodness deserves a scrutiny and a celebration of its own kind, even as each one deserves his own birthday and his unique name." In essence, Schwartz is praising Eliot for being true to himself, true to his ethical system. Yet Schwartz undercuts that praise by ridiculing the "hemmed-in"

system which Eliot has chosen.

Schwartz tries to hold on to his earliest belief in Eliot as a sound moralist while simultaneously limiting the significance of Eliot's ethics to that of a game or hobby. A meditation on "Goodness" from Schwartz's unfinished *Child's Universal History* puts his struggles with Eliot's ethics into a wider context. In this work, the author casts himself as the prospective tutor of a schoolboy, a character based on the son of two of Schwartz's Cambridge friends. He tries to decide what knowledge of the world is most necessary for the child. Concerning goodness, the would-be tutor can only contradict the standard wisdom that "goodness is good because when you do something good, you feel better. But I am not [so] ^{very} sure most of the time. Too many good people look tormented and by their very goodness" ("so" canceled, and "very" added to typescript). When reading Schwartz's pronouncements on Eliot's particular type of goodness it is useful to keep the following definition in mind: "Also some say that goodness is sensible, it is a good policy, it makes for good health. Do not be deceived, dear [?] fellow [?], goodness has a wild excitement in it, and the wild excitement grows and at times it is as hysterical as tickled girls, although sometimes it is as serene, distant, and dignified as Northern snows" (question marks added to typescript). If Eliot is Schwartz's model of a man trying to be good, then this dual description ought to apply to him, and in fact it applies very well. In his description of the extremes of goodness Schwartz seems to describe Eliot's progress from the chaos and wild expressions of both excitement and despair of "The Waste Land," with its hysteria and terrifying lovemaking, to the "still point of the turning world" (*Collected Poems* 191) and the quiet meditations of *Four Quartets*, where Eliot becomes as "serene, distant, and dignified" as one could ever wish a poet to be.

Goodness must not be confused with its effects, which may be beneficial to others or to

oneself, or may be dreadful. Goodness is a matter of one's orientation toward the source of goodness. Plato asks in *The Republic* if there is anything surprising in seeing a man who has looked on the good and returns to the "evil state of man, misbehaving himself in a ridiculous manner" (Jowett translation 269). This is exactly Schwartz's idea of "hemmed-in" goodness, a nature that has seen the good but cannot make a wider earthly application of that vision. Plato's good is a power which appears, and then only dimly, at the end of all knowledge. It is a beatific state, and those that experience it do not want to return to actual existence. They are not necessarily warm and caring, but more likely "serene, distant, and dignified". Reason is the connection of the self with the source of the good, a source which powers the world but is not of the world. Charles Taylor describes a modern conception of the good. We share Plato's sense that a man knows the good if he is in a proper attitude toward the source of goodness, the ultimate source of existence. Taylor finds an exemplar in Puritan Christianity, with its constant questioning of one's orientation toward salvation and sanctification. The "pre-modern" "aspiration to fulness" was (and, of course, still is) met by "connecting one's life up with some greater reality or story" (43). Modern seekers after the good must build "something into [their]... life, some pattern of higher action, or some meaning". Taylor writes:

But whatever favoured description, be it incorporating something in one's life or connecting to something greater outside, I use my images of 'contact' with the good, or 'how we are placed' in relation to the good, as generic terms, overarching this distinction.... For those who define the good as self-mastery through reason, the aspiration is to be able to order their lives, and the unbearable threat is of being engulfed and degraded by the irresistible craving for lower things. For those moved by one of the modern forms of the affirmation of ordinary life, it is above all important to see oneself as moved by and furthering this life, in one's work for instance, and one's family. (44)

Schwartz, according to Taylor's categories, began with a definition of the good as "self-mastery

through reason", and ended by adopting a modern form "of the affirmation of ordinary life".

Schwartz tries to maintain his respect for Eliot's personal goodness when the source of that good has been revealed to be (as expressed in one of Schwartz's less generous moments) "vicious and destructive too often" (*Letters* 260). For Schwartz, as we have observed in "SCREENO" and "A Game," Eliot himself was one of Schwartz's own sources of the good. Eliot's work did not even necessarily participate in that relationship ("your work has been deteriorating for the past fifteen years"). The elder poet was a saintly figure worthy of emulation. The younger poet's earliest ideas and poetic style were developed in response to Eliot's example, or more precisely, the type of life Eliot had come to symbolize. Schwartz's self-portraits in "SCREENO" and "A Game of Tennis" suggest that the young disciple was never without reservations concerning such emulation, and that he had, even in his formative years, reservations concerning those very ideals which constituted Eliot's (and by association, his own) vision of the good.

In his later criticism, Schwartz struggles to maintain his view of Eliot as a source of goodness while denying in turn the goodness of Eliot's own moral sources. Eliot, whose image is described in "Fun With the Famous" as, like God's, fatally dazzling, is discredited as a deity. The ethical stance which Eliot has inspired is, nevertheless, still valid. Schwartz himself makes a similar theological claim in a review of Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair*:

I would like very much to be able to have religious belief. But the farthest I can get is the belief that even if God does not exist, He does exist. I am not trying to be paradoxical. What I mean and what Greene's novel realizes and shows is that whether God exists or does not exist, the belief in God is and has been so much a part of human existence, of the institutions of society, and of the values by which human beings find it necessary to live, that human beings in their most independent, intimate and free behaviour act and suffer as if in fact God does exist. Perhaps all I am saying is that good and evil are real; and I imagine that my state of belief is an ancient, recurrent, and obscure heresy, probably Albigenian. ("Fiction

Chronicle: Dear Uncle James" 237)

The heretic knows that good and evil have been made indistinguishable by corrosive advances in human thought, he knows that the sources of the good have vanished, but he plainly sees what he must nevertheless take to be good and evil everywhere around him. Wallace Stevens, who in later life would replace Eliot as Schwartz's poetic exemplar, writes that "In an age of disbelief, or, what is the same thing, in a time that is largely humanistic, in one sense or another, it is for the poet to supply the satisfactions of belief, in his measure and in his style" (*Opus Posthumous* 206). Although "we do not say that the poet is to take the place of the gods", we do need the "satisfactions" of belief, even when there is no spiritual order for us to believe in. Our orientation toward the good is satisfying, even if the source of goodness is revealed as an unsatisfactory and outmoded ideal.

While in his serious moments Schwartz would never confuse T.S. Eliot with God, Eliot does indeed represent the system of belief, at the very least a philosophy of literature, which Schwartz made his own as a young man. When Eliot's "goodness" became tarnished through his anti-Semitic pronouncements and through what Schwartz felt to be his increasingly weak poetic imagery, the beliefs which Eliot stood for were discredited along with their exemplar. What those beliefs consisted of has been hinted at above in the description of Cornelius's public reading, and will be explored in more depth in the following chapters. Schwartz was not willing to jettison Eliot. He did so only after he had found a new faith to replace the old, after he had elevated the celebration of the actual to the status of a higher good.

It is important to understand at the outset the enormous impact of Eliot on Schwartz's work and ideas, Schwartz's response often verging on hero-worship and sometimes reaching the level of religious discipleship. That is why I have spent so many of these initial pages emphasizing

what is perhaps self-evident to alert readers of Schwartz, that Eliot was a tangible influence on the younger American. What is not self-evident and what I have therefore tried at length to establish is the personal and emotional element of this emulation, which surpasses the expected limit of literary discipleship. It is also crucial to realize at the outset that Schwartz, both as apprentice poet and as mature critic, was distinctly of two minds about this unholy elevation of Eliot and his early verse to the level of holy relics.

The next chapter will deal with a different but related type of elevation, the elevation of the exile above the accidents of actual experience through time and distance, memory and abstraction. Eliot represents for Schwartz the possibility of such a divorce from actuality. As an expatriate Eliot has elevated himself to a position of moral and prophetic authority which Schwartz can only attain in scattered moments, as suggested by Cornelius's experience in "SCREENO." The characters of the Jewish emigration in Schwartz's *Genesis* want to step outside of themselves, usually by crossing the Atlantic. But like Cornelius Schmidt, however much they see themselves as individuals or desire to be independent they are very much part of their milieu. The assumptions of Schwartz's verse-play "Shenandoah" are even more deterministic than those of *Genesis*. The figure of the exile standing alone and shaping experience is, nevertheless, always present as a troubling ideal, an ideal which Schwartz is at a loss to reconcile with his own constant awareness, like that of Cornelius before the theatre audience, of a profound connection to his surroundings.

Chapter II

“Lift your mind from the local color”:

Dreaming of Authority and Escape

Both the stories and lyric poems of Delmore Schwartz offer insights into the way the poet viewed the experience of Jewish immigrants and the way he saw his own experience as the child of immigrant parents in the New World. I leave aside for the present, however, Schwartz’s best-known poetic work, that which dates from the late 1930s, and his most successful prose, which dates from the mid 1940s. Disregarding chronological sequence, I will focus in this chapter on two works of the early 1940s, works which contain many of the poet’s most frank statements concerning emigration and exile. Schwartz’s long and flawed poem *Genesis*, part one of a projected epic fictionalizing his own early years, begins with a history of his family’s establishment in America. “Shenandoah” is a verse play in which the complexity of personal identity is symbolized by an argument among the poet’s immigrant relatives concerning the naming of the child.

Schwartz’s poem *Genesis* was to have been his masterwork; the published version is merely the first volume out of a projected three. *Genesis* begins with Schwartz’s alter-ego Hershey Green telling his own story of exile. It is not a self-imposed exile like that of Eliot or like those of any of Schwartz’s other literary heroes. Exile is chosen on Hershey’s behalf before his birth. Hershey tries to make his parents’ story his own: his parents’ and grandparents’ physical journey into exile corresponds to the young poet’s image of himself as an intellectual exile. Schwartz therefore privileges the private encounter of the mind with America over the external

circumstances of men and women encountering the New World. This does not mean that he is uninterested in the stories of immigration or that he draws no distinction between his experience and his parents' experience. He is, to the contrary, very aware of these distinctions and interested in the immigrant's narrative as a narrative. From the outset, however, his parents' story is not just their own tale but is most importantly "the story which I tell myself" (8). Hershey's "state" of being "is not uncommon in this world" (3), and has been brought about by forces beyond the self, forces originating before his birth. His exile is not self-made, a troubling fact for the young artist. His narrative of that exile, however, is self-made. The young man cannot choose exile and physically remove himself from his environment, as did T.S. Eliot. Elisa New claims that "There is no nostalgia in Schwartz's writing and that is the trouble: there is no leaving home" (258); this claim will be taken up in a later chapter. The poet can, nevertheless, fashion out of the details of his parents' experience a personal history, one in which he imaginatively recreates their actual decisions. The poet chooses America for himself by rehearsing and critiquing the choices of others, writing what he admits is a subjective history. His is a history created primarily to define the present-day self and only secondarily to understand the past actions of others.

The poet has not chosen his current state, but through his identification with the characters of his narrative, he can play an imaginative role in their momentous choices. The blatant identification of the poet's characters with Hershey and the imaginative connection of their concerns with his own concerns begins with the first line of the narrative proper. Like Hershey, whose state is "by no means" (3) unique, Noah Green is "a young man in Czarist Russia, one among many" (8). Hershey has been defined from the start as a young thinker disillusioned by experience, and likewise Noah "was dissatisfied because his life did not resemble the images of adolescence". The cough, a frequent sound-image in Schwartz's work, concretely connects the

two young men. Hershey, in the opening sequence, is awakened when he “coughs, coughs! / the old cold comes” (3). Noah, to avoid his Russian military service:

ate many lemons, seeking the look
of sickness,
He gained a cough which lasted all his life, but he did not convince
the Czar’s laughing officers,
He was taken by the army, he suffered the humiliation of being the
butt and Jew of officers,
And then after a year was sent home, returning with more unrest than
before because he had seen much, going from city to city. (8)

The cough is a mark of knowledge in Schwartz’s work. It represents skepticism, awareness, and self-consciousness. In the lyric “Someone Is Harshly Coughing as Before,” Schwartz’s narrator hears someone coughing on the next floor and longs to find out “Who is the sick one”, “Ask what is wrong and sweetly pay attention” (*Selected Poems* 37). The invalid turns out to be “God, who has caught cold again” by coming in contact with reality, “Wandering helplessly in the world once more”. Knowledge, symbolized by the cough, makes belief problematic. Belief in a deity becomes more difficult the more one learns “Wandering helplessly”. Another “mystery must be crucified, / Another exile bare his complex care” before peace will return to the world. The exile, whose exertions create order out of the chaos, is constantly forced to reconcile his beloved “mystery” and his metaphysical system with the corrosive effects of experience and precise knowledge. The Incarnation is perhaps one such moment of reconciliation, but it is far from the only one. This vacillation between belief and knowledge continues indefinitely, just as the body alternates between sickness and health. It is interesting to note that at this early stage Schwartz equates belief with health and equates illness with that immanence and fragmentary knowledge which comprises consciousness.

Hershey’s cough awakens the young man, whose “Jack-in-the-box, the conscious mind snaps

up" (3). Noah's cough is a mark of his disillusioning political and social experiences "going from city to city", the metaphorical "awakening" of a consciousness. Noah Green's story remains an independent biographical narrative, but Hershey also makes it a reflection of his own process of intellectual growth away from inherited attitudes and assumptions. Schwartz is not content, however, to let Hershey adopt his grandparents' story of exile as an easy metaphor for his own estrangement from his society. From the beginning Hershey is portrayed as more heir than exile. Schwartz shows him to be motivated by virtually the same impulses which led to his parents' and grandparents' emigration. The character traits which force Noah to run away from his fated status are the very same traits which prove Hershey's profound connection with Noah.

New York is the capital of the New World, a place of second childhood and new beginnings symbolized by Hershey Green's excitement at what he takes to be the sight of new snow:

The childhood love still lives in him,
Like a sweet tooth in grown-up married girls,
December's white delight, a fourth year wish,
The classic swan disguised in modern life,
Freedom and silence shining in New York! (3)

Schwartz nevertheless wishes to emphasize the continuity of the New World with the Old World.

New York is not only a place of rebirth where one's childhood may be relived: the city also represents the continuation and perhaps decadent culmination of Europe's primary concerns.

New York is a refuge from a tired Europe (significantly the city is a place not only of noisy, busy freedom, its traditional reputation, but also of the restful freedom of "silence") and simultaneously "Europe's last capital", "Here where Long Island like a liner slants / To the great city" (5).¹ T.S.

¹ Richard McDougall analyzes the significance in Schwartz's work of snow as a metaphor of transcendence. He remarks that snow "represents both beginnings and ends, both life and death, both the extinction of consciousness and a transcendent awareness 'perfect and serene'" (40). The factor which "above all gives snow its symbolic power to embrace these extremes is its whiteness. White is both the absence of color, as such suggesting annihilation and death, and the color of light, which is the source of all color." Light signifies pure potential and snow signifies obliteration. Like New York, the "last capital" of

Eliot argues, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," that "the historical sense", a perception "not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence", is an artistic necessity; however: "if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, 'tradition' should positively be discouraged" (*Selected Prose* 38). Schwartz's poet cannot help but see the culture of the New World as a continuation of a European tradition. Hershey possesses the historical sense, so such a perception is inevitable. Following Eliot's lead, however, Schwartz celebrates the renewing energy which the New World introduces into a stagnating tradition ("Europe's last capital"). Schwartz turns Eliot's aesthetic theory into social observation. He provides a dual rationale for emigration: not only is the emigrant reborn, but a tradition is fulfilled and revived. Eliot, of course, came to very different conclusions when he turned his own gaze from literary tradition to societal tradition.² Whereas Eliot, in his own subsequent works, took the side of homogenous "tradition", Schwartz followed the strand in Eliot's early essay which celebrated renewal and individuation. It is remarkable that two such antagonistic social visions share a common literary root.

Hershey Green, then, as both young poet and Eliot-influenced intellectual, is one who responds to the promise of the New World with an involuntary sense of expectation yet also comprehends the deceptive nature of the immigrant's hope. Hershey, "standing by the window,

the Old World and the first capital of the New, snow is both the denial of potential and, through its association with light, the image of endless potential. Interestingly, Hershey thinks he is seeing snow, but is really viewing the moonlight, "diagonal and pale". Light itself, like snow, is both a metaphor of fecundity ("the source of all color") and sterility (moonlight). Perhaps any image of ultimate potential is also an image of defeated hope.

² Anthony Julius finds strong affinities between "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and *After Strange Gods*, arguing that the latter treatise, with its notorious social pronouncements, "founders on greater ambitions" (151) but does not represent a decisive break with the more "balanced" and more narrowly focused early essay. Julius suggests: "Rename *After Strange Gods* 'Orthodoxy and the Critic' and one discloses the book's relation to 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'" (152).

sees the truth" (3), not a revealed truth but rather a young skeptic's perception of the falsehood, the inherent incompleteness, of every type of knowledge. In his prose introduction to *Selected Poems*, the mature Schwartz claims with a typically complex mixture of universal humility and personal hubris that "Every point of view, every kind of knowledge and every kind of experience is limited and ignorant; nevertheless, so far as I know, this volume seems to me to be as representative as it could be" (10). The young poet of *Genesis* similarly wonders at the way he constantly strives for all-encompassing truth despite his awareness of falsehood at every turn:

Says to himself, "How each view may be false!"
And then the whole thing happens all over again,
Waking, walking to the window, looking out,
Seeking for snow in May, a miracle
Quick in the dozing head's compelled free mix. (4)

The apparent fall of snow is unmasked as an illusion, but the process of hope, disillusionment, and skeptical generalization is to be continually repeated. Knowledge is apparently gained at the cost of a loss of hopefulness, yet hope remains, not only as the "compelled" component of the poet's psyche, but also as an attitude freely chosen. The poet, indeed, works very hard to be deluded. His gaze is not merely presented with a pleasing illusion, rather, it "strains the dark... to see a certain whiteness glitter there" (3).³ A "fourth year wish" may be an uneducated and childish longing, yet wishing represents the active choice of a personality.

Schwartz claims in this prologue to have seen through the New World myth, albeit allowing the belief a certain validity. His interest is therefore not in the ways in which America lives up to

³ In "Chaplin Upon the Cliff, Dining Alone," a sonnet from 1950, Schwartz again makes his narrator a willing accomplice in his own deception. As in *Genesis*, an optical illusion is equated with the eternal renewal of the poet's hope: "Again I put away a gold rush hope: / It was my eye deluded me, my hopeful eye / Which looked at sunlight flashing like a whip" ("Eleven Poems" 4). Disillusion follows self-willed illusion in an endless regression, and the poet's awareness of that fact aggravates the process: "and if my gaze / Is full of anxious curiosity, / One more illusion will not fool my eye / Before I hope again as foolishly!"

or fails to live up to its promise. Schwartz prefers instead to observe the mysterious activity of the individual mind in its encounter with the New World, especially that of his own mind, which experiences repeated hope and repeated disillusionment. The act of choosing life in a strange land is more interesting than the outcome of such a choice. This preference is announced immediately by the image of Hershey's willing self-deception at the window.

As they narrate the emigration of Noah Newman, the poet's maternal grandfather (not to be confused with Noah Green, the paternal patriarch), Hershey and his chorus of ghostly commentators imagine the train of impulsive actions which leads to Noah's resolution. Noah Newman leaves a hated position as his brother-in-law's business underling. The escapee at first prospers. The custom of the town, however, forces him to send his daughters to a convent school. Largely because of this action "the poverty of Noah Newman became such that he had to go and ask his brother-in-law Benjamin to employ him again" (23). Benjamin then provokes his brother-in-law with a condescending joke. A know-it-all ghost resembling Sigmund Freud imaginatively recreates the joke (incidentally, a poor and humourless piece of imagining on Freud's or on Schwartz's part). The poet meekly corrects Freud, but in doing so Hershey also dismisses the importance of the recorded facts: "Yes, you are right in essence, if not in detail. It was another joke, but it does not matter much". The poet's quibble with the ghost's narration deflates the commentator's grand poses and arrogant assumptions ("Is this not right, young man? do I not know?"). Schwartz nevertheless admits that his interest, as much as Freud's, is really in the mental journey of the exile, and not in the mechanics of the story. The correct telling of the story is important. Correctness, however, is to be measured by the faithfulness of one's attempt to examine mental processes and states of human emotion. Imagining Noah's panic as he reconsiders his decision is more important than getting the correct facts on record. Telling the

story of Noah Newman, the poet is interested in the haphazard ease with which the decision is taken and in the terror with which, sometime later, Noah finally confronts the meaning of that decision. Appropriately to a fragment of the story narrated by Freud, Noah “trembles in Vienna”.⁴

Decisions are more important to Schwartz than their outcome, and as one might guess, indecision is as vital as decision. For a narration dealing with emigration and transplanted families, a theme in which American mythologists have often discovered a metaphor for hope and rebirth, the opening pages of *Genesis* are surprisingly full of stories of failed flight or regretted choices. Noah Newman’s first flight ends in humiliation. His second resolution is successfully carried through, but as we have seen, it is afterwards regretted and almost aborted. Even in the fateful second resolution there is a quality of helplessness and passivity, not the heroic decision of American mythology. Benjamin makes his joke at Noah’s expense, and:

The old dream of America springs up,
Springs up like a boxer’s arm, blocking a blow,
- Benjamin’s joke becomes his righteousness,
He flies with money to America! (27)

⁴ By so downplaying the importance of factual authenticity, Schwartz anticipates and answers some (but by no means all) of the criticism of A.M. Klein. Klein laments the “limitations of background” (248) of Schwartz and of Schwartz’s young peers. Because of those limitations, the “inexhaustible inheritance” (Schwartz, “Under Forty”, quoted in Klein) of the writer’s Jewishness “conveys only negations, and no positive values.” As evidence of Schwartz’s inadequate induction into Jewish culture, Klein points to “such Jewish solecisms... as the confusion, in *Genesis*, of the laws touching *chalitza*, or the appearance in the same place, of an uncle called Ishmael. Not in the modern centuries has a Jew been dubbed Ishmael; he might as well have been named Esau.” Klein quotes some of Schwartz’s own criticism of Eliot to describe Schwartz himself and to highlight the dilemma of “the contemporary American-Jewish writer”: “The protagonist of ‘Gerontion’ uses one of the most significant phrases in Eliot’s work when he speaks of himself as living in a *rented* house; which is to say, not in the house where his forebears lived” (*Selected Essays* 126, quoted in Klein 248). Despite the pleasure he takes in such fault-finding, however, Klein appreciates that Schwartz is both aware of his limited participation in Jewish tradition and generally humble in the face of his ignorance. Klein credits Schwartz, if not with good information and good orthodoxy, at least with “goodwill” (247).

Flight to America becomes a defensive move, hope is motivated by a petty reflex action, not by heroism. The momentum of activity and the distance of Noah's exile transform petty hurt feelings into a justification: a "joke becomes his righteousness". Noah is at first a failed hero; later, even in the moment of success when "Courage returns, daring returns, he goes!", the childish motivations behind Noah Newman's act cast doubt on his heroic stance.

Noah Green's story is a more straightforward tale of failure than that of Noah Newman, the ostensible success. It is Noah Green's sons Jack and Albert who make a successful getaway in his stead. Noah leaves his home twice, once in the expectation of returning, once with no such idea. In both cases he returns home discontented with his existence. It is not difficult to believe that Schwartz had in mind T.S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" when he described Noah Green's initial journey and return. Like Noah Green, the Biblical travelers are treated with contempt. They find "the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly" (110). The Magi return to "our places, these Kingdoms, / But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, / With an alien people clutching their gods." Noah likewise returns with "more unrest than before". Like the Magi, the returning wanderer finds his own people, and especially their religious customs, alien: in the knowledge that war is imminent Noah asks his wife to give him a divorce, so that she will not be forced in the event of his death to marry his brother, a practice ascribed to "the strict Hebrew law, given by Moses" (8). The narrator of Eliot's poem "should be glad of another death." Noah goes further than welcoming such an imagined second death - he actually fakes drowning to escape his inevitable future in the army (and most likely to escape a wife of whom he has tired).

Significantly, Noah's attempted escape is no escape at all. His pregnant first wife finds him as he is about to marry another. He tries to explain that he has been divorced from Hannah, but "he had no moral stature next to the rotundity of his pregnant wife" (13). The moral stature of exile

and separation derives from distance. Standing alongside such an obvious proof of familial attachment, the self-exiled Noah loses all moral power. Previously, one might have called his gesture the protest of a conscientious objector, a suggestion made by one of Schwartz's ghost-commentators. That suggestion, however, is ultimately discarded. The staged death now becomes, in the presence of the accusing Hannah, the callous act of a cowardly man running away from home in search of young love, an act of second adolescence.

Given that Schwartz identifies Noah Green with Hershey from the first line of his narrative, one may argue that Noah symbolizes the poet as intellectual exile. The poet protests his divorce from his society and from his relations, yet to the onlooker, and often to the poet himself, he appears to be profoundly a part of his milieu. He cannot comment on his society without implicating himself in the charge. Only the true exile, benefiting from physical distance, seems to possess both intimate knowledge of his subject matter and the necessary outsider's perspective. Schwartz seems to have felt quite strongly the lack of physical distance from his formative environment, a distance which gave the work of a writer such as Eliot its "moral stature".

Eliot himself similarly equates exile with authority in a passage of early criticism concerning Turgenev. Exile does not automatically confer heightened moral stature upon one who is transplanted. Being an expatriate is "A position which for a smaller man may be merely a compromise, or a means of disappearance", but "was for Turgenev (who knew how to maintain the role of foreigner with integrity) a source of authority, in addressing either Russian or European; authority but also isolation" (Ricks 199). Christopher Ricks sees Eliot in this piece "thinking of himself too, and hoping," but with "no sidelong glances, only a direct admiring contemplation of Turgenev's exemplary achievement." He calls Eliot's commentary "the prose of a man steeling himself." Ricks goes on to make a fine distinction concerning Eliot's increasing

adoption of English manners in his later years: "Eliot later decided not fully to maintain the role of foreigner with integrity. He did not forfeit integrity, but he forfeited foreignness. Or rather, he played down his foreignness in much of his public life... and in much of his literary and cultural criticism. But he maintained the role of foreigner with integrity in the place where it really mattered: his poetry" (200).

In writing about Eliot's adoption of Anglo-Catholicism and Royalism, Schwartz defends the poet by arguing that "only one who has known fully the deracination and alienation inherent in modern life" would feel moved "to make so extreme an effort at returning to the traditional community" (*Essays* 128). In examining Schwartz's later critical writings concerning Eliot, we shall see that the mature Schwartz would not have endorsed Ricks's saving distinction, that Eliot's foreignness and therefore his authority was maintained in the poetry. Schwartz saw even the *Four Quartets* as issuing from the same sense of foreignness, foreignness to experience itself, and not alienation from any one society or societies. In his early work, however, with which I am now dealing, Schwartz has not quite formulated such criticisms. The young Schwartz still sees Eliot's work as deriving its authority from the poet's expatriate existence. Schwartz finds such authority lacking in his own verse. The result in *Genesis* is a repeated denial of the possibility of one's truly escaping one's surroundings. Characters repeatedly fail to maintain a detached, authoritative stance.

One should remember that occasionally even in his earliest work, including *Genesis*, Schwartz attempted to make a positive quality out of this lack. One of Schwartz's chorus of ghostly spectators tries to explain a possible windfall which this lack of dominating moral stature might bring to an artist. That gain is in the comic dethroning of great ideas and in the concentration on stories reduced to human scale:

When War and Love, when Mars and Venus, walking,
Slip on banana peels and dignities,
Then, then, I love the laughter's foam in me,
I love the laughter from this endless story! (14)

The ghosts themselves often provide examples of this vaudeville-style deflation, yet the motivation behind their presence is ambiguous.

Schwartz states in his prose introduction that in the present “No author can assume a continuity of ideas and values between himself and his audience. Hence he must bring in his ideas and values openly and clearly” (viii). Schwartz cites “The Waste Land,” specifically its figure of Tiresias, as a precedent. For Schwartz, Tiresias represents the critical intelligence of the poet being brought to bear on experience. The poet’s mind ranges through ancient and modern wisdom to make sense of the contemporary scene. Tiresias, who has “foresuffered all” (*Collected Poems* 72), represents the perspective of an accumulated tradition, but it is a tradition defined by the poet’s own particular influences. Only by allowing Tiresias himself into the modern text can the poet hope to let his reader share his particular perspective. There is no one common heritage, no religious or philosophical common ground, to which the author can appeal in order to “comment and to judge” contemporary reality. Tiresias’s authority is that of the exile, standing somewhat apart from and imposing order on the actual. In order to make such an escape from the actual, however, the poet must introduce a commentator out of mythology. If the poet is seeing elements of Greek tragedy in the modern seduction scene, then the poet must bring in a Greek seer to make that connection plain. The clear, almost didactic expression of ideas and values is held up as a current value, and such a practice is exemplified by Eliot’s work, his “mythical method”.

Should the poet “love the laughter” or should he “bring in his ideas”, or is it possible to do

both in a work? The example of Eliot (as read by Schwartz, one must always recall) seems to weigh in in favour of the second option. Schwartz's reading of Eliot, however, did not remain static throughout his career. The satirical, even burlesque, elements of Eliot's early poetry appealed strongly to the young Schwartz. Yet if the "banana peel" element was ever really present in Eliot's work, it was employed in the service of what Schwartz described in a review of *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* as "the intense irony of 'Sweeney Agonistes' or of the 'Five-Finger Exercises'" ("Mr. Eliot" 737), an irony which Schwartz called an "engaging aspect of the poet".

Irony, in this context, implies distance, from oneself or from one's subject - Schwartz cites the lines "How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot! / (Whether his mouth be open or shut)." Such ironic distancing may be said to go hand in hand with the state of mind of the exile. For Schwartz, that distancing is never entirely possible because one can never stand apart from one's milieu. Schwartz's concept of escape is worth examining in this context. Characters are often discovered and humiliated in their attempts to flee undesirable states of existence. Noah Green's "escape and the romance had been the great effort of his life, / For the rest of his life, he was a defeated man, ruled by his wife" (15). It is his sons Jack and Albert who make the decisive break with the past. Yet Jack's success in changing his surroundings is balanced by his continuing unrest in the New World.

A story is told of Jack which recalls Noah Newman's hasty and fateful reaction to his brother-in-law's ridicule: "When someone hurt Jack's feelings in the house where he lived with Albert, he quit his job and went to Montreal / To change his life. The trip was overnight" (37). Once again, the dramatic effect is entirely out of line with the trivial cause. One of the ghostly spectators remarks that:

Montreal
Taught him what is between-ness, what it is,
How formal and how dialectical
Escape is, after all, like any bridge,
Being by two banks made to be itself. (39)

Escape is defined in this case by its failure. Exile is a state of successful escape, in which the “bridge” does really lead to a new bank. Recrossing the intervening distance is difficult and often impossible. Jack learns that temporary escape may masquerade for a night as a permanent choice. The “freshness and relief of the journey” may be mistaken for the freshness of the destination. Eliot, by juxtaposing the line “In the mountains, there you feel free” (*Collected Poems* 63) with its anticlimactic corollary (“I read, much of the night, and go south in winter”) is saying much the same thing. We obey a mechanical and short-lived impulse to escape, to holiday outside our normal existence, and thereby experience exhilaration. Infinitely greater than such exhilaration is the real and elusive freedom and real dangers which one experiences in questioning and remaking the self. The lesser euphoria is often mistaken for the greater. In examining Schwartz’s stories, especially those collected as *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities*, we will return to this recurring theme of failed escape.

Hershey’s audience of ghosts are all-wise and therefore “Anguished for those who do not know their lives” (39), but they are physically powerless. They experience their own short-lived exhilaration in hearing stories of blind human beings making terrible decisions: Hershey’s storytelling is for them “a week-end of eternity”. They can no longer experience firsthand such choices, but through Hershey’s narration the dead vicariously “have a sense, strong, clanking, black and loud / Of the huge domed stations where the self / Has for departure made a marvellous church”. Schwartz repeats this metaphor twice in the early pages of *Genesis* with very slight alterations of text [“the grand domed stations where the self / Made for departure a new idiom: /

Travel is in your speech, trains charge the air / With guns of sound, many a liner sails" (19)]. The author's careless proofreading may ultimately be responsible for the duplication, but the repetition may also be a sign of the image's importance to Schwartz's conception of the ghost chorus. By extension, the image proves important to his vision of Hershey's character. The ghosts are no longer doers, but listeners. They have ultimate wisdom, but they regret their passive position as helpless witnesses. Raymond Williams suggests that the rebel exists in a positive relation to society "by the very fact that he is actively living out his personal values", whereas the true exile is committed only "to waiting: when his society changes, then he can come home, but the actual process of change is one in which he is not involved" (90). The ghosts understand the actions of the narrative's living characters to be futile acts of rebellion against fate. They nevertheless long for a time before they gained their wisdom and their skepticism, a time when human activity and heartbreak was possible. The place they are exiled from is unbearable, but the place they inhabit lacks all but reflected vitality. They are worse than Williams's exiles: they wait for nothing, and change can no longer touch them. The ghosts are all-knowing and therefore beyond direction and dissent, yet not beyond voyeurism.

One of the novelist André Brink's characters remarks of his fellow emigrés that they had a suggestion "of something hollow about them, a vacuum, like an electric car, not driven by a battery inside but remote-controlled from the outside.... their control centre was not the intellect or will or emotion, but South Africa" (169). Brink's hollow men yet live, as do T.S. Eliot's. Eliot's "hollow men" (89) are remembered and labeled as such by "Those who have crossed / With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom." The state of being divorced from experienced reality is terrifying to the hollow men. They imagine the dead hearing voices "more distant and more solemn than a falling star" (90). If there is such a thing as a "solid man", he exists only in

dreams of death, and his idea of fulfillment terrifies the living. As Eliot ambiguously phrases it, he exists as “The hope only / Of empty men” (91). Schwartz’s dead are full of precise knowledge, but their fulfillment is too perfect and saddens even themselves. They in turn long for a fulfillment which only the living can “know”, the experience of the imperfect actual. Eliot asks (or theorizes - the passage significantly lacks a question mark):

Is it like this
In death’s other kingdom
Waking alone
At the hour when we are
Trembling with tenderness
Lips that would kiss
Form prayers to broken stone. (90-91)

Schwartz’s ghosts seem to answer a qualified “yes”. Eliot’s choice in “The Hollow Men” is between an empty, sterile actuality and a hidden fulfillment in “death’s other kingdom”, a potential exile which is both the sole source of our hope, and our prime source of terror. Schwartz’s choice is between a chaotic but vital actuality and a wise but sterile consummation in death. Schwartz accepts Eliot’s diagnosis of experience as “Sightless, unless / The eyes reappear”, but he finds more to regret in life’s passing than Eliot does. Michael Seidel writes that

The displaced condition or ‘state’ of mind of the exile at times results in a decidedly ambiguous relation with both the place of remove and the place of resettlement. The younger generation of murmuring Jews of the Exodus..., who know little of their promised land before reaching it... seem as agonized at the prospect of leaving a temporary home... as Moses, who knows much more, is agonized at the prospect of staying.
(12)

Both the Eliot of “The Hollow Men” and the Schwartz of *Genesis* exist in such an ambiguous relationship with experienced reality and with the projected afterlife. Knowledge of life’s blindness or emptiness makes one agonized at the prospect of staying, while blindness itself makes one agonized at the prospect of leaving. Schwartz takes this a step further (as does Eliot with his

terrible and sly question/statement, "Is it like this"). He makes even the perfectly knowledgeable dead agonize over their weakness and regret the sterility of their existence.

The ghosts' state of exile is different from their old state of being, but it is still unsatisfying. Hershey himself seems to be as one with the ghosts. He understands the futility of any attempt to change one's life by changing one's residence: Jack behaves as ridiculously in the New World as Noah Green and Noah Newman did in the Old World. Yet Hershey must reconstruct his family's history in order to fill a need in himself, the need to participate in the making of blind and therefore fully human decisions. By telling these stories with attention he experiences the decisive moments of a life, its "grand domed stations", as important monuments, even "churches", although he knows these anecdotes are mostly unimportant and routine stops on a routine journey, mere "stations". In "The Waste Land," Tiresias has "Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest" (72), yet he witnesses and narrates the scene anyhow, giving it a present poetic life which seems to contradict its predetermined character. Tiresias says he has "foresuffered all", yet he too "awaited the expected guest". The observer as storyteller, whether Tiresias, Hershey's panel of ghosts, or the poet himself, stands somewhat apart from the repeated and transparent patterns of human existence. Despite his "moral stature", however, the exile is compelled to come down and join the action as he narrates the scene. Both Hershey and his listeners are enraptured by what they nonetheless acknowledge to be the trivial and commonplace stories of the Green and Newman families. The poet is both self-consciously skeptical and weary of that skepticism (Hershey is called a "sleepless Atlantic boy" (11), suggesting both awareness and exhaustion). The storytelling itself is a way to relieve such weariness, although it leaves intact the causes of fatigue and skepticism. While assembling "The Waste Land" is not a cure for the poet's inability to believe in the promise of "a new start" (74), to "connect / Nothing with nothing", it

functions, like Schwartz's recreation of a family history, as a means of at least setting the poet's "lands in order" (79), as a means of dealing with such disorder by narrating it: "These fragments I have shored against my ruin".

Here, in the introduction and initial episodes of *Genesis*, is evidence that Eliot's legacy to Schwartz consisted of the two contradictory ideals of ironic distance in representation and rather didactic clarity in communicating one's values. Schwartz was capable of distancing his authorial voice from his subject matter, but he never made that technique entirely his own. He was also capable of presenting his ideas in a bald-faced manner, yet his values and ideas were those of a skeptic. They are values held against his own better judgment, just as Hershey willfully deceives himself and sees his desired snow in May. Eliot, on the other hand, was capable both of coolly detached representation and of earnest advertisement of his beliefs. Eliot's irony derives a great deal of its force from the exile's symbolic act of separating himself from his society. To Schwartz and his peers, Eliot even seemed to have vanished from the plane of everyday existence: witness Schwartz's shyness about meeting his mentor, as described in "Fun With the Famous, Stunned By the Stars."

Schwartz felt himself to be divided intellectually from his environment, yet was everyday convinced of his connection to that milieu. The figure of an Eliot looking down on life from the lofty, seemingly otherworldly, viewpoint of exile provides a powerful model but also inspires a feeling of artistic inadequacy in such a mind. Noah Green, standing in for his creator, is crushed by his simultaneous knowledge of his physical belonging and of his spiritual alienation. His wife does not fear this knowledge. She exploits his former untrustworthiness as an instrument of behavioral control: "She reminded him again and again of what he had done, / But she knew that she had destroyed in him the power to do it ever again" (16). Noah in his discontented immobility

is much like Eliot's Magi or Prufrock: "I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas" (*Collected Poems* 15). Schwartz's characters, in fact, often resemble Eliot's. It is Eliot himself whom Schwartz cannot hope to emulate. The unhappy ending of Noah's story reflects the negative side of such a failure. There is, of course, a positive side to such a failure. The positive potential of Schwartz's failure is suggested by the "laughter's foam" of the spectator ghost, but here it is merely discussed and not displayed in Schwartz's art. For that type of demonstration one must search elsewhere in his work.

The presentation of Noah Green as an alter-ego of Hershey, and hence of Schwartz, suggests that the poet felt himself to be an exile from his society, yet was continually confronted by and fascinated with the proofs of a profound connection to his surroundings. In Schwartz's own case, this proof did not come, like Noah's, in the burlesque form of a pregnant wife with a prior and indisputable claim on his loyalty, but it came in forms which were nevertheless painful and self-evident. Schwartz found such proof in the private sphere in his inherited family traits, especially the undesirable traits of his father, and in the public sphere in the remarkably similar concerns of all those who belonged to his generation.

In the verse-play "Shenandoah," published while Schwartz was composing *Genesis*, the poet is no longer just the storyteller, isolated from his story in time yet nevertheless involved in its making. Here Schwartz emphasizes the artificial space of the theatre and represents himself as the narrator Shenandoah Fish. He stands physically apart from the action, not even to create the tale which others will act out, but merely to comment learnedly and helplessly on his own "greatest day" (*Shenandoah* 3), the day when he received his absurd name. Whereas in *Genesis* the poet participates in the events of the emigration through his narration, by his creation of the "story which I tell myself", the narrator of "Shenandoah" calls attention to his dual spectator status, both

as the child within the scene and as the mature poet looking on: "I must stand here, regardant at an angle, / I must lie there, quite helpless in my cradle, / As passive as a man who takes a haircut" (11).

Whereas *Genesis* holds out the promise of making the self by imaginatively remaking one's personal history and genealogy, "Shenandoah" denies such a strategy any real value. The narrator scoffs at the myth of the self-made man, yet he recognizes that the pervasiveness of such a belief confers a type of legitimacy upon it: he marvels at "how many minds believe a man / Creates his life *ex nihilo*, and laugh / At the far influence of deities, / and stars" (12). Mrs. Goldmark and Elsie Fish chime in with the popular version of this myth, quoting from and commenting upon the society pages in their search for an appropriate child's name. Elsie's analysis tends to contradict that of her son. She asks, quite sensibly, "Who would have believed we would all be as well as we are, ten years ago?" The self-made man appears to be a reality, as long as one does not insist on his being entirely self-made. Elsie can say such things, because her generation really does appear to have made its future "*ex nihilo*". Shenandoah and his generation, however, can point to no single element of their existence which they have forged for themselves.

In Mrs. Goldmark's society pages, as in the world of culture, the one who steps away from his physical environment possesses an automatic authority and stature. The mark of the self-made man is his ability to leave his surroundings and "go south in the winter." There is no proof that "Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Somerville" are the sort of people who take trips to Havana every year, but the mere mention of their trip implies that they consequently have access to a linked set of spectacular privileges, including Mrs. Goldmark's assertion that "one would never have colds". The Somervilles can get away for the season; they are therefore able to create their own personae and even control their physiology. Elsie sees a similar process of self-creation in her own

continuing social advancement. She is correct, if blindly optimistic. Shenandoah is unable to believe in this partial truth, which because it is partial he labels a deception. After the names Delmore ("What a pretty name, Mrs. Goldmark") and Kenneth (Schwartz's brother's name) are rejected, the narrator offers the opinion that:

Every particular must have a name,
Every uniqueness needs a special sound
In the Beginning is the word,
and in the End
Gabriel will call the blessed by their nicknames,
And summon up the damned by the sweet petnames
They called each other in adulterous beds (13)

When Shenandoah sermonizes that “In the Beginning is the word,” the particular word he has in mind is his own name. The name symbolizes the identity which the child must assume, largely against its will. The “name” determines the character of the child’s future actions: “Gabriel will call” it “in the End”. In other words, “In my beginning is my end.” Schwartz elaborates the opening lines of Eliot’s “East Coker,” but subverts them to suggest that the process of individuation is all-important.⁵ For Eliot, it is precisely the process of individuation which is least

Schwartz was noisy in his criticism of "East Coker." The references to the work in his letters of 1940 seem to mark a turning point in the young poet's rejection of Eliot. To Dwight MacDonald he wrote: "The last *Partisan Review* seemed one of the best of all time, even if "East Coca Cola" is a disgraceful piece of writing" (*Letters* 98). In a letter to Allen Tate, Schwartz narrates a scene of himself "arguing with [I.A.] Richards about Eliot's new poem, "East Coca Cola," and getting more and more annoyed because Richards would not admit that 'undisciplined squads of emotion' was an inept metaphor. After citing Confucius several times to add to the general daze, Richards informed me that I ought not to take lines in isolation, thus rendering me speechless" (99-100). "East Coker" was ripe to be abused in Schwartz's verse. Robert Phillips describes "Shenandoah" as having been written during Schwartz's "first academic year at Cambridge" (*Shenandoah* xii): in other words, 1935-36. According to Schwartz's letter of February 16, 1941, however, the play was "written last summer" (*Letters* 107). Even if an early version of "Shenandoah" had been written some years earlier, Schwartz obviously considered the play to be an all-new work. By May 1940, Schwartz had read "East Coker" (his letter to MacDonald is dated May 28th). In the summer, at the beginning of his first academic year at Cambridge as a faculty member (his job began in September, but he moved to Cambridge in February), Schwartz created "Shenandoah" as it now stands. I therefore feel justified in seeing these lines as a direct response to Eliot's *Quartet*. If one takes Phillips chronology as fact, one must then see these lines as an inorganic late addition or an example of clairvoyance (not, of course, an unprecedented situation in terms of Schwartz and Eliot).

important: "I am here / Or there, or elsewhere" (*Collected Poems* 197).

Undisturbed by the narrator's intrusion, Mrs. Goldmark continues reading her list of society-page names for the child, and incidentally underlines Shenandoah's allusions to "East Coker": "Elliott, Thomas, Maxwell, Harold...." From year to year and from season to season Mrs. Goldmark watches the society couples make their rounds, marks the progress of those with the gold: "I know their friends and where they go in winter and summer. For instance, the Talbot Brewsters, who are mentioned today: every year they go to Florida in January". The society crowd moves from north to south to north in an endless cycle, its overall design obvious to the eyes of a distant observer like Mrs. Goldmark. Her distance from that world is, of course, crucial to her perception of its unity and of the cyclical nature of its activity. The Talbot Brewsters, from the viewpoint of Mrs. Goldmark, are merely symbols of riches and mobility. They are too distant to be treated as actual human creatures. In "East Coker," the poet perceives a similar cycle in the life of the village, "Keeping time, / Keeping the rhythm in their dancing / As in their living in the living seasons" (197). One evening's festivities suggest an entire succession of village generations with their "Eating and drinking. Dung and death." As with Mrs. Goldmark and her society pages, however, distance is crucial to one's perceiving an eternal round in the present scene. Eliot stresses that your perceptions will be such only "If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close" (196).

The sort of necessary distance advocated by Eliot is also essential if one would make a self according to one's own desire. Before the child's name is chosen, Shenandoah denies the possibility of any act of self-creation. After the name is selected he remains a skeptic, but he does at least admit to dreaming of such things. In response to Elsie Fish's fateful decision, and in an attempt to soothe both himself and the crying infant, the distraught narrator recites some

encyclopedia facts concerning the variety of human naming practices. Through this recitation, he attempts to debate calmly the powerful role of the milieu versus the individual's power to create a self. The magnitude of the external forces shaping the child's personality is at first shown to be overwhelming, and the nature of those forces malign:

Primitive peoples, sparkling with intuition,
Often refuse to give the child a name,
Or call him "Filth," "Worthless," "Nothingness,"
In order to outwit the evil powers.
Sometimes a child is named by the event
Which happened near his birth: how wise that is -
This poor child by that rule would be named
"The First World War" (14)

The narrator approves the way society makes "most difficult / The change of names, flight from identity", but then reveals that his greatest desire is for just such a new beginning. In the narrator's final vision, however, such an act is far from being an irresponsible "flight". He stresses the immense responsibility involved in choosing a name and symbolically creating a self:

But let me now propose another use,
Custom, and rule: let each child choose his name
When he is old enough? Is this too great
An emphasis upon the private will?
Is not the problem very serious?

In "Shenandoah," the characters within the scene will often, in one outrageous vaudevillian outburst, recapitulate an idea which the narrator has previously taken many lines to enunciate. Jack Strauss, an employee of Shenandoah's father, sums up the narrator's reflections through his materialism, his crass social maneuvering, but also through his quiet emphasis on the importance of human uniqueness and individuality. "To me", he announces self-importantly, "Shenandoah is a beautiful name, original and strange." The ugly concerns of the world, however, undercut and cheapen his pronouncement: "I will give fifty dollars to be this boy's godfather."

Two years before the publication of “Shenandoah,” in the review “Mr. Eliot and Old Possum,” Schwartz similarly connected the procedure of naming a creature with the antagonistic roles of the world and of the individual in creating a personality:

When Mr. Eliot calls himself Old Possum in this new and unexpected book, he is not only displaying himself in the hitherto unknown part of a gifted friend of children; he is also thinking of the names he has been called and reminding us of that private, peculiar, dignified, ‘deep and inscrutable name’ of himself, which he ‘himself knows and will never confess.’ We do not know that name, but we can be sure that Old Possum is not correct. (737-8)

Eliot’s public personae, the “names he has been called”, are many and various, but none of those labels approaches the private man. This is, of course, a truism. What is interesting is the assertion that Eliot “himself knows” his private name. Schwartz would never have made the same assertion concerning himself. Eliot has created his own identity, doing so in a sort of cocoon which minimizes the impact of all outside forces, which resists the intrusion of all alien names. It is a remarkably strong statement, and reveals that Shenandoah’s suggestion of “another use, / Custom, and rule” was not a fanciful dream. Custom had indeed been initiated and the rule had already been set by T.S. Eliot. For Schwartz, Eliot was an immediate and actual example of a man who had ‘chosen his own name’. The narrator of “Shenandoah” is, however, less sure than the reviewer of *Old Possum* that such a choice can in reality be made by any man: each of the last three sentences of his monologue ends in a question mark.

Schwartz generally accepts Eliot’s prescription of necessary distance, both for creating a self and for correctly perceiving universal patterns behind life’s many accidents. Yet, as I have remarked in the discussion of Hershey’s quibble with the Freudian ghost (*Genesis* 27), Schwartz rejects such a strategy as an absolute condition of art. He insists on the importance of envisioning the narrative details, even as he questions the importance of those details in and of

themselves. In “Shenandoah” the poet is blatant in dismissing the particulars of his story in favour of its universal implications. The auditor is to “Gaze briefly at the period quality” (4), to absorb “Certain clear generals of time and place”. The narrator orders us to “*Look* at the cut glass bowls on the buffet” [my italics]. Their mere presence as detail is insufficient to the poet’s purpose: they must be examined not as isolated stage furnishings, but as “the works of art of these rising Jews”, works which illustrate how the “shadow of Israel and the shadow of Europe / Darken their minds and hearts in the new world.” The narrator makes a pretense of indifference to the rest of the stage setting, asking us to:

Explain the other furniture yourself,
But lift your mind from the local color,
For the particular as particular
Is not itself, as a house is not its front,
And as a man is not his flesh:
Come now:
See the particular as universal (4)

In Shenandoah’s view, one needs first to gaze at the “period quality” in order to correctly perceive life as it is actually lived by human beings. One then must look, however, beyond the artifacts presented onstage and search for “Significance like sunlight”. The moment of the naming of a child is not placed in its perspective as one event among millions which are similar. Instead, the event is exaggerated in importance until the narrator seems almost justified in his ludicrous announcement that “This was the greatest day of my life! / I was eight days of age” (3).

Although his technique is similar to the mock-heroic strategy of absurdly magnifying small details or events to emphasize their smallness, Schwartz is doing something fundamentally different than writing a mock-epic. The young narrator is advocating a strategy toward the contemplation of experience quite similar to that offered in “Burnt Norton”: “Only through time time is conquered” (*Collected Poems* 192). Schwartz is not content to let the symbolic content of

this one event, the naming of the child, remain latent: his narrator takes the event so seriously that his auditors have no choice but to do the same. For Eliot, the timeless may only be approached by the action of the poet's memory on significant temporal moments: "only in time can the moment in the rose-garden, / The moment in the arbour where the rain beat, / The moment in the draughty church at smokefall / Be remembered" (192), although the significance of these moments is precisely that they lead us, in a manner that can never be properly expressed, beyond the constraints of time. Schwartz is following Eliot's lead, although the two techniques could hardly differ more one from the other.

Eliot's 'moments' are private memories which can only be recalled from a vantage within one particular consciousness, yet those time-bound memories describe the threshold of a timeless reality. Eliot refuses to individuate these moments. When they are viewed from outside his own consciousness they are commonplace happenings, but from within they are keys to the ordering of experience. The reader is challenged to find or create his or her own key moments, and the very obliquity of Eliot's examples therefore serves his didactic purpose.

The universal quality of Shenandoah's "moment" is, by contrast, hysterically insisted upon. The speech of the play's characters varies from that of low comedy to that of Biblical parable. When stalemate results in the Jewish household, the Gentile world is called in to mediate. The camera at one point pans wide to reveal the whereabouts of the child's future literary heroes. At the end of the play, the ancient rite of the *bris* makes the child a participant in his people's whole history, including their latest "wound", "The rise of Hitler" (30). Everyone is on stage with the poor child. In the earlier poem "The Ballad of the Children of the Czar," Schwartz charges history with employing "Child labor! The child must carry / His fathers on his back" (22). In "The Ballad of the Children," "Child labor" is portrayed as a crime which provokes the poet's

hatred for “an abstract thing.” In “Shenandoah,” the child’s unwilling and wounding participation in history is both a source of terror and of exhilaration. Eliot strips away much of the actual content from his crucial moments, abstracting from the symbolic meaning. Schwartz adds content to a very commonplace event, and piles meaning upon the child’s head. Eliot’s moments are personal symbols almost empty of public reference, whereas Schwartz’s moment is a symbol overflowing with public reference. Eliot writes that “We had the experience but missed the meaning” (208), and the project of his poetry is to make an “approach to the meaning” through abstraction. Schwartz ensures that the meaning not be missed by investing the experience with more meaning than it will hold. The goals are the same, but the techniques of Schwartz and Eliot are antagonistic.

When an author insists on the universal interest of a private drama, the modern impulse is to treat such insistence as a technique of mock-heroic irony. Such an approach leaves the author open to the criticism of Elisa New, who tries to construe at least one of Shenandoah’s speeches as a parodic inflation of the author’s overweening egotism, but concludes that Schwartz is uncomfortably and in all seriousness placing himself in the company of literary giants. She writes: “proper cultural context is supplied in a tone we would just as soon take for vaudeville but fear we must take straight” (250). To the bewildered critic, the opposite of irony is pretension, a straight-faced self-aggrandizement: “The tone is too much the greenhorn’s at having mastered the classics as others master the subway; the pride too much that of the recently arrived”. One can agree with New that the speech in question is tiresome and dramatically awkward while defending its author from the larger criticism. The critic complains that the poet’s embarrassing reflections are presented in language “pushed beyond decency, but not quite far enough for irony”. Schwartz must indeed be convicted of such a charge: the play is designed to operate in exactly that fashion.

The poet takes his young narrator's wishes seriously, without irony, and through *Shenandoah* the author presents himself very nakedly, indeed. The narrator's views control all access to the story being told, denying the possibility of distance or non-involvement. The young narrator not only desires a very serious hearing, but vigorously campaigns with his auditors for that hearing. He presses them to see universal significance in a very personal story. When *Shenandoah* calls his parents' marriage "a stupid endless mistake", one is to accept that judgment. The narrator takes the side of his uncle Nathan against the other family members, although Nathan's pig-headed resistance to the name 'Shenandoah,' his divisive insistence in the midst of a celebration, could easily be viewed in a less positive light. It is the narrator's warmth toward his uncle which ensures the audience's sympathy for Nathan's actions: "Yet what a friend he is to me, how close / I feel to him!" (18). All of the characters excepting Nathan, it is immediately understood, fail to meet *Shenandoah*'s exacting standard of wisdom and foresight.

Once again, as in *Genesis*, one may observe Schwartz wrestling with a dual aesthetic inheritance, both strands of which may be traced to the example of Eliot. On the one hand, the author "must bring in his ideas and values openly and clearly" (*Genesis* viii), obviously without ironic distance, risking being either didactic or foolish. The title character of Schwartz's "Dr. Bergen's Belief" offers such an aesthetic: "Do not exclude the least childlike pun, the sudden nonsense syllable, the comment which will surely be nursed in resentment... Permit yourself to be ridiculous as a man weeping... Adopt with voluntary act the naive, the ingenuous, the stupid. Accept harm" (*Shenandoah* 105). On the other hand, worthwhile observation seems to require the distance from the accidents of living which exile typifies. In "*Shenandoah*", the narrator endorses this second aesthetic ("lift your mind from the local color"), an aesthetic which Schwartz's dramatic technique simultaneously rejects.

The poet's two warring aesthetics come together uneasily but instructively in the above-mentioned passage, the revealing speech for which New takes Schwartz justly to task. Shenandoah speculates on the whereabouts of his literary heroes during the most crucial moment of his young life. The first three "great men... / Who will obsess this child when he can read" (20) are Joyce, Eliot, and Pound. They are followed by Rilke, Yeats, Kafka, Perse, and Mann. All are grouped together as exiles, although Rilke and Yeats qualify for the title merely because they are living in "solitude" "In empty castles" and "on old lords' estates / ... amid the loss, / Daily and desperate, of love, of friends, / Of every thought with which his age began" (20-21). As for Eliot and Kafka, the mere fact of their doing office work seems enough to make them exiles. Pound is pictured as discovering a hidden order which only expatriates have access to, "culture in chaos all through time".

All of Shenandoah's heroes are shown making roughly the same discovery: "All over Europe these exiles find in art / What exile is: art becomes exile too, / A secret and a code studied in secret, / Declaring the agony of modern life". This biographical monologue is Schwartz's most candid statement of the meaning of exile to his thought and work. Exile is an image of the artist's place in modern life. The artist discovers and participates in a unity of culture throughout time, but this participation comes at the price of disconnection from one's own time and surroundings. Ironically, this immersion in a distant and invisible order is also the only effective way to understand one's own time, to declare "the agony of modern life". It is these premises that Schwartz will come to question in the following years. Does one need to stand outside of modern life, or for that matter, outside of lived actuality, in order to describe it? Shenandoah prophesies that "This child will learn of life from these great men, / He will participate in their solitude". In the ensuing years, Schwartz will wish to learn a different type of participation, a greater

participation in the minutiae of living and an immersion in the community of men in the here-and-now. He will turn Joyce from an exemplar of exile into a very different kind of role-model. Eliot will come more and more to represent all that Schwartz found lacking in his early idealism. In *Genesis* and “Shenandoah,” large-scale works of the early forties, the poet is just beginning to reject Eliot’s tutelage. In the next chapter I will step back in time to the middle and late 1930s when Schwartz was producing lyric poetry and plays under the strong influence of his earliest mentor.

Chapter III

“...a little unnervous peace”:

Desiring Certainty, Confronting the Consequences

When one turns from *Genesis* and “Shenandoah” to the early lyric poetry of Delmore Schwartz, exile appears to be a less important theme. That impression, however, is dispelled by a closer examination of the poetry. In these shorter works, exile is treated not as a social phenomenon, but as a set of attitudes toward actuality. In “Our Poor Dead King,” Schwartz’s unpublished critical piece on *Finnegans Wake*, Schwartz differentiates between *cultural* exile and *personal* exile. Although the concept is left largely undeveloped, Schwartz is drawing a distinction between the man who leaves his home in actuality, such as Joyce living away from Ireland, and the man, especially the modern artist, who finds himself isolated from the surrounding culture, unable to either approve of that culture or make use of its potential artistic resources. Schwartz’s apparent model for the latter sort of exile is Thomas Mann, although as we shall see, Schwartz’s true model for this artistic type was himself. He portrays Joyce as a personal exile who is, nevertheless, culturally acquisitive (it is probable that this critical piece was the work of an older Schwartz, since this cultural acquisitiveness is so vigorously applauded). Schwartz argues that by conflating the two forms of exile one mistakes Joyce’s aims. Joyce is unquestionably a personal exile, but commentators who consequently label him a cultural exile are doing violence to his intentions: “Joyce, far from being a cultural exile, [can make] use of local cultural resources” (Schwartz’s emphasis and emendation). The artist-exile can live apart from his milieu and still make use of the resources of that abandoned society, or the artist can live in the midst of

a society yet turn his back on its values and cultural resources. Raymond Williams borrows a term from the Soviets and calls this type of artist an “internal emigré” (90). This sort of “self-exile lives and moves about in the society into which he was born, but rejects its purposes and despises its values, because of alternative principles to which his whole personal reality is committed. Unlike the rebel, he does not fight for these principles, but watches and waits.” In his early work, Schwartz clearly sees himself as belonging to this category, a cultural exile who never moves more than a few hours’ drive from New York City. Even Schwartz’s self-imposed exile to farm country in the fifties supports rather than contradicts such an observation: his remote Edenic retreat was located in New Jersey.

In Schwartz’s early poetry, little attention is given to the case of the personal exile. The lyrics are rooted in intimate experience and Schwartz’s readings in literature, and therefore, as one might expect, they focus on what Schwartz saw as his own private dilemma, that of the stay-at-home cultural exile. Williams writes that the internal emigré’s “personal dissent has remained fixed at an individual stage” and therefore, “it is difficult for him to form adequate relationships, even with other dissenters” (90). Schwartz, in “A Young Child and His Pregnant Mother,” describes a stage of childhood in which nothing in nature seems of human scale, all is terrible and sublime: “At four years Nature is mountainous, / Mysterious, and submarine” (*Selected Poems* 43). The poet never escapes that phase. Living in New York City locates the child in the midst of the world’s most sophisticated system of human social interaction, but his feeling of alienation refuses to be reasoned away: “Even / A city child knows this, hearing the subway’s / Rumor underground.” The child can form no attachment to his soon-to-be brother. The unborn baby, to the contrary, teaches him “of his exile from his mother” (44) by showing the child that the mother is a separate individual, now “much too fat and absentminded, / Gazing past

his face, careless of him" (43). Self-consciousness, the power to "dissent" from the external world, the one power which elevates man above animal, is exactly that which divides self from other. The child learns to measure distance with the words "I am I". The self needs to define itself against another self. It must continue to discriminate in order to maintain its sense of the infinite, yet at the same time it has that need in common with every other human consciousness.

The self finds its own identity by denying its identity with the other, by finding people and nature "Mysterious, and submarine". The young Schwartz likewise believed that one could only create significance in experience by standing apart from that experience. All actuality is to be treated as Other. The natural condition of the creative artist was therefore that of the exile. Even in his confident early years Schwartz had some grave difficulties with the consequences of such a faith. Schwartz does not doubt that poetry should try to approximate the actual. The crucial question is how one can best record that actuality, from within as a confused participant, identifying with nature and with the other, or from without as a detached observer, discriminating between the meaningful and the meaninglessly chaotic. Humans, of course, assume both stances in every moment of living. We live through time and in the world and can never utterly ignore the wealth of facts which the world thrusts on our attention. Human consciousness can conceive many unrealized possibilities, but events realize themselves only in one form and present themselves to our senses as fixed fact. Our consciousness nevertheless insulates us from those fixed realities. We entertain unreal potentialities which may themselves become a component of our actual experience, as much as any external reality. Discrete events reveal connections or have connections imposed upon them by the action of consciousness. The poet, at least the type of poet Schwartz wished to be, is able to reveal unity where chaos existed before. When one's attention, however, is lost in the wealth of moment-by-moment detail which makes up the outside

world, that power is diminished or neglected. Whether he is literally in a state of exile (the personal exile of a Joyce or Eliot), or whether he is merely described as such in a metaphorical sense (the cultural exile), the exile is in some degree freed from the intimidating weight of actuality. He is prevented from identifying too closely with and being swallowed up by experienced reality. He is separated from a significant portion of his life experience: to reflect on and recover that experience, he must employ his faculties of memory and imagination. In reaching for the physical realities which compose his experience, this type of artist is paradoxically led toward metaphysics. Such a belief does not necessarily lead one to neglect the details which compose the physical world. Schwartz's exile, on the contrary, is a keen observer. His attitude, however, does assume that actuality is in need of ordering, and that it is more desirable to make sense of chaos than simply to live in confusion in the world. It is difficult to argue with that preference: ordering experience is what our mind does on our behalf no matter where we stand on any philosophical continuum. That being said, to what degree does actuality need to be shaped and ordered by a remote observer, and to what degree is that remoteness, that exile from actuality, an obstacle to observation and artistic communication? For the young Schwartz, the artist's primary task was to draw latent significance from material reality or, failing that, to somehow impose from without a meaningful metaphysical order on the seeming chaos of the physical world.

An early "Song" describes the poet's "timid darling" at the seaside with her "back turned on the boardwalk, deaf to that / Gay carousel's emotion, whereon the children ride" (Valenti 212). Her inclination to "worry on a fate, / Dark-blue, like the sky, and inexhaustible" turns out to be a shared quality with the narrator, a quality attributed to their both being Jewish: "We are of Zion: this exile is innate". The direct correlation between exile and Judaism is one which Schwartz

almost never draws in his lyric poetry. That theme belongs almost exclusively to the fiction, and to certain prose sections of *Genesis*. Exile, in this early work, is a state of deafness to experience. The couple may move among the vacationers, but they might as well be miles away from the scene. This “Song” bears comparison with the later and more intricate lyric “Far Rockaway”. The scene is once again the seaside resort boardwalk, and once again the narrator is a “Nervous conscience amid the concessions” (*Selected Poems* 34). Here, however, exile is not the inherited lot of one born Jewish, but is instead the lot of one who sets himself up as an artist and thinker. Although the poet’s state of separation from the seaside crowd is not racially determined in “Far Rockaway,” it is every bit as “innate” as the exile of the lovers in “Song”. “Far Rockaway”’s “novelist tangential on the boardwalk” is far from deaf to the celebration around him. He is in sympathy with the “Fun, foam, and freedom” below. Nevertheless, he cannot fully connect with that world of heedless experience where “Eternities of sea and sky shadow no pleasure” and “Time unheard moves”. It is the artist’s job to shadow that pleasure. He may stand close by and pay the most respectful attention to the scene, but he must nevertheless remain distant, overhead and self-aware. Schwartz plays off the words “concessions” and “conscience” in a punning fashion which will become one of the stylistic hallmarks of his later verse. For the sake of their health, mental and physical, the vacationers suspend their usual awareness of sophisticated social constraints (“A socialist health takes hold of the adult”) and of the “Eternities of sea and sky”. Concessions are the order of the day: the soul *concedes* its power to the body, potentiality *concedes* temporary victory to actuality. The artist, however, “Seeks his cure of souls” (“Seeks”, not “Finds”) in honest self-examination, and that honesty requires that nothing be conceded to seductive actuality by the active *conscience*. The novelist can tangentially approach the holidayers and he can sympathize with their enjoyment of one afternoon’s unadulterated

experience away from “the rigors of the weekday”. He cannot descend, though, from his physical exile on the boardwalk, and he cannot ascend from his interior exile in the torments of a questioning conscience. He provides the consciousness which the scene is lacking, and thus his non-participation becomes a positive value. In Raymond Williams’s terms, therefore, he is not a “true exile”: he is “living out his personal values” in the manner of the “rebel”. The artist’s proximity has, however, the appearance of a haunting. The artist is not of the crowd and does not share in the “socialistic health” of those below. Yet if he is separated from society he is nevertheless nearby, looking on and fulfilling an essential role. His nervous sense of alternate possibilities is a necessary complement to the heedless and disorderly actuality in which the rest of his fellows are happy to lose themselves.

As a graduate student at Harvard, Schwartz studied Cosmologies under Alfred North Whitehead. One of Schwartz’s letters contains a versified record of a stilted conversation between Whitehead and Schwartz in which the student corrects the professor and reveals himself to be a devoted Platonic idealist:

“[Schwartz]...that which is in time moves,
That which moves moves to an end
But that which moves to an end is imperfect.
Therefore the timeless is more perfect,
Therefore Plato preferred it...”
“[Whitehead] But I can’t think of a thing in time
But that it moves.” “[Schwartz] That’s what I mean:
If in time, it moves: but then it is imperfect.” (*Letters* 26)

One should keep in mind Maurice Zolotow’s warnings about other of Schwartz’s early letters: the dialogue might be partially or wholly fictional. The portrait of Schwartz as eager Platonist is, nevertheless, confirmed in his poems. Whitehead, whom Schwartz described as “the most charming, most delightful of all old men, but the most ignorant of philosophers” (27), represented

the enemy for the young Schwartz in philosophical terms. Schwartz was in agreement with Whitehead up to a point: the epigraph to Schwartz's poem "The Heavy Bear Who Goes With Me" ("the withness of the body") is a quotation from his sometime mentor, which suggests the debt of poet to philosopher. In many ways, however, Whitehead's ideas comprise the antithesis to the young poet's beliefs. There is a tremendous divide, yet over time, a rather close correspondence, between the philosophies of these two men. Whitehead's position embraces both the idealism of the young Schwartz and the respect for movement and process in Schwartz's later poetry. In its mature form, in fact, Schwartz's thought is quite reminiscent of Whitehead's philosophy. In later years Schwartz appropriated Whitehead's opposed terms of 'order' and 'actuality' and used them in his evaluations of Eliot.

Whitehead, writing of the Greeks, claims that "according to this tradition in so far as we abstract from our experience the brute particularity of happening here and now, amid this environment, there remains a residue with self-identities, differences, and essential interconnections, which seems to have no reference to the passage of events" (*Modes of Thought* 67-68). Whitehead calls this "the notion that has haunted philosophy" and argues that such a "notion of a sphere of human knowledge characterized by unalloyed truth is the pet delusion of dogmatists, whether they be theologians, scientists, or humanistic scholars" (68-69). He does not, however, dismiss this concept out of hand. Whitehead looks beyond the scholastic debates over philosophical system and finds more widely that "perfection is a notion which haunts human imagination". "It cannot be ignored": it is a common human desire. Where the philosopher takes the idealist to task, he does so for the idealist's contention that Platonic forms possess an "absolute reality,' which is devoid of implications beyond itself." For Whitehead:

The realm of forms is the realm of potentiality, and the very notion of

potentiality has an external meaning. It refers to life and motion. It refers to inclusion and exclusion. It refers to hope, fear, and intention. Phrasing this statement more generally, - it refers to appetite. It refers to the development of actuality, which realizes form and is yet more than form. It refers to past, present, and future. (69)

For Whitehead, perfection is the ultimate form of potentiality; it is the unattainable direction toward which, despite its illusory character, the actual must move. And movement and becoming are the essence of actuality. The relationship of actuality and potentiality is reciprocal, like that of the novelist and the vacationers in "Far Rockaway": "actuality is the exemplification of potentiality, and potentiality is the characterization of actuality, either in fact or in concept" (70).

Returning now to the reported conversation between Schwartz and his professor, one can see quite clearly the deep divide between poet and philosopher. Schwartz appears to be one of the dogmatists whom Whitehead is criticizing. The world of absolute truth and timeless forms is a reality for the young Schwartz. The rules of this temporal world cannot be the only laws of existence. Whitehead's "appetition" is insufficient: from where do we inherit our concepts of order and perfection if there is no absolute form of truth? In *Humboldt's Gift*, his fictional portrait of Schwartz, Saul Bellow shows how much of Schwartz's philosophy he has made his own when he has his narrator Charlie Citrine remark that "I was drawn also to philosophical idealists because I was perfectly sure that *this* could not be *it*" (89). Schwartz (and Bellow, as distinct from his fictional alter-ego) is never so perfectly sure of anything, but he does share this intuition about an ultimate realm of ideas.¹ Whitehead, by contrast, sees the idealist's *it* as one of

¹ Bellow's Citrine is not really "perfectly sure": he often criticizes Humboldt for his love affair with abstractions, words, and ideas, "the capitalization of... nouns" (6). In Citrine's opinion, "Humboldt had too long a list" of "sacred words", a list which Citrine himself has tried to keep to a minimum. These capitalized nouns included "Poetry, Beauty, Love, *Waste Land*, Alienation, Politics, History, the Unconscious. And, of course, Manic and Depressive, always capitalized." [my italics]. Citrine preaches a balance between the articulation of ideals and one's participation in actuality, a balance which Humboldt failed to or never wished to maintain (Citrine often loses his balance as well: criticism of Humboldt, with

the two components of *this* existence. The ideal is the direction of our aspirations in the actual world. Perfection is an orientation of processes of becoming. For Schwartz, perfection is not only an orientation of process in this world but also an ultimate reality somewhere outside and beneath the surface of our actual existence. In the reported classroom encounter Whitehead tells Schwartz that he cannot imagine a thing in time that does not move. Schwartz agrees, but finds Whitehead's emphasis on motion and becoming ultimately short-sighted and irrelevant. In the name of Plato, Schwartz posits the existence of an order of immobile perfection outside of time, a realm of universal knowledge.

In Schwartz's poem "Concerning the Synthetic Unity of Apperception," materialism and metaphysics meet face to face in the form of an anecdote from the poet's adolescence. An uncle, whose philosophy is firmly rooted in the enjoyment of things sensual and physical, tries to focus the young narrator's mind on tangible realities such as beer and siestas. In the uncle's version of reality, the "big brown bear" (*Collected Poems* 40) is a warm and welcoming figure from the nursery. This contrasts strongly with the image of the bear in Schwartz's "The Heavy Bear Who Goes With Me": in the latter poem, the bear, representing "the withness of the body", is a menacing, betraying double who, in mediating between spirit and matter, turns all of the spirit's most lofty efforts into a low and shameful "scrimmage of appetite" (75). The bear is, in both poems, a metaphor for the primacy of physicality in all human perception and action. For the uncle, physicality is not menacing. Instead, abstraction and its attendant melancholy are enemies

whom he strongly identifies, equals self-criticism). When one abstracts from reality to make metaphor, one can lose one's grasp of the present moment and thereby become exposed to very real danger. At one point (while in the company of the hoodlum Cantabile) Citrine connects this imbalance in Humboldt's character with Humboldt's Eliot obsession: "The Thunderbird, puffing fumes, was beginning to block traffic. Because I had been immersed for much of the day in Humboldt's life and because Humboldt had in turn been immersed in T.S. Eliot, I thought as he might have done of the violet hour when the human engine waits like a taxi throbbing, waiting. But I cut this out. The moment required my full presence" (253).

of life: for the uncle life is equivalent to sensual pleasure. His image of the spirit is pale and sickly. The spirit lacks any vitality, ascending in death “weak as smoke”. Schwartz skillfully uses rhythmic contrasts to reinforce this opposition of weakness and strength. Short, aggressive rhythmic units of imperative diction suggest the imposing solidity of things physical: “Trash, trash!”; “Eat oranges! Pish tosh! The car attends”; “No beer and no siestas”. The spirit is portrayed in long flowing lines of formalized diction which lack the nervous rhythmic drive of the lines quoted above: “The spirit’s smoke and weak as smoke ascends”; “Sit in the sun and not among the dead”.

The boy is ordered to seize the day and not anticipate death by meditating long upon it: “The car attends”. This poem is full of faint and not-so-faint literary echoes: it is not fanciful to trace the “car” to Yeats’s “Who Goes With Fergus?,” in which “Fergus rules the brazen cars” (*Collected Poems* 49). In Yeats’s verse, as in Schwartz’s, a young man is being urged to “brood on hopes and fears no more. / And no more turn aside and brood / Upon love’s bitter mystery”. He, like Schwartz’s narrator, is commanded to turn his attention to the wonders of the external world, “the white breast of the dim sea / And all dishevelled wandering stars”. Schwartz’s reference to the uncle as “the king my uncle” is, then, perhaps a nod to Yeats’s Fergus as well as to *The Tempest*. For the uncle, death is a chauffeured car which will wait until one has done with living, and therefore there is no need to think overmuch about such ultimately unimaginable things.

“Eat oranges!”, commands the uncle, turning Prufrock’s “Do I dare eat a peach?” (17) into a rough imperative. The uncle also echoes the sentiment of Louis MacNeice’s “I peel and portion / A tangerine and spit the pips and feel / The drunkenness of things being various” (*Collected*

Poems 30), but does so without MacNeice's minute self-awareness.² For both MacNeice and Eliot there is a dangerous pleasure in abandoning oneself to the sensual life. The independence of spirit and the courage which is required for one to live in the moment is so great that it is very easy to fail in the attempt and look foolish. When one 'dares' to do so, experience may yet prove to be vain and elusive ("would it have been worth it, after all, / would it have been worth while") and its significance ultimately impossible to communicate to others ("It is impossible to say just what I mean!"). The world is both "more spiteful and gay than one supposes" when one focuses exclusively on sensuous actuality. Prufrock does not think that the intensity of the living moment is his to enjoy, and the mermaids, creatures of imagination, will not sing to him. We are wakened and drowned by "human voices": for the dreamer, actuality lacks the visionary intensity which the imagination can provide. Prufrock is, in addition, incapable of conjuring such intensity out of actual experience in the manner of a purely sensual man like Schwartz's uncle. For MacNeice, moments of intense living in the present moment are as surprising as the acts of imagination. Such moments are equivalent to drunkenness, a state which one may presently enjoy and cherish but which one would not dare to maintain for too long. The narrator's uncle in Schwartz's poem, by contrast, is a man who lacks the self-consciousness of Prufrock or MacNeice's poetic persona. He is a man who not only dares eat an orange, but makes of that act an imperative, one which dispels doubt and banishes any serious metaphysical inquiry. The spirit is pictured as ascending "weak as smoke". To the poet's uncle, the spirit is an intangible not worth our consideration and

² There is one bit of strong evidence to support this possible connection with MacNeice, a connection which at first appears mere speculation. One of Schwartz's first published review pieces was a 1936 review of *Poems* by MacNeice. Although "Snow" is itself not quoted in the piece, Schwartz does applaud MacNeice for being "able to step from judgment and wide reference to the most concrete of impressions" ("Adroitly Naive" 116), a technique which the lines from "Snow" perfectly exemplify, and a technique which Schwartz is attempting here to make his own. "Concerning the Synthetic Unity of Apperception" was published soon after, in 1938.

its longing to ascend is not as strong as our desire to remain here and live in the moment. Even the dead do not enjoy the afterlife as they enjoyed this life. Ghosts regret losing sensual pleasures, and philosophy does not hasten or hold off death. The budding poet, however, articulates (in failing to articulate) the longings of a spirit which finds itself alienated in the world's confusing realities. The boy says, "I'm lonely. What is love?": despite his uncle's counsel, he is compelled to brood "Upon love's bitter mystery". While the uncle and his dissatisfied ghosts who "do not like it there" may favour this life in all its sensuous actuality, many of those living in this world are equally unhappy and experience strong longings for a state of closer union with the other, a frustrated, half-understood aspiration to love.

The narrator is unhappy at being exiled from a desired state of love and unity. No matter how the uncle tries to lull the narrator to sleep with his exhortations, the spirit's vague aspiration cannot be talked away. The boy's feeling of exile from a desired state of communion with the other is perhaps shared by even the dead themselves (as it is in *Genesis*): no one is where he or she aspires to be, although the uncle himself might claim such satisfaction. The child's question drives the uncle "quite insane". Simply by asking such an unanswerable question the narrator reduces the materialist position to a ruin. In Whitehead's words:

There are experiences of ideals - of ideals entertained, of ideals aimed at, of ideals achieved, of ideals defaced. This is the experience of the deity in the universe. The intertwining of success and failure in respect to this final experience is essential. We thereby experience a relationship to a universe other than ourselves. We are essentially measuring ourselves in respect to what we are not. A solipsistic experience cannot succeed or fail, for it would be all that exists. There would be no standard of comparison. Human experience explicitly relates itself to an external standard. The universe is thus understood as including a source of ideals.
(103)

The uncle may not understand this metaphysical imperative, but he does understand in a very

immediate way that the boy's lonely dissatisfaction shatters his materialist, sensual, and tranquilized system of belief. Spiritual aspiration toward unrealized potentialities is as much a reality to the child as "silky water" or "beer".

"Concerning the Synthetic Unity of Apperception" is the poet's refutation of an antagonistic philosophy (a philosophy which makes a system out of not philosophizing at all). Schwartz's "Father and Son" is likewise a dialogue between age and youth, but here the elder's advice is generally consonant with Schwartz's belief. Both trust in the existence of some external order, an order which can give significance to chaotic experience. The son's difficulties with that belief, however, reflect Schwartz's undeniable difficulties with his faith. Although the father's character is not an obvious portrait or parody, the father's ideas derive from those of Eliot. The initial description of the father suggests both Eliot as 'literary dictator' (to borrow Schwartz's own later description) and Eliot as 'Old Possum' (secretive and elusive): "Father, you're not Polonius, you're reticent, / But sure" (*Selected Poems* 29). The father claims that his son's unnamed fear is really fear of the passage of time. Because he lives with and within its "slow drip", the son is in fact implicated in time, perhaps even guilty of time. Time is compared to melting ice and smoke "In February's glittering sunny day". It is an image which would suggest the "Midwinter spring" of "Little Gidding," its "pentecostal fire / In the dark time of the year", a moment where time stops and "Between melting and freezing / The soul's sap quivers" (*Collected Poems* 214). Schwartz's poem *would* suggest "Little Gidding," but "Father and Son" in fact predates the last of the *Four Quartets* by some four years. Schwartz once again demonstrates an uncanny ability to anticipate Eliot's every move, including in this case his mentor's use of specific imagery.³ In both

³ The editors of Schwartz's *Selected Essays* note that when Schwartz produced "The Literary Dictatorship of T.S. Eliot" the critic "did not know that Eliot had recently lectured on Milton to the British Academy and had publicly revised, if not reversed, his earlier attitude toward Milton" (n312). Thus in that lecture "Schwartz was, in effect, predicting just such a revision."

Eliot's poem and Schwartz's verses, time is equated with death. Eliot's rhetoric is less heated: he keeps a double focus on "budding" and "fading", both parts of "the scheme of generation". Both poets, however, promise a solution, a way to "stop / Time as it dribbles from you", a knowledge of "the intersection of the timeless moment".

The son is confused by this new interpretation of time as death. Until now, the son has learned, and experience has confirmed for him, that "time was full of promises, / Even as now, the emotion of going away". The father denies that one can have a future substantially untrammelled by the present. Future and present are both moments of time which assume their significance only as part of a comprehended past. As Eliot urges in the opening of "Burnt Norton":

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present. (189)

Actuality (the "eternally present") needs potentiality ("What might have been") to redeem it, to invest with meaning the otherwise empty chaos of a multitude of realized facts.

The son, interestingly, does not criticize his father's wisdom from the traditional standpoint of young rebellion. Father's advice may appear as tired cynicism to the youthful optimist, but that is not the son's line of attack. The son does not call his father a sellout or liar, but protests instead that "the sentiment you give to me" is "premature, not to be given, learned alone / When experience shrinks upon the chilling bone" (30). The validity or the worthlessness of the father's knowledge is secondary: father's opinions may even be accepted as probable truth. The son

argues along other lines, contending that it is the place of youth to “be sudden now and rash in joy”, to participate in the actual, to move with the passage of time and not to stand apart from that experience. It is the place of age to find wisdom in detachment.

The father allows one possibility of dissent, a possibility which points the way directly toward Schwartz’s late stories and poems. He admits that “If time flowed from your will and were a feast / I would be wrong to question your zest”. I will argue in the following chapter, taking the image of the feast as a cue, that 1948’s “The World Is A Wedding” is an attempt to harmonize this dissenting voice with Schwartz’s early ideas. For now, however, the father is able to dismiss such a protest out of hand. Before he reveals how time may be stopped, the father describes some of the false efforts that men make to evade “melting time”. He predicts that the son, like nearly every other human being, will attempt to “flee the guilt of time”.⁴ The son will probably not attempt the difficult task of making an escape from his society or from his milieu, but will try, rather, to merge with the rest of humanity, or more precisely, to submerge himself in his surroundings. Those who try to escape in this manner seem self-contained, “one number among masses”, but that self-sufficiency is illusory. The escapee is both “Separate from actor and act, a member / Of public opinion, never involved” (30-31). This type of man is “afraid to be alone, / Each with his own death in the lonely room”. Such fear is disguised by the “specious splendor” of reverie. It is masked by what the father ridicules as specious varieties of pain, pangs of hunger or the local pain which a dentist can eliminate. Schwartz’s analysis is weak at this point: he falls back on satire to disguise a possibly vicious strand in his own belief. It is precisely this type of callousness to the lesser pains of human experience which the mature poet will attempt to renounce in turning away from Eliot. Mortality is viewed by the young poet (speaking as the

⁴ McDougall feels that Schwartz reflects here “the subdued, ironic tone of Eliot’s musings over human vanity and delusion” (48). Schwartz’s lines “suggest the Eliot of ‘Animula’”.

experienced father) as the only source of true pain or guilt. In contrast to specious splendor and specious pain, the father labels mortality "the actual pain". Schwartz meant this adjective to mean more than "authentic": mortality is very much "the *actual* pain", 'the pain of actuality' when the actual is stripped of any imaginative and redeeming order.⁵

The father's remedy for "Guilt, guilt of time, nameless guilt" is to grasp one's fear, to "Stand in mastery, / Keeping time in you, its terrifying mystery." With this burst of proud rhetoric, the father loses most of his supposed "reticence", looking like a nineteenth-century Romantic, very "sure" of himself, indeed. What follows, however, is less spectacular. He counsels:

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. (31)

"Father, you're not Polonius", says the son, yet this sober advice might well have come from Polonius; the one crucial exception is the father's remark about being "always in debt": "This above all, to thine own self be true / And it must follow as the night the day / Thou canst not then be false to any man" (*Hamlet* I.iii). The father cautions:

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! (32)

⁵ This, too, recalls "Animula," but what I call an imaginative order is for Eliot precisely what is most real. To welcome "warm reality" (*Collected Poems* 113) one must accept death and submit to God's wisdom and care. Any action which defers such acceptance only increases "The pain of living". One "confounds the actual and the fanciful" by mistaking "the drug of dreams" for spiritual aspiration: Eliot's 'actuality' includes faith in spiritual potentiality (not in "fanciful" human dreams). Schwartz's actuality also needs God, but God is not necessarily within actuality.

Once one has given some attention to Schwartz's "Shenandoah," these lines about the impossibility of taking a new name or of creating a new self seem insufficient. They are in harmony with Shenandoah's basic pessimism. Yet in the verse play Schwartz complicates the issue by having his narrator admit to dreaming dreams of transcending the determined self. Such transcendence is an almost miraculous act which Eliot is credited with having nonetheless accomplished. In "Father and Son," transcendence of the self is only possible through death. While one is alive, one may approximate such a state by living in constant awareness of one's mortality, understanding that "Love, power, and fame stand on an absolute / Under the formless night and the brilliant day, / The searching violin, the piercing flute. / Absolute!" Even the "searching" and "piercing" power of art is reduced, in the face of such shadowy awareness, to a silly echo of a stark reality, a teasing musical motif: "Absolute!"). Art, after all, like all human endeavour, rests on the foundation of that absolute.

The earlier parallels with Polonius give way to a new recommendation that "Hamlet is the example", since "only dying / Did he take up his manhood, the dead's burden, / Done with evasion, done with sighing, / Done with revery" (33). The advice is essentially Eliot's advice from the "Death by Water" section of "The Waste Land":

As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.
Gentile or Jew
O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you. (75)

Phlebas's manhood is, however, forfeited as he goes to meet his fate. He passes beyond both age and youth, and in that order, upon entering the whirlpool. Hamlet assumes not only wisdom and Phlebas's type of forgetful rest through the acceptance of death, but also his manhood. For Eliot,

dying is acquiescence, an emptying of desire and self before a higher power, but for the father in Schwartz's poem dying is assuming one's true self. The father has faith that the self will only emerge when it stands in the shadow of annihilation. To get to what you actually *are* you must go through the way in which you are not: "Your own self acts then, then you know" (33). It is not precisely the advice of *Four Quartets*: "In order to arrive at what you *are not* / You must go through the way in which you are not" [my italics]; "And the time of death is every moment"; "I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you / Which shall be the darkness of God" (201, 211, 200). Whereas Eliot's explorer is found by the darkness of God, Schwartz's hero seeks out the darkness. The prescription of *Four Quartets* and "Death by Water" is a waiting, a state of immobility. Eliot's exile has faith's guarantee (in *Four Quartets*, at least) that his inactivity and powerlessness is a creative state of becoming: "We must be still and still moving / Into another intensity" (203-4). Because Schwartz's very qualified faith does not guarantee that the darkness has divine significance, seeking out that darkness requires heroic fortitude. In "Prothalamion," Schwartz gives the self all credit for its own obliteration: "I am nothing because my circus self / Divides its love a million times" (*Selected Poems* 48). The poet is an "octopus in love with God", and his mind "Issues in its own darkness, clutching seas".

The self strives for contact with the infinite, and in that striving brings about its own death. In Schwartz's poem "A Dog Named Ego, the Snowflakes as Kisses," the 'true' self wishes to be free of the socialized Ego, in this case personified by the tenacious but playful dog of the title. Like Eliot's Dog, he is "friend to men" (*Collected Poems* 65). Ego goes chasing after other beings to incorporate them into the self. Ego swallows the snowflakes and becomes harder to control. The poet is overwhelmed by the snowflakes, as Eliot is by the crowd on London Bridge: like Eliot he wonders that "So many died!" (76). In the end the dog is gone, and the self, having given all

away in union with the other, is obliterated. The poet has his desired freedom from the self, an aloneness which Ego had denied could ever be. That freedom turns out, however, to be a terrifying state of exile from light and home. The repeated final line is, according to Stanley Foss, an alternate ending for Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening": "And left me no recourse, far from my home, / And left me no recourse, far from my home." Frost's narrator remembers his societal obligations, whereas Schwartz's narrator is left in the woods, in exile and paralysis.

Eliot prays in "Ash-Wednesday" that we be taught "to care and not to care", "to sit still" (96), that the self may be reduced and opened to the divine. Schwartz's narrator, by contrast, runs in all directions, and incorporates all other beings into himself, hoping to come upon the infinite. In comparing "Shenandoah" with *Four Quartets* I remarked that Eliot empties his timeless moments of actual content, abstracting all but the kernel of symbolic suggestion. I noted as well that Schwartz loads his private moment with content, insisting on its universal value. Something similar is occurring here. Schwartz's dog Ego takes the snowflakes into himself and expands beyond the limits of personality. He reaches the verge of the infinite by reaching out with frightening energy from the self. Eliot, in "Ash-Wednesday," sits still and waits for communion with the divine. Once again, the techniques are antagonistic, but the goals are the same. In both cases, the poet obliterated the self in order to test the borders of the infinite. Schwartz's method is a Romantic self-aggrandizement, whereas Eliot's method is a severe self-curtailment. In their respective attitudes toward the extinction of personality, one can see most clearly the younger poet struggling to adopt an alien ideal. Schwartz, on the whole, fears the extinction of the self. He sees impenetrable darkness where Eliot sees "the darkness of God".

The young poet has nonetheless copied and assimilated the thought and style of the elder,

however alien it is to his intuitive understanding. Schwartz produces his own statement of that thought in "Father and Son," a monologue masquerading as a dialogue. The father is Eliot as translated by Schwartz. The son is Schwartz. The dialogue consists of Schwartz the fan and disciple expounding Eliot's views to Schwartz the skeptic. The son's protests are feeble, as Schwartz is more concerned with endorsing the father's wisdom than voicing the son's complaints. There is regret, not rejection, in the son's admission: "I cannot partake of your difficult vision" (32). Eliot's vision is "difficult" for two reasons. One is Schwartz's youth, with his feeling that, whether Eliot is wise or misguided, only experience and age can assemble for one such a philosophy. The other is the poet's suspicion that such a philosophy is at heart an endorsement of the death instinct. The father's recommendations, a cartoon version of some of Eliot's ideas, are certainly such an endorsement. One must stand outside life in order to master time. Otherwise, one moves blindly in time, prey to unacknowledged fears. One must act as if one were dying every moment in order to understand one's self and in order thus to act truthfully to one's "actual will". Otherwise, one remains unaware of the essential unity of one's self over time, "The phoenix with eight hundred thousand memories!" As Eliot writes in "The Family Reunion," "Now I see at last that I am following you, / And I know that there can be only one itinerary / And one destination" (*Collected Plays* 108).

The father counsels meditation, unlike the uncle of "Concerning the Synthetic Unity of Apperception," who counsels action and forgetting. Concentrating on death requires supreme self-consciousness: "Be guilty of yourself in the full looking glass" (33). If such hyper-awareness must come at the expense of actual living, then so be it. The father's vision certainly is "difficult", if one takes the word to mean "troubling to consider". It is also "difficult" in that it ultimately cannot be accomplished. Its fulfillment is impossible this side of the grave. Eliot is well aware of

this dilemma: "I would not have chosen this way, had there been any other! / It is at once the hardest thing, and the only thing possible" (*Collected Plays* 110). The chorus in "The Family Reunion" asks:

What ambush lies beyond the heather
And behind the Standing Stones?
Beyond the Heavyside Layer
And behind the smiling moon?
And what is being done to us?
And what are we, and what are we doing?
To each and all of these questions
There is no conceivable answer. (120-21)

Not "no answer", but "no conceivable answer". In Schwartz's dialogue, the father suggests one keep one's mind endlessly focused on a metaphysical ideal: he possesses Eliot's and Schwartz's faith in the existence of an 'answer,' an ideal but inaccessible realm of perfect knowledge. The son's will to maintain such focus is weak: he has too much fondness for facts in themselves and too much of Schwartz's (and Eliot's) mistrust of belief, a mistrust based on our very imperfect knowledge.

Schwartz's play "Dr. Bergen's Belief" was published in the poet's first collection, along with the early lyrics. It complements "Father and Son" as a critique of the father's advice. If the son could compose an articulate answer beyond his slight protest and his intuition that "Time is a dancing fire at twenty-one" (30), then the play he might write would be "Dr. Bergen's Belief." The "belief" of the title is the father's belief, transferred into the mind of another father, the leader of a small religious sect. Dr. Bergen's daughter has killed herself, and Bergen tells his disciples that she has done so "in her enactment of the method of our belief" (*Shenandoah* 110). He decides that:

She killed herself because she had come to the impasse where she could
not understand her own heart and could not decide once for all what

she wanted, except by examining her own heart in the perspective of death. It is a method which we must use only as a last resort and she recognized it, and accepting our belief she killed herself and thus became our first witness.

Eleanor was a poet of sorts in life. Her voice is heard on a recording, “distant, low... and in a way, oracular and dramatic”, predicting that

... in the future we shall see
The present quickly passed away,
Irrelevant to our belief,
Misunderstood as every play,
Full of a secret actuality
Which worked its wish consummately
And held the conscious will at bay. (110-11)

In Dr. Bergen’s eyes, and according to the evidence of Eleanor’s poem, Eleanor could only understand the actual by stepping beyond “conscious will” and observing her desires from the other side of the grave. This is indeed the advice given by the father of “Father and Son” taken to a lunatic extreme.

Although it might seem that we have traveled a long way from the theme of exile in following the trail of Schwartz’s philosophy, Dr. Bergen supplies the connection in his own farewell speech before his suicide: “I am done. Whereas the consequence is final and the exodus is irreparable; whereas the notion is unanalyzed, the dream unexhausted, the procedure without rationale, the belief a verbalism, there remains the complete conclusion of utter light or at least a little unnervous peace” (119). Ultimate knowledge and certainty is only possible when “the exodus is irreparable”. Dr. Bergen imagines a state where one is no longer within the body and within the passage of time, a place where one is no longer living at all: he opts for the perfect exile of death. Dr. Bergen chooses to stand outside of life in order to achieve some certainty about that life. Schwartz’s play is a cautionary tale about the impossibility, or at least the danger, of a man

desiring complete freedom from actuality.

Is the viewpoint of the exile, irreparably distant from his milieu and even from his own experience, a milder form of death? The claim seems absurd. The dislocation of the exile need not lead to the desperation of a Dr. Bergen. One can be somewhat divorced from actual experience and yet live: Schwartz, indeed, would argue that this is the predicament of every person, to a greater or lesser degree, in modern society, and is especially the predicament of the artist. Dr. Bergen is exceptional, however, in that he desires absolute knowledge and is painfully tortured by the apparently accidental character of so many occurrences in life. He looks down on the street dismayed by the "tiny figures of human beings and of cars" moving on "the tiny street" with "sharp, short motions, quickly, neatly, and wholly without meaning" (118). Dr. Bergen wants to step away from and beyond that multiplicity: "I am going the shortest distance past them, which will at least convince you of my sincerity." Exile is a long and arduous way of "going past" one's fellows, while Dr. Bergen's death is a quick and complete means of putting distance between himself and life. Bergen's action is extreme, but for Schwartz that act is merely a parody of an ideal which is in fact intrinsic to many of the world's more respectable systems of belief. The play questions Dr. Bergen's wisdom, but Dr. Newman is nevertheless "very much impressed by the somewhat intellectual character of your doctrines, which is so different from the emphasis upon emotion in most latter-day religious societies" (107). Dr. Bergen is a mixture of deceitful parlour philosopher and would-be saint, but Schwartz is not convinced that the desires of the true saint and sage differ from Bergen's longings in any significant way. Schwartz's poem "Saint, Revolutionist" acknowledges that not only the lunatic or fanatic, but also the

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. (*Selected Poems* 56)

The poet asks “What is this that is / The good of nothingness” for these men who generally “love life until / It shames both face and will.” The answer is in essence the same one Schwartz gives on Dr. Bergen’s behalf, a desire for certainty and for the confirmation of their hopes:

But they wish to know
How far the will can go,
Lest their infinite play
And their desires be
Shadow and mockery.

Schwartz is sympathetic to Dr. Bergen’s belief. The poet questions himself to determine how much of that belief is his own. Recognizing his philosophical kinship with the doctor, he wonders why he is not driven to the same drastic measures. One important difference is that Schwartz’s empiricism, as represented in the play by Dr. Newman, does not allow him to convincingly picture a consciousness functioning without the body as its companion. In Schwartz’s most anthologized lyric, “The Heavy Bear Who Goes With Me,” the poet calls the body “A caricature, a swollen shadow, / A stupid clown of the spirit’s motive” (74). More than this, the body has mysterious desires of its own to correspond to the desires of the mind or spirit. The body “Perplexes and affronts with *his own* darkness” [my emphasis]. The spirit is sharply distinguished from the body, yet it cannot exist free of its “inescapable animal”. Yeats confronts a similar paradox in “The Tower,” the mating of a renewed imagination and spiritual vigour with physical decrepitude. Schwartz’s word “caricature” is also the word Yeats uses to describe his aged body. For Yeats, the imagination and the soul can be refined and instructed until the gross body hardly matters anymore:

Now shall I make my soul,
Compelling it to study
In a learned school
Till the wreck of body,
Slow decay of blood,
Testy delirium
Or dull decrepitude...
Seem but the clouds of the sky
When the horizon fades.... (*Collected Poems* 224)

Yeats chooses to concentrate on the soul and overcome the body, that “battered kettle at the keel”. He is afraid that to do so he must turn to idealist philosophy and deal only in chilly abstract thought, leaving behind earthly beauty in order to leave behind his own decaying animal. His ultimate solution, however, is to immerse himself in works of imagination and memory. By disdaining present reality and meditating on art and old loves, the poet can have both freedom of the soul from bodily decay and delight in sensual pleasures (pleasures to which he is more receptive than ever in the mind, if no longer in the body).

For Yeats, in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul,” the soul cannot be distinguished from the darkness of the infinite. The soul has intuitions of its obliteration which exceed the capacity of the self to express. Yeats concludes, nevertheless, in favour of actuality and of the self, however blindly and foolishly the self may act in this life. Like Schwartz’s mock-dialogue which is in fact the father’s show, Yeats’s dialogue is designed to favour the self. For the late Yeats, the human is equivalent to the sensuous and the animal, although our consciousness ranges beyond, to the threshold of metaphysics. For Schwartz, by contrast, the identity of the soul is altogether independent of the animal. When I “bare my heart” I reveal the true human desires, those of the spirit. The punning word “bare” is, however, telling: one can “bare” only through the “bear”. The aspirations of the spirit can only be articulated with the distorting assistance of the animal. The poet has faith that the real “I” is an essence in all points superior to the childishly needy body,

but as an empiricist, he knows that the two entities are always experienced as one.

Yeats declares his faith in the power of man's imagination to remake the world: "Man makes a superhuman / Mirror-resembling dream" (224). Schwartz is not interested in what man can make of the world; rather, he is interested in how man tries to achieve perfect knowledge of a higher reality. Whereas Yeats mocks Plotinus' thought and cries in Plato's teeth, Schwartz holds fast to Socrates's project of knowing. Schwartz shows that Platonic longings are not to be stilled by imagination and belief. The poet's faith remains simply faith unless one opts for Dr. Bergen's leap of certainty out of the apartment window and out of Plato's cave. Bergen has had visions (to him they are not imaginings - he labels them intuitions). He believes he has been taken intermittently into the realm of perfect knowing, of the divine. Having had such intuitions, he cannot return to his "old unrest and uncertainty". He is like Plato's escapees from the cave who must return awkwardly to the world of illusion.

Dr. Newman represents Schwartz the empiricist. He is a more eloquent version of the son from "Father and Son," but despite his eloquence, his attempts to dissuade Dr. Bergen necessarily lack conviction. He quite plausibly but rather feebly suggests that "Time takes away both good and bad. In three months all will seem different to you" (117). Dr. Newman's empiricism is unable to still his own desire for belief and perfect knowledge, let alone convince Dr. Bergen that living is worthwhile. Bergen's argument is ultimately unassailable because it is based on a private desire to be certain and on an intuitive belief, facts which Newman must acknowledge. In Eliot's "The Family Reunion," Harry comes to understand that things he "thought were real are shadows, and the real / Are what I thought were private shadows. O that awful privacy / Of the insane mind! Now I can live in public" (*Collected Plays* 106). In trying to stop Bergen, Newman goes so far as to pretend he accepts the suicide's ideas: "I accept your belief! One example proves

nothing.” These words are a ruse, but in fact both Newman and Schwartz himself share Bergen’s desire for belief and certain knowledge. It is not hard for Newman to lie, because his words correspond to his true desire.

Despite his private sympathy, Dr. Newman the public man suggests that Dr. Bergen’s doctrines “have an aspect which would be impossibly dangerous and foolish, unless they are, in fact, true doctrines. I mean that your final test, that of dying to find one’s true self, is indefensible unless you are sure that you are right” (113). Dr. Newman is Schwartz the empiricist attempting unsuccessfully to argue away his own fascination with such beliefs. In Eliot’s “The Cocktail Party,” Peter realizes only through Celia’s violent death that he did not know and did not understand her. Reilly sees this death as Celia’s destiny, which has been foreshadowed in a vision. Through a horrible death, and through the agony of self-sacrifice which preceded that martyrdom, she discovers her true self. The experience cannot be described, but only “hinted at in myths and images” (*Collected Plays* 210). As in “Dr. Bergen’s Belief,” one must actually go through the death of the self in order to be certain about one’s destiny. Reports are insufficient.

Dr. Newman, having witnessed Bergen’s leap, finds himself deeply incriminated in the act, not merely because his revelations about Eleanor precipitated Bergen’s decision, but for private reasons as well. He asks himself how his own feelings correspond to those of the suicide and wonders what, if anything, makes his skepticism superior to Bergen’s destructive belief : “question my own heart, justify myself, if I can. Belief and knowledge consume the heart of man” (119). In “The Cocktail Party,” Edward, filled with guilt and sounding much like Schwartz’s Newman, says:

if this was right - if this was right for Celia -
There must be something else that is terribly wrong,
And the rest of us are somehow involved in the wrong.

I should only speak for myself. I'm sure that *I* am. (210)

Reilly finds Celia's sacrificial death "triumphant", although by the standards of "our limited understanding" her death seems a waste. It is, of course, not death itself that Eliot upholds as an ultimate good, but rather an attitude toward living. One keeps one's end in view and thereby harmonizes a human life with the hidden will of time and the deity. Reilly calls Celia's a "happy death" (209). Her death is not a happy event by human measure: it is in fact made more painful because of her heightened awareness. Yet by preparing for it and accepting the manner of its coming Celia fulfills her "destiny": it is therefore *hap*-py in the sense that it could *hap*-pen no other way. The death is happy in that neutral sense, but it is also happy in a more positive sense: by giving herself up to this inevitability, she lived in harmony with God's will. Lavinia, however, has difficulty seeing the triumph which Reilly discovers in Celia's death, and she finds herself implicated in the tragedy, just as Dr. Newman is so strangely implicated in Bergen's death: "Yet I know I shall go on blaming myself / For being so unkind to her... so spiteful" (210). Reilly suggests that, like Dr. Bergen facing the fact of his daughter's suicide, Lavinia must "live with these memories and make them / Into something new. Only by acceptance / Of the past will you alter its meaning" (211). Schwartz's play, however, suggests that we more often alter the meaning of the past to achieve acceptance and make our memories acceptable. Dr. Bergen turns his daughter's suicide into a symbol of his belief, just as Reilly finds triumph in Celia's tragedy. Eliot, however, implies that Reilly is correct to do so, whereas Schwartz's Bergen is clearly mistaken and has distorted the actual circumstances of the past.

Dr. Newman receives more sympathy from Schwartz than Dr. Bergen does. Dr. Bergen's longings are nevertheless portrayed as distressingly sensible, and his reasoning is airtight despite, and indeed because of, its hysterical character. In Eliot's plays, such longings are equally

distressing, but acting upon those longings is not only justified, rather, it becomes a form of heroism, probably the only true heroism. Thomas Becket does not, of course, kill himself; it is not a suicide but a "Murder in the Cathedral," yet the Archbishop's part in bringing about his own death is one of the playwright's overarching concerns. When his priests wish to lead him to safety, Thomas pleads that he has had "a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper, / And I would no longer be denied; All things / Proceed to a joyful consummation" (*Collected Plays* 44). In "The Family Reunion," there is an intense awareness of the difficulties in following "the bright angels" (111) "Somewhere on the other side of despair", although there is a complementary faith that such a mysterious election brings with it its own sufficient measure of strength to meet the task: "Strength demanded / That seems too much, is just strength enough given". In my discussion of Schwartz's "Father and Son," I contrasted the patient waiting prescribed by some of Eliot's verse with the heroism of Schwartz's adventurer seeking out the darkness. In fact, that heroic view also comes to Schwartz from Eliot, not, of course, from later plays like "The Cocktail Party,"⁶ but potentially from "Murder in the Cathedral." It certainly emerges in such earlier works as "Marina," in which the narrator wants to "Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken, / The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships" (*Collected Poems* 116), and "Difficulties of a Statesman," in which at the end the heroic Coriolanus himself joins in the cry for

⁶ In a 1950 letter to Karl Shapiro, Schwartz called "The Cocktail Party" "quite poor, I think" (*Letters* 250). Schwartz also discussed the play in a letter to Wallace Stevens: "When I saw and then read Eliot's new play and heard so many intelligent human beings say that it was a masterpiece, I began to think that either something was very wrong with me or - which was what I really thought - something was very wrong with many other people" (251). Schwartz was generally critical of Eliot's later plays. In a 1954 essay he finds their verse inadequate and their "subject matter... and their vision of life" inconsistent with "the same source of genius" (*Selected Essays* 129) as Eliot's earlier work. The fact that Eliot's plays from the 1950s bear comparison with Schwartz's work from the 1930s belies Schwartz's assertion. Eliot's later attitudes are implicit in Eliot's early verse, and Schwartz's early verse often predicted his mentor's future direction. By the time Eliot had actually written the later works, Schwartz had become horrified by their content and "vision of life". In "T.S. Eliot's Voice and His Voices," Schwartz does acknowledge and explore the continuity between the Eliot of 1922 and the Eliot of 1954, but the critic limits that exploration to questions of literary technique.

“a committee, a representative committee, a committee of investigation / RESIGN RESIGN RESIGN” (143).

“Dr. Bergen’s Belief” predicts the tone of Schwartz’s later criticism of Eliot. In his 1943 review of *Four Quartets*, Schwartz contends that “in Eliot’s poetry from the start, what declares itself above all is an obsessing desire to be free from ‘birth, copulation, and death,’ to be ‘divested of the love of created things,’ to be utterly out of the world” (“Anywhere Out” 103). Dr. Bergen’s desire, certainly. The extent to which Schwartz shared this desire is revealed by the troubles he takes to distance himself from this element of Eliot’s thought. In one draft of this review, Schwartz changes “overwhelming desire” to “obsessed desire” before ultimately substituting the slightly less damning “obsessing” in the published version. By 1943, Schwartz has decided that such desire, obsessed or otherwise, for the doubtful knowledge of non-existence can be considered independently from questions of belief. In the play, “Belief and knowledge consume the heart of man”, whereas in his review of *Four Quartets*, Schwartz reverses the order of the two terms. First comes the desire for knowledge and then, only secondarily, the need to believe: “rejection and renunciation are dominant to such an extent that the affirmation of belief seems only lyrical after-thought. The Incarnation is present for the sake of the rejection of this life, not the renunciation because of the Incarnation.”⁷ In 1938, however, Eliot’s belief is still taken at face value. Dr. Bergen is seen primarily as a believer, and acts as a nihilist because of his belief, not the other way around. The play shows, nevertheless, that as early as 1938 Schwartz

⁷ In Schwartz’s later poem “Starlight Like Intuition Pierced the Twelve,” the Incarnation similarly ruins the disciples’ appreciation of experience: “I no longer understand surprise” (*Selected Poems* 238). Through the Incarnation, divinity accepts and endorses human life. For Schwartz, such a spectacular event could only leave ennui in its wake. In “When I Remember the Advent,” the poet is left “alone / With the poverty of having known the dazzling of beauty, / But only as a memory is known” (*Last and Lost* 115). For Schwartz, divinity overwhelms the human. The Incarnation is an affirming demonstration of ordinary life elevated to its highest potential, but it is also a crippling demonstration of life lived in perfect goodness, as none but the deity could live it.

was moving beyond the vague unease of the son in "Father and Son" and attempting to formulate precisely what was "difficult" in the wisdom he had inherited from Eliot. Dr. Newman's lack of success is the young poet's lack of success in pinpointing exactly what of Eliot's thought troubled him. I will return to Schwartz's 1943 reformulation of the problem in dealing with his later poetry and prose.

"Dr. Bergen's Belief" argues that the desire for certain knowledge and for belief that withstands all doubt is a basic characteristic of every human heart, and that we will go to extreme lengths to simulate that certainty. In other poems, Schwartz calls that desire a specific trait of the American mind, a mind which always wants "Certainty where the darkness loomed before" and longs to perceive "each thing clear, / Separate from all others, standing in its place", a mind which seems to have invented or at least perfected "The Beautiful American Word, Sure" (27). The title phrase of Schwartz's sonnet gently criticizes such a desire as particularly American, but the criticism is so gentle as to seem even lovingly patriotic. Yet in comparing that sonnet with the early "Poem to Johann Sebastian Bach," one is struck by the critical distance which Schwartz has indeed subtly placed between himself and his own desires. In the early poem, he imagines a scene where "Out of the watercolored windows, when you look, / Each is but each, and plain to see, not deep" (*Last and Lost* 105). That image then suggests to the poet the print of a book: in literature there is an intimation of secure knowing. The young poet's desire for such certain knowledge is not fulfilled ("the only absolute stillness is the frieze / Of the escalator where the damned crowds rise"), yet that longing is not criticized for its being unattained or unattainable. There is a guarantee, vaguely religious in character, that "afterward, we will know each other".

In the original published version of "The Beautiful American Word, Sure," included by Schwartz in *Mosaic* in 1934, faith provides a similar guarantee: "When morning shines the world

will have that face. / But what assures you present after here? / In dark accidents your sufficient grace” (Valenti 215). In the revised version of the sonnet appearing in the *Selected Poems* there is still an assurance of certainty, but the implications of “after here” have been strictly limited, that phrase replaced by “every year”. The guarantor is neither the supernatural “Father” of “Poem to Johann Sebastian Bach” nor the indefinite “you” of the sonnet’s original version. What “assures her present every year” is “the mind’s sufficient grace.” Belief and certainty come via the action of mind, the same mind which creates such concepts as ‘sure’ to bolster its courage. The word sure is undeniably beautiful, but the concept is a man-made metaphor. Certainty is not an attainable state of being.

Lila Lee Valenti, in analyzing the original text, dismisses those critics who point to this sonnet to suggest that Schwartz “cannot maintain a poem at the intensity of its beginning” (215). Valenti suggests that such loss of intensity is carefully engineered: the energy of the “brash” opening is gradually “sapped by the confusions of uncertainty. Brash convictions, then, are self-delusions. The sonnet ends with humility before present uncertainties, but it also carries forward the sustenance of hope” (216). Surprisingly, the emended version suggests even more strongly than the original text that activity of thought and imagination can produce a necessary sense of certainty. The humility which Valenti rightly observes in the first version of the poem gives way to a belief in the self-sufficient power of the poet’s own mind. Jo Brans, commenting upon the revised text of this poem, asks “who would press a light switch if light weren’t conceived as a possibility?” (519). The text is an expression of “faith in the conceptual powers of the imagination”. Brans identifies this faith with Schwartz’s youthful Platonism, a view which seems to confirm the thesis that Schwartz moved from early idealism to a late belief in the primacy of experience. Such grand claims, however, often break down when one examines the untidy details

of any literary career. The sense of certainty which Brans attributes to the young "Schwartz's Platonic credo" is in fact not weakened but rather strengthened by the poet's late revisions. The humility and uncertainty which Valenti observes in the original text seem more characteristic of the poet's later work.

As an older man editing and emending his early work, Schwartz perhaps overemphasizes his former youthful sense of iron-clad conviction, a faith which seems in truth to have been far from unshakeable. Perceptively, Brans argues that "Schwartz condescendingly deprecates, from the editor's removal of twenty years, the young poet's rational attempts, influenced by Plato, to understand the soul's relationship to the world" (507). Brans wants to portray the young Schwartz as a confident Platonic idealist, which is generally a fair thesis, and takes "The Beautiful American Word, Sure" as an ideal expression of the poet's early faith. The critic seems, however, unaware of the poem's history, and that history undermines the essay's simple conclusions. Both Valenti and Brans possess part of the truth. Putting together the two critics' readings of the 'poem' (really two poems, because of the weight of Schwartz's revisions), one gets a concise, fairly complete picture both of the transformations in Schwartz's thought and of the impossibility of fitting the poet's work into any neat biographical pattern (even Brans's very plausible design, with which I generally agree). Valenti's emphasis, suggested by the early text, on the poet's "humility before present uncertainties" complements Brans's speculations about the poet's "Platonic credo", the certainty of youth expressed, to one's surprise, most strongly in the mature revised text. For the speaker in the revised poem, brash convictions remain self-delusions, but the mind is able to approximate such convictions through actions of its own. One need not wait for an exterior agent of grace to act upon the understanding. The mind that orders experience can fortify itself with hope and, very occasionally, with solid assurance. One need not rely solely on

belief. Charles Taylor writes of Descartes's reasoning process: "The judgement now turns on properties of the activity of thinking rather than on the substantive beliefs which emerge from it" (156). The "whole point of the reflexive turn is to achieve a quite self-sufficient certainty. What I get in the cogito, and in each successive step in the chain of clear and distinct perceptions, is just this kind of certainty, which I can generate for myself by following the right method." Descartes seems especially at home in Schwartz's America. In *Genesis*, the poet expands on this idea, connecting the protagonist's New York upbringing with his faith in the Cartesian *cogito*:

O New York boy, this Life, Life in which
 You can't reject the world's *de facto* shame
 - This is the way to knowledge and freedom,
 Here thrashing in this depth, here in this room
 From which the chairs and else quotidian
 Have been removed. Keep thinking all the time,
 What else is there to do? what other move?
 What other play? O what activity
 Can hold identity? grasping the brink
 Under which utter darkness ever lies prone:
You lie in the coffin of your character,
Hopes rise and fall as the breast rises and falls! (87)

Only through the mind's activity of constructing abstractions ("the chairs and else quotidian have been removed") can one simulate certainty, especially certainty about one's self ("O what activity can hold identity"), and only through such simulation can one continue to exist, act, and hope ("what other move?").

Jewel Spears Brooker sees such a process at the heart of Eliot's "mythical method": "The mythical method enables artists and readers to begin with fragments and generate comprehensive abstractions, to begin in isolation and end in community" (*Mastery and Escape* 122). Schwartz praises Eliot in nearly identical terms in a draft of his never-completed critical volume: "Our sensitivity to experience has been widened not because two objects have been newly joined, but

because the relevance of any two such objects to each other and to human thought and emotion has been accomplished” [Schwartz’s emphasis]. In his 1941 essay “The Isolation of Modern Poetry,” Schwartz credits the isolation of the poet from his environment with increasing “the uses and powers of languages in the most amazing and the most valuable directions” (*Essays* 12). This isolation “is certainly a misfortune so far as the life of the whole community is concerned”, although it has been fortunate in terms of “technical resources of all kinds”. Eliot is able to, in Brooker’s words, “end in community” precisely because his observations “begin in isolation”. Schwartz’s “whole community” benefits from such new perceptions of order and unity, but the precondition for such perceptions is, ironically, the poet’s isolation from community. Only from the standpoint of exile or isolation can reassuring unifying discoveries be made. Such, at least, is Schwartz’s opinion in 1941. Eliot, in the fifth section of “East Coker”, is concerned with this sort of dismal paradox as it manifests itself in one’s art over time:

every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. (202-3)

Eliot’s choice to live as an expatriate was a clear and public sign of his isolation. Schwartz goes further and attempts to make even Eliot’s adoption of English religion and manners a symptom of the same “deracination and alienation” (*Essays* 128). In Schwartz’s eyes Eliot was no reactionary, although he was indeed *reacting* to the alienation of the artist from modern society. Eliot’s technique of ironically contrasting past with present “has been misunderstood very often as a yearning to go back to a past idyllically conceived. It is nothing of the kind; it is the poet’s conscious experience of the isolation of culture from the rest of society” (12). Isolation itself, as the above examples from Schwartz’s lyric poetry suggest, engenders new and important

ways of perceiving and connecting experience so as to make possible hope and assurance in future action. But does one gain false assurance and certainty when one makes an ultimate value out of isolation? Is there a supplementary truth which can only be attained through connection with and immersion in community and in raw actual experience? Eliot himself believed so, writing in "The Cocktail Party" that "Sir Henry has been saying, / I think, that every moment is a fresh beginning; / And Julia, that life is only keeping on; / And somehow, the two ideas seem to fit together" (212). Edward and Lavinia are reconciled to the human condition, and if that reconciliation lacks the heroic character of the journey of faith, it is nevertheless a "good life" in "a world of lunacy, / Violence, stupidity [and] greed" (190). Since few have the trust to undertake Celia's type of lonely journey, the Chamberlayne's modest way is both necessary and laudable. Celia seems, however, to betray the poet's favouritism when she says:

I know I ought to be able to accept that
If I might still have it. Yet it leaves me cold.
Perhaps that's just a part of my illness,
But I feel it would be a kind of surrender -
No, not a surrender - more like a betrayal.

What is important here is not Eliot's own preference, but Schwartz's impression of Eliot's belief. Schwartz felt that Eliot's work primarily celebrated isolation and that the author's attempts to immerse himself in a traditional community were only desperate, albeit understandable, reactions to a terrifying social weightlessness:

...only one who has known fully the deracination and alienation inherent in modern life can be moved to make so extreme an effort at returning to the traditional community as Eliot makes in attaching himself to Anglo-Catholicism and Royalism. Coming back may well be the same thing as going away; or at any rate, the effort to return home may exhibit the same predicament and the same topography as the fact of departure. (*Selected Essays* 128)

In the following two chapters, I will examine the movement in Schwartz's own fiction from

isolation to integration, which is itself an extreme effort on Schwartz's part. The author never quite achieves an easy affirmation of temporal actuality, the attitude which he has parodied in "Concerning the Synthetic Unity of Apperception." Yet Schwartz's thought certainly moves in that direction during the late forties and early fifties. It is worth, therefore, keeping in mind the way one tiny proof of the spirit's aspiration drives the child's uncle "quite insane". Schwartz's narrator asks "What is love?": the question is not stilled by Schwartz's late movement toward social integration and affirmation of natural processes. The actual is never capable of stilling the sense of potentiality, the spirit's constant aspiration. On the whole, does Schwartz's work benefit from the poet's new manner of perceiving actuality, in which the poet assumes a confused vantage within the continuous stream of undigested experiences and often celebrates the confusion itself? Or does the author's work suffer as he substitutes the partial fulfillment of sensuous experience for the youthfully honest encounters of his early poetry, encounters with unanswerable questions of belief and with the unattainable objects of his aspiration? To begin to answer these questions I will examine Schwartz's mature fiction of the 1940s, a period of transition and artistic fruition.

Chapter IV

“...places and parts for everyone”:

Returning from Exile, Replacing Eliot

Delmore Schwartz spent much of the 1940s writing fiction rather than poetry. In the works from this period, many of which were collected in 1948 as *The World is a Wedding*, the author looks back on his experiences in the previous decade among young intellectuals in New York. The self is still a source of fascination for Schwartz, but the self is no longer to be examined in its isolation. Characters are forced, often much against their will, to relate to their environment and to their peers. The inner life of the character is revealed incidentally, as he or she responds to the actions of the other. Schwartz began working in a new medium to suit the new perspective. He had, it is true, written several successful stories previously, including his most widely anthologized and most highly regarded work, “In Dreams Begin Responsibilities”; furthermore, the ‘Biblical prose’ style of *Genesis* anticipates in many ways the deceptively transparent style of the later fiction. Yet aside from Schwartz’s keeping verse journals, the writing of poetry gave way almost entirely to work in prose during this period.¹ Introspection remains a central activity for Schwartz’s characters, but the author now chooses a mode of writing which privileges dialogue and narrative: this itself serves to turn one’s gaze outward. All of these stories are fueled by the struggle between the self’s sense of identity with its surroundings and its awareness of being (or

¹ With a very few significant exceptions the verse collected in 1950’s *Vaudeville For a Princess* is much more ‘prosaic’ than Schwartz’s prose. A reviewer for the *Nation* perceptively remarked at the time that “the poetry of Mr. Schwartz suffers its most severe criticism at the hands of the author’s own prose, for the later [sic] is amusing, clever - if at times a bit glib - witty, bright, full of satirical energy and bounce, in short, extremely readable, whereas the verse tends to be solemn, owlish, abstract, tiresome, and, to my ear at least, entirely earless” (Rolfe Humphries, “A Verse Chronicle,” quoted in McDougall 105).

desire to be) different. The protagonists recognize, alternately to their horror and delight, their identity with either their Depression-era peers (“New Year’s Eve,” “The World is a Wedding”), their families (“America! America!,” “The Child is the Meaning of This Life”), or even, anticipating Schwartz’s diverse late fiction, those of a younger generation and alien background (“A Bitter Farce”).

The early stories “SCREENO” and “In Dreams Begin Responsibilities” share many of the concerns of the later fiction. In “SCREENO,” as we have noted above, the poet’s identification with his fellows or lack thereof determines his moral stature. Cornelius’s authority depends upon his ability to stand apart from and above his peers, his ability to be, in Schwartz’s words from “Far Rockaway,” “the novelist tangential on the boardwalk above”. The provisionally happy ending of “SCREENO” does, however, suggest a future direction for Schwartz’s fiction: “how small a price for the sense of generosity and dignity which I now have, even though the act was forced upon me by my maudlin sympathy for the old man. Probably I have been foolish, and yet how reasonable I feel at present, and how joyous” (*In Dreams* 201). Cornelius returns home alone. He has nevertheless, in return for his terrifying experience of identifying with his peers (his abuse at the hands of the theatre crowd), been given a compensating vision of the joy that can come to him through the giving of sympathy. T.S. Eliot’s “awful daring of a moment’s surrender” (*Collected Poems* 78) becomes Cornelius’s less romantic assessment: “Probably I have been foolish, and yet how reasonable I feel”. Schwartz, however, moves beyond this model of sympathy, this form of tentative compassion in which we, from exile, from the privacy of our own consciousness, “think of the key, each in his prison / Thinking of the key” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 79).

In Schwartz’s new manner, the artist assumes a community between himself and the other,

attributing to the other every motive, pleasant or unpleasant, which he discovers in himself. Such an assumption is, however, questionable, and is ultimately an act of faith. In “The World is a Wedding,” Jacob decides that he and his peers “did not inhabit a true community and there was an estrangement between each human being and his family, or between his family and his friends, or between his family and his school” (*In Dreams* 50). Yet, “seeking to see the whole truth”, Jacob dismisses his own conclusion and remembers that “there is the other side, which always exists. They say of New York that it is like an apartment hotel. And they say: ‘It’s fine for a visit, but I would not want to live here.’ They are wrong. It’s fine to live here, but exhausting on a visit”. He who stands apart from the actual life of the city sees mostly chaos and is exhausted by the multiplicity of empty impressions. As outsiders, as exiles, we may “go and make our visit” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 13) and may probably find some significance among the overwhelming realities of daily experience, but we will never be able to answer or even ask the “overwhelming question”: “What is it?” Schwartz has decided that the life of a society (of whatever magnitude) is best understood and described from within. What is more, he recognizes that to learn about the self one need not rely on introspection, one need not observe the self in isolation. The artist may depend instead on sympathy, on correspondences of self and other: paradoxically he must surrender his independence to learn more about his own individual nature.

In several of Schwartz’s stories dating from the 1940s, the author produces veiled portraits of T.S. Eliot. These portraits indicate that Schwartz saw Eliot as a thinker who could not, to borrow one of Eliot’s phrases, “bear very much reality” (*Collected Poems* 190). “An Argument in 1934” dates from the early years of the decade: it was published in *The Kenyon Review* in 1942, yet it was not collected in the 1948 volume. In that story, Schwartz draws what is essentially a caricature of Eliot; nevertheless, Schwartz reveals both his continuing concurrence with Eliot’s

philosophy and his discomfort with the opposing outlook, a luxurious sensuality. Noah and Harry are young intellectuals who meet regularly in the Public Library cafeteria to share their interests “in the history of thought and in the arts” (62). Bradley is a lonely young man who follows the two friends to lunch one day. The intellectuals are aliens in their own society. They look for inspiration to a romanticized Europe from which they and their generation have been exiled. Harry, who is relatively comfortable with his elitism, says of the cafeteria culture of his peers that “It is the equivalent for America of the café life of Europe... and inferior to it just as the native wines are inferior” (64). For this generation of young men, significantly, there is no plausible escape from the inferiority of American life. Harry asks “what can we do? Where else is there to go?” For earlier generations, for James, Eliot, or Henry Miller, the answer to those questions was to resettle in Europe. For Harry and Noah, New York may be imperfect yet there is no serious alternative. The choice of previous generations is no longer a viable option. Bradley does seem to have, compared with Noah and Harry, choices other than the unfortunate realities of New York life, options of imagination and belief. Those choices, however, are revealed as illusory when reality, especially the reality of cartoon violence, asserts its importance in the life of the otherworldly Bradley: “the dignity of the outside world was bound to make itself felt” (72).

As always, names are important clues to Schwartz’s intentions.² Here the name Bradley is

² The name Noah also appears in Schwartz’s play “Venus in the Back Room,” in which young Noah is propositioned by the sinister Mr. Stimme. Noah feels an affinity for Stimme’s unseen but alluring daughter, whose words are oracular and obscure but mysteriously harmonize with Noah’s own feelings. She turns out to be merely a ventriloquist’s projection of Stimme’s own voice. The situation mirrors that of “An Argument.” Mr. Stimme, the sensualist, corresponds to Harry Morton. Noah’s desire for the daughter, attractive but fictitious, mirrors Noah Gottlieb’s affection for Bradley, whose belief, though fallacious, can remake the external world. In “An Argument,” as in “Venus,” there is a struggle for Noah’s affections between the unreality of abstract thought and spiritualism (Bradley) and the all-too-real life of the city (Harry) - a love triangle (again, all-male). In *Genesis*, we recall, there are two Noahs, Newman and Green. Both are torn between the vivid claims of actuality (pregnant wife, business humiliation) and their desires to transcend that state of being, to remake, like Bradley Brown, the given world for themselves. ‘Noah,’ then, stands for a set of attitudes toward experience, the attitudes of the poet or dreamer: it is not a label arbitrarily chosen. The identification of the poet Hershey with Noah Green (see

suggestive: Eliot's dissertation was concerned with the philosophy of F.H. Bradley. On its own, that connection might be weak (certainly not as convincing as the name Lancelot Emerson in "A Game of Tennis"), but other evidence confirms that Bradley Brown is indeed another in Schwartz's gallery of Eliot portraits. Bradley is tall, pallid, and dressed with elaborate care: "The neat pin which held together the two wings of his collar seemed to Noah the essence of white-collar gentility" (64). Noah's observations undoubtedly echo Prufrock's "collar mounting firmly to the chin, / ... necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin" (14). Noah is confused by Bradley's Eliotic "excess of courtesy" (65).

The two young men appear to differ greatly in their attitudes toward death. Bradley relates a fond childhood memory of napping in a cemetery before the War. He delights in the proximity of death. Noah, on the other hand, as a child was "horrified by any thought of death!" There is a third position one might adopt in opposition to these polarities. The sensualist Harry condemns both Noah and Bradley for even being aware of death in childhood. For Harry, both his friends "like to cultivate... morbidity. It does not mean anything" (67). Harry is most impressed by the healthful and immediate image of a "gob of butter in his soft-boiled egg". Each of the trio represents a side of Schwartz's own personality: Noah, the skeptic terrified of his mortality, Bradley, the introspective idealist, and Harry, the man pleased with actual facts and displeased by morbid abstractions. Schwartz's Harry is, significantly, the least appealing of the three portraits.³

chapter 2) is thus furthered by Schwartz's choice of name for his character. The significance of that name is consistent throughout Schwartz's career. From two 1944 fragments entitled "Noah" come these lines: "The energy which drives the stars / Moves your mind, & drives your heart"; "The ark, drums, and horses / Touched by the mind, ... / The solid and clear shapes... / Touched by the mind" (*Portrait* 219-20).

³ The name Harry Morton perhaps suggests Harry Levin, the Cambridge antagonist and next-door neighbour whom Schwartz called a "learned jackass" (*Letters* 193). Schwartz often made an equation of "the Philistines and the Levins" (152). Giving the name Harry to the sensualist Morton may be a nasty slander (nasty but rather cryptic) expressing Schwartz's image of Levin as a self-satisfied materialist getting ahead in the world, albeit one who does so while maintaining an elevated, scholarly air. Harry's recitation of an exhaustive list of hero/intellectuals parodies Levin's encyclopedic manner: "Was not Ulysses an intellectual, as well as Hamlet?... David... Solomon, Dante, Pierre Bezukhov, Prince Myshkin,

Noah and Bradley differ on fundamental points, but each is nevertheless sympathetic to the other, Bradley demonstrating sympathy through his extreme courtesy and Noah through his attempts to alleviate Bradley's embarrassment. Harry, the sensual man, is callous by comparison. He is free of "morbidity", and potentially stronger than the others, but he lacks that ethical sense which the two dreamers possess in common.

The year 1934 saw the publication of Eliot's *After Strange Gods*, in which the author's uncomfortable vision of the good society was most notoriously laid out. Eliot had become an Anglican several years before and had been eager to convince skeptics that his conversion was sincere and was not a mere pose, another intellectual interest like his sometime Buddhism. Bradley, like Eliot, has decided that "It is necessary to believe in something" (69). Harry wonders if his idealist friend has perhaps adopted "Christian Science" this time around, and accuses Bradley of having "a kneeling acquaintance with all the more esoteric religious societies in the city of New York." "It is true", protests Bradley, that "I have tried to become acquainted with more than one *Weltanschauung*. That is the reasonable method". His current belief is that the world exists only in one's mind. When the others press him on this point, he turns out to be less of a mystic than it would at first appear. He argues that "all experience comes to one through the medium of one's consciousness" and that the world is therefore exactly what we make of it: "Each of us is alone in his private dream" (70) of knowledge and perception. This corresponds to the passage from "The Waste Land" quoted above: "We think of the key, each in his prison / Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison" (79). Harry is scornful of this speculation, telling himself that it is irrelevant, but Noah is disturbed by Bradley's philosophy, and so for the sake of argument stakes the opposite ground. Harry facetiously describes the debate as: "Noah Gottlieb Stephen Daedalus [sic], and Sherlock Holmes!" (62). The manner, however, belongs equally to Schwartz: Schwartz's criticism of his peers is often a confession at one remove.

defends the external world on Fifth Avenue and 46th Street four days before Christmas 1934” (70). The time and place is crucial to Schwartz’s vision. An argument pitting external reality against private perception takes place in the busiest shopping area in a crowded city on one of the year’s most frantic shopping days. The brute force of actuality is made manifest in the form of that jostling crowd. Bradley can maintain his views only by closing his eyes to that powerful evidence, yet he is indeed secure in his philosophy. He looks down his nose at those who are not as enlightened as he: people like Harry simply “make an enormous mistake” (69).

Noah embodies the conflicts within Schwartz’s mind. He “defends the external world”, something the sensualist Harry need never do. The external world is only in need of a defence because Bradley’s idealism resonates with Noah’s own inclinations. The child who fears death and the child who naps contentedly among the tombstones are two sides of one coin: they both acknowledge the power of an abstraction, one embraces it and one wrestles with it. Harry does not want to argue: he simply wishes to walk away from Bradley. Schwartz calls this climax the “Hawaiian moment of every conflict, for it springs from the desire to escape” (71). Schwartz also connects this impulse with the desire to assert one’s independence of being. Harry the sensualist can make such an assertion because he denies the attraction of Bradley’s idealism. Noah, however, is not willing to leave his new acquaintance. The narrator tells us that Noah was “feeling sorry for Bradley” and was “instinctively against any anger which was not his own” (the latter phrase an ironic confession on Schwartz’s part in the light of the writer’s growing paranoia). Above all, however, Noah knows himself to be as one with Bradley, although he is obliged to argue with the young idealist. Noah does not walk away to assert, like Harry, his “independence of being” because he feels a strong kinship with Bradley. He is like Dr. Newman in “Dr. Bergen’s Belief” searching his own heart for justification, unwillingly implicated in Dr.

Bergen's idealistic leap.

I have demonstrated several ways in which Bradley is a type of T.S. Eliot: his religious explorations rooted in a need "to believe in something", his idealism which, while by no means ignoring experience, denies the primacy of the external world, his dandyish appearance, his sense of manners, and his exaggerated courtesy. There is one more parallel, however, which is most important to this study. Bradley is separated from his past and from his parents, and that exilic separation affects the workings of memory. He lost his parents "in the influenza pandemic of 1919" (66), at which time he was at a military academy, "too far away to come back for the funeral". His distance from them in time and the fact that Bradley was elsewhere at the moment of their deaths combine to produce an idealized image of his parents "as they looked on those warm Sunday afternoons.... In their mature beauty". As an exile, physically cut off from the awful realities of his parents' illness and cut off by their deaths from that entire prewar world, Bradley is able to abstract all the horrors of reality from the lost beauty preserved in his memory. The "stone angels and the crosses" of the graveyard are pleasing "fairy tale" figures from which the distance of exile has removed all ambiguity of meaning. The original germ of experience would be robbed of its transparent significance if it came into contact with other, less pleasing realities. As Eliot writes in "Burnt Norton," "human kind / Cannot bear very much reality" (190). Bradley certainly cannot bear very much reality, whether he is recalling his parents or attempting to navigate his way through the modern city. He bumps into the "dignity" (72) of a young woman crossing a street and is threatened and then knocked down by the woman's drunken escort. Harry is delighted by the turn of events. He is satisfied that "the dignity of the external world" should "make itself felt!" in such a spectacular manner. A policeman is hailed and the drunk threatens to set his uncle, "a powerful politician" (73), upon the policeman. When the officer claims "There's

no politics in our department”, the belligerent Johnny replies that “There’s politics in Paradise!”, a remark Noah finds “Worthy of Dante” (74). Any situation which human consciousness can imagine must in some fashion take into account our experience of actuality.

Bradley’s idealism runs up not only against Johnny’s fist, which is merely a part representing the whole, but more generally against the insurmountable constant pressure of chaotic actuality, an actuality apparently uncaring and meaningless. It appears that Harry’s philosophy is victorious in the argument. Bradley himself affirms that victory by breaking into “actual tears”. The victory of actuality is, however, not as complete as one might assume. In the epilogue to the story Harry describes Bradley as “fast asleep in the cemetery on Sunday afternoon in 1912, a child regarded by his parents” (whom Harry emphasizes “are dead”), watching as “the Montreal train goes by, below, far away from him.” Despite his collision with the dignity of the external world, Bradley remains an exile from experienced reality. He continues to create ideal order and significance by abstracting the complexities of reality from the significant images of his memory. The Montreal train remains below him and distant.⁴ Harry is certain that Bradley will “never wake up to this”. “This” is “the great city moving about them in 1934”, in which drunks assault absent-minded intellectuals on the street-corner, and in which ideals are endlessly alloyed with meaningless eventuality: “There’s politics in Paradise!” Bradley is both a pathetic dreamer, and, on close examination, a successful escapee from the endless movement of the city. His belief is a retreat and a source of order and beauty, as exemplified by his ideal image of his dead parents. Bradley’s nose bleeds from the encounter with reality, but Harry assures Noah that in fact “he will never

⁴ This recalls the episode from *Genesis* in which Jack Green flees to Montreal and returns the next morning (39). Montreal represents “between-ness”, the state of being inexorably connected to experienced reality, despite one’s aspirations to escape existence-as-it-is. In “An Argument,” however, Bradley, unlike Jack Green, is so divorced from reality, so successful at creating an ideal private world, that he is permanently *above* the ‘Montreal’ train. Bradley’s position above the tracks also recalls the artist upon the boardwalk in “Far Rockaway.”

wake up". His exile from actuality is so perfect that even "actual tears" and real blood have no lasting impact.

Harry's eulogy for the "damned" Bradley is full of both pathos and ridicule, but if one thinks back to the first page of "An Argument," both Harry and Noah are engaged in a similar attempt to deny actuality, to shut out the extraneous noise of living. Noah is "an artificial flower salesman",⁵ a vendor of unreal beauty, and Harry is surrounded in the Public Library by the fruits of human intellectual endeavour. Noah is touched by the quiet of the library which is "marble like a mausoleum" (63). The two friends meet to discuss that which has no meaning to others in the city. Bradley's presence is itself an intrusion of the world on their escape. Harry's sensualist rhetoric is belied by his actions. He, like Bradley, needs at times to turn a blind eye to the chaos of reality and enjoy the sleep of private interests.

In 1942, when this story was published, Schwartz was beginning to take the side of Harry against Bradley, beginning to question whether it was necessary for one to be exiled from experience in order for one to find beauty and meaning in that experience. Does the external world truly have a "dignity", or does it simply exert a brute force to smother idealism? Bradley is a tragic figure, but he is not, as a dreamer, entirely mistaken: Bradley's idealism is shared even by the hostile Harry. That idealism, therefore, cannot be dismissed, but neither can it be entirely accepted lest one fall asleep to "the great city". Schwartz is not yet prepared to champion the dignity of actuality in any serious way: it is Harry who credits the external world with a "dignity", and Harry is by far the least attractive of the three characters. In later stories, Schwartz attempts

⁵ Schwartz's brother Kenneth had such a job in the 1930s, working at Pecker Brothers Artificial Flowers. According to Atlas, Schwartz "was patronizing toward what he thought of as his brother's commonplace existence, and distressed by the differences of temperament that estranged them" (*Delmore Schwartz* 98). Schwartz locates his own alter-ego in his brother's workplace. The artist is, according to this biographical echo, in a more alien environment than is apparent from the story, where "artificial flower salesman" might well be read as an ironic phrase meaning "poet".

to describe exactly what composes this dignity in actual experience. At this point, Harry can only allude to it ironically. The sympathy which Noah shows to Bradley Brown is also, despite elements of caricature, Schwartz's sympathy with the intentions (if not the achievement) of T.S. Eliot, something which Schwartz is largely unable to summon up in his later work. Schwartz is still philosophically close enough to his formative years, those mid-1930s which he is describing, to do justice to Eliot. The negative presentation of Harry's buffoonery is a complementary proof of how far Schwartz had yet to travel to become a celebrant of "butter in his soft-boiled egg".

"An Argument in 1934" is a work of transition. "America! America!," existing as it does in two published versions, provides further evidence of the nature of that transition and also suggests the outcome of the process: the two texts highlight the distance between Schwartz's outlook at the beginning of the forties and Schwartz's changed ideals at the threshold of the following decade. Irving Saposnik has written perceptively about the differences between the 1940 version published in *Partisan Review* and the final version which appeared in 1948's *The World is a Wedding*. Saposnik finds that Schwartz makes most of his revisions

in order to bring mother and son closer together, as well as to remove most of the son's comments from the cloying confines of subjective complaint.... While listening to his mother's monologue, Shenandoah reflects upon his mother's native wisdom. With increasing frequency, he begins to join in her narrative until they become as one speaker, each telling a part of the story that each must share. (154)

In the 1940 text, Belmont Weiss (the name becomes Shenandoah Fish in *The World is a Wedding*) finds that he "had seen nothing of his connections with all these people. The separation and the alienation from them which he felt keenly at times was actual enough, but coexisted with the immense unity between his own life and the lives of these people" (133). In the revised version, Belmont's "immense unity" becomes, significantly, an "unbreakable unity" (32). Whereas

Belmont has “seen nothing of his connections”, Shenandoah has understood his place in this net of family relationships: Shenandoah, however, now realizes for the first time “how closely bound he was to these people”. The connections of heredity and environment are constant, although one can be blinded to those ties by the undeniably real forces bringing about a separation. The son’s exile from the parents’ world is an obvious fact, although the source of that separation has subtly shifted when Schwartz comes to revise his story. Belmont “has for a long time seen himself as *different*, because he was an artist and because they regarded him as different and because art had no important part in their lives.” His separation from his surroundings is “an aspect of the whole context in which he existed as a product of those people and their lives.” His family represents unreflecting actuality, while Belmont himself is an artist who is set apart from his milieu and resents this condition of exile. In the original story, the surrounding air is full as if with radio waves of “countless habits, activities, desires and memories” which tie the young man to the people “from whom he had come”. In the revised story, “the life he breathed in was full of these lives and the age in which they had acted and suffered”. The change is subtle but important. Belmont can choose either to hear these ambient voices or ignore them. Shenandoah has no such choice. Being united with his environment is as involuntary to the artist as breathing. The immense unity becomes an unbreakable bond. The young musician of the 1940 story becomes, in a small but emblematic change, a young author. The artist is no longer marked out as obviously different: a musician’s skill is highly public, and Belmont the musician, even when idle, cannot help advertising his otherness in the midst of his environment (“they regarded him as different”), whereas to the hostile onlooker Shenandoah the idle writer is merely a lazy directionless son, not much different from Sidney Baumann.

In both versions of “America! America!,” Schwartz has his protagonist speculate on “How

different the picture would be if he had been able to see those lives from the inside, looking out.”

In the revised text, this passage reads: “How different *it might seem*, if he had been able to see those lives from the inside, looking out” [my emphasis]. Even the slight change of verb from *would be* to *might seem* suggests a change in Schwartz’s thinking. The difference between the young man’s vision and the mother’s vision is taken for granted in the original text. In the revised version, Shenandoah allows for the possibility that his mother sees the events she narrates from essentially the same ironic viewpoint as himself. From inside these lives, what seems caricature to the young artist might be painful tragedy. Then again, posits the revised text, perhaps not: perhaps the artist has no monopoly on such irony. Maybe the young man views these events in such a manner, not because of his alienation from his milieu but precisely because of his profound connection with that environment. Be that as it may, the story of the Baumann family as received by the young man is only “an outline and thus a caricature”. It is almost certain that the artist’s separation from his surroundings prevents him from getting the story straight. In the revised story, Schwartz adds another noun to the list: “what he saw was an outline, a caricature, and *an abstraction*” [my emphasis]. The very effort to abstract from experience and bring order to experience produces caricature.

Belmont Weiss, the protagonist of the 1940 text, does not find his newly recognized relationship with his family and environment to be “a pleasant matter”. He “did not feel any allegiance, whatever that could be, to these people; and he certainly did not feel that he would want to spend his time with them”. Belmont tires of his mother’s story. Shenandoah, on the other hand, is not *tired of* but *exhausted by* the story. He, like Belmont Weiss, listens to the narration from a distance with irony and contempt, yet he seems, at least in part, to welcome the revelation of hidden unity: Belmont decides that the “contemptuous mood” in which he has

listened all morning is “really self-contempt”, contempt at his displeasing connection to these people, whereas Shenandoah’s identical mood is really both “self-contempt and ignorance”. The young man of the later narrative is dismayed by the identity of the self with its surroundings, but he is keen to dispel his ignorance, lamenting : “I do not see myself. I do not know myself. I cannot look at myself truly” (33). His desire is to see the truth clearly, but truth is no longer a single transcendent object. Truth is a composite of all realized facts, an impossible ultimate bringing together of actuality and potentiality of which the present self is a tiny sampling: “No one truly exists in the real world because no one knows all that he is to other human beings, all that they say behind his back, and all the foolishness which the future will bring him.” Belmont Weiss has a premonition of this new philosophical orientation, this understanding of the “limitation of vision” (134), but he thrusts it aside, and along with Schwartz “kept himself from looking at it too closely, though he promised himself that he would do so later”. Schwartz keeps his promise and does look at the matter later. The second version of “America! America!” signals a new awareness of truth as a process, a conglomeration of experience and understanding, rather than simply as an understanding born of perfect hindsight and self-conscious irony. Self-consciousness remains essential: Shenandoah, as much as Belmont, approaches his mother’s story from an ironic distance and with a feeling of contempt. But Shenandoah is willing to bridge that distance, to discover the identity, however bewildering, of mother and son, artist and milieu, an identity which persists despite the artistic exile’s very real sense of separation from the family and from the crowd.

Schwartz’s Belmont Weiss corresponds to the Stephen Dedalus of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Cranly asks Stephen “Do you love your mother?”, and Stephen answers “I don’t know what your words mean” (240). Stephen recalls that “Pascal... would not suffer his mother

to kiss him" (242). As he prepares to leave Ireland, Stephen's mother is putting his "new secondhand clothes in order" (253).⁶ She prays that in his "own life and away from home and friends" he may learn "what the heart is and what it feels." The young artist needs to find his own 'clothing' in exile, to create a self in freedom rather than kneel to his mother's choice of authorities. He denies his pre-existing attachment to his family and friends ("your people", as Cranly puts it) in favour of a self-made new persona and new existence (the language of making, which is also the language of counterfeiting, dominates the conclusion of the novel: the artificer will forge an identity in exile).

Schwartz's young artist, Shenandoah, blames his "emotion of a loss or lapse of identity" (11) on his unaccustomed idleness, but such an emotion springs from more profound sources. It is no coincidence that Shenandoah has just "returned from Paris" (10): he has returned to the family home from exile, the external circumstance symbolizing an internal process. Although Shenandoah expects "to go back next year", the narrator knows what Shenandoah does not, that his homecoming is permanent and "that it would be impossible for him to go back." Just as there are two 'Belmont's (with a name change to signify other transformations), there are two versions of Stephen Dedalus. The Stephen of *Ulysses* has, like Shenandoah, recently returned from Paris. Also like Shenandoah, Stephen is beginning to realize his identity with his native environment. He reassumes his "secondhand breeks" (5). He acknowledges in guilty visions the sway which his dead mother still has over him: "No, mother! Let me be and let me live" (9). He produces his own version of Cranly's sentimental speech on the centrality of mother's love: "She had saved

⁶ The mother of Schwartz's protagonist is also engaged in domestic tasks, especially in doing the laundry. She informs Shenandoah at one point that he has stayed listening long enough in his dressing-gown. In "her imperative tone, he recognized the strain and the resistance which was part of the relationship of mother and son; which had its cause in the true assumption that mother and son would disagree about what was the right thing to do, no matter what the problem might be" (20).

him from being trampled underfoot and had gone, scarcely having been" (23). He recognizes of young Sargent that "Like him was I" (24). Stephen is no more gratified than Shenandoah by his budding sense of identity with the familiar other. "Let me live" is both an admission of servitude and a plea for independence. In Schwartz's view, however, once the artist recognizes his identity with his environment he can never hope to elude this knowledge. It is useful to recall the comment of Elisa New that "There is no nostalgia in Schwartz's writing and that is the trouble: there is no leaving home" (258). To expand on this observation: there is only the possibility of leaving home as long as there is ignorance of identity.

An interesting transposition has taken place in Schwartz's thought. In the early work, actuality was a confused tangle of facts which required the ordering power of art and metaphysical system to lend it meaning. Truth was an ideal beyond and above our experience. In the forties, between the publication dates of the two versions of "America! America!," Schwartz gradually comes to see truth as a conglomeration of actuality and potentiality, a truth which eternally eludes both system and blind experience. There is no viewpoint which is not a fabrication, beyond that of living and struggling with personal identity. Irony is one type of vision, one way of reaching one component of truth, but it contains its own distortions and severe limitations. And whereas Schwartz's original idealism depended on creations of artists or abstractions of thinkers to provide unity among the disparate facts of the experienced world, his later philosophy saw unity already existing in actuality, especially in the undeniable facts of heredity and environment. The artist was not of necessity drawing unity and harmony out of discord and chaos; rather, being the wrong sort of artist or thinker often interfered with one's perception of an existing "unbreakable unity". Art had always been associated in Schwartz's mind with alienation and exile: this exile was, paradoxically, the only source of the unifying insights which built a human

community. Now there was another source of unifying insight, one which did not risk the distortion of the exile's perspective. The limited perspective of one living in and identifying himself with the actual world appeared sufficient. Shenandoah does not need to think on his past from a Parisian exile. He needs to understand what he shares with those around him, especially, as depicted in the revised "America! America!," to understand that which he shares with his mother. Distance and private irony are insufficient: he needs to learn whether his thoughts, which seem "to have nothing to do with these human beings" (16), are his own hard-won private revelations or are in fact universally shared. The experience of identification is potentially humbling and painful. The uniqueness of Shenandoah's point-of-view seems questionable: he "was not sure at any moment whether the cruelty of the story was in his own mind or in his mother's tongue." The artist, Schwartz suggests, can never stand apart from the world in a watchful exile; rather, if he is honest with himself, he will find himself endlessly merging with his environment. Stephen Dedalus's trio of "silence, exile, and cunning" (247) is to be replaced with breakfast-table conversation, participation, and frankness. Unity and order are there for the poet to discover in actual relationships, and not to impose on actuality from above.

"The World is a Wedding" brings together many strands of Schwartz's thought. The subject matter is the young intellectuals of the preceding decade. The central figure in the circle is Rudyard Bell, a type of the self-centred artist. Everything begins with "the graduation or departure of Rudyard Bell from school, just at the beginning of the great depression" (34). The story begins, then, with an exile: exile from prosperity, from the sheltered world of the school where Rudyard "won all the prizes... and did everything best" (35), and from the home of the parents. Rudyard, the would-be dramatist, declares that "to be a playwright was a noble and difficult profession to which one must give one's whole being" (34), and thereby justifies his

idleness and economic reliance on his sister Laura. In his plays, Rudyard “used character and incident merely as springboards for excursions which were lyrical and philosophical, so that the essential impression was dream-like, abstract, and didactic” (35). The actual, when it is perceived at all, is perceived only for the sake of articulating an unworldly ideal. Such criticism of Rudyard’s plays is in large measure self-criticism: Schwartz’s dramas at their worst indeed use “character and incident merely as springboards”. There is also, however, a more public criticism implied in Schwartz’s words, a criticism of Eliot and of the wrongheaded aesthetic which his followers, Schwartz among them, drew from his example. In a draft of a critical chapter on Eliot’s *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Schwartz questions such a misdirection of energy:

The value of this book, as of much else of Eliot’s, is not the drawing of the ideal, but in the important criticism of the actual which is involved in any such effort to conceive the ideal; and probably without an effort to get at the ideal, Eliot would not succeed so well in expressing his apprehension of the actual; although, on the other hand, we must also say that a genius for the actual may explain Eliot’s misapprehension of the ideal, which is to say, of the possibilities of the actual. [Schwartz’s underlining]

Rudyard is not wrong in his attempt to conceive the ideal, to make his “lyrical and philosophical” excursions. Those investigations, however, are not valuable without a more substantial reference to realized fact. One’s apprehension of the ideal must help one perceive actuality more clearly, both its deficiencies and its possibilities. Rudyard has made of actual incident a springboard to lyrical idealism: he, like Schwartz himself, and like other followers of Eliot, has created a type of writing which appeals to Edmund Kish, the would-be philosopher of the group, but fails to succeed at all outside the intellectual circle.

Laura, Rudyard’s protective sister, provides the necessary complement to Rudyard and to the rest of the “boys”, whose “life as part of the circle was their true life” (36). She speaks up for the

primacy of hated experience. From her post in the kitchen she reminds them of the prior claims of the world and of time: “‘Tick, tick, tick,’ ... ‘O,’ said Laura, ‘That’s just my life ticking away’” (37). Francis French asks Laura if she cannot, for one time, “stop being human for an evening?” Laura, however, is too aware of the actual world to enter into the idealism and intellectualism of the circle. She answers: “I never can, no matter how hard I try. I just keep thinking of the rotten truth, the dirty truth, and nothing but the awful truth.” Rotten, dirty, and awful truths are, nevertheless, only three varieties of truth among an infinite number: Rudyard is not mistaken when he insists on “the profound insight stated in the sentence, ‘Joy is our duty’”, but his idealism needs to be complemented by an awareness of actuality, of the chaotic truths which Laura introduces into the circle.

For the most part, Schwartz draws the old literary parallels between the feminine and the natural/animal side of existence and between the masculine and the higher human faculties. The male characters represent the abstracting and idealizing tendency, and the female characters possess a strong and necessary sense of actuality, with which they deflate the pretensions of the men. Israel Brown is a revered teacher who “did not seem to belong to this world and this life, although he appeared to all to know about everything in this world.” He stands utterly apart from ordinary existence, and even his body takes on otherworldly characteristics, “lean, tall, hollow-cheeked, and Christ-like”. He has exiled himself from life in pursuit of learning, yet he seems thereby to possess knowledge of and essential insights into the actual world. When told that in seeing Israel Brown she has “just seen a genius” (38), Edmund Kish’s mother immediately asks “How much money does he make?” The feminine seems to represent practical and worldly-wise thinking, while the masculine represents the idealist and abstract capacity of the mind. There is, if not a desirable unity or harmony between the two spheres, at least a symbiotic

relationship.⁷ Laura is dependent on Rudyard, even as she attempts “to overthrow the attitudes in which Rudyard took the most pride”. Rudyard and his circle are dependent on Laura in a much more tangible fashion: they rely on her as a waitress and surrogate mother. Rudyard expresses his rosy view that “Love is always at the beginning of everything, that’s obvious” (42). Laura counters that “That’s just an *idea*, that’s nothing but an *idea*. Money is the root of all good”, and it is up to Jacob Cohen, the self-appointed conscience of the group, to articulate the insight that “Everything is mixed in everything else”: Jacob both sees how Rudyard uses his sister to get the means to live and understands “how much Laura desired to be loved”.

How is Jacob able to form such a clear image of the symbiotic relationships among his friends? At first, as the conscience of the circle, he seems to stand apart even in their midst, like the “novelist tangential” of “Far Rockaway”. To a degree, that is true: he is recognized by the circle as a special type of being. Yet the true source of Jacob’s insight is not his separation from the group, but his obsession with it. His tool is a unique, though not infallible, capacity for sympathy. The others in the circle “often discussed each other, but seldom thought about each other when they were alone. They came together in order not to be alone, to escape from deviceless solitude.” Jacob, by contrast, likes to walk the city alone and think

about his friends of the circle. They were objects of his consciousness during his solitude and in this way they existed in his mind like great

⁷ “The World is a Wedding” apparently separated itself from a longer effort entitled *The Story of the Boys and the Girls*. The boys certainly act like boys, but the sole girl in the circle acts like a harassed wife and mother. Schwartz’s concept of actual marriage is rather disappointing when set beside the grand conception of life as a wedding, a rite of unity and inclusion, which Jacob enunciates in his closing speech. The world is a wedding, but a *marriage* is virtual slavery. Laura herself articulates this gap between ideal and reality in her mis-relation of a parable by Kafka in which she represents herself, humorously and tragically, as a cow being devoured by hunters and horses. The story “A Colossal Fortune” paints a tragicomic picture of Schwartz’s own attempts to merge dictatorial masculine traditions with the ideals of companionate marriage: “... Monroe and Kitty seldom saw each other, according to the detailed plan. [...] she should know enough philosophy to share her husband’s intellectual interests. Since she had only a year more at school, she had to engage in a speed-up program, which Monroe had carefully worked out for her” (*Successful Love* 162).

pictures in a famous gallery, pictures which, however, were studied not merely for curiosity and pleasure, but as if they contained some secret of all pictures and all human beings. (43)

Jacob stands apart from his environment and thinks his way back to a world to which he does not really belong. He draws universal conclusions from specific facts, his thoughts leading away from specific affection to abstract knowledge. This process seems not much different from that of Shenandoah looking back on his *bris* and cautioning the audience to see the dining room furnishings as containing “in vivid signs / Certain clear generals of time and place” (272). The difference is not in Jacob’s perception of external reality, but in his perception of his own relationship with and newly discovered share in that reality. Jacob is convinced that “through them he might know his own fate, because of their likeness, difference, and variety”. Recognition of one’s alienation and difference from one’s fellows is important to the thinker or artist, but more important is a recognition of one’s commonality. Jacob tries to put this into the form of an artistic maxim, but he reasons himself into a state of confusion: “You have to love human beings... if you want to write stories about them. Or at least you have to want to love them. Or at least you have to imagine the possibility that you might be able to love them. Maybe that’s not true” (48). Jacob uses the word love, but it appears that one can acknowledge an identity with the other without having any affection for that other. By love, Jacob means a reaching-out toward the other, but he also means an acceptance and a cherishing, and that type of affection does not necessarily result when one approaches the other with sympathy. Jacob is aware that while he himself tries to understand the rest of the circle through self-identification, he nevertheless remains sharply critical of their actions. Love seems to be the right attitude to assume toward the other, but the concept needs to expand to include all sorts of displeasing identifications and experiences of undesired unity with one’s environment.

Jacob struggles to understand the proper stance which he ought to assume toward his peers. He is accepted by the group as their “conscience and the noble critic” (51), but this stature is a byproduct of Jacob’s intense privacy, the emotions of “hopelessness and despair he felt at times, emotions bottomless and overpowering which made him lose all interest or power to be interested in anything outside of himself”. These emotions “persisted for months and made him withdraw from others. Yet these emotions made possible Jacob’s noble indifference, an important part of his moral authority.” Such withdrawal, his self-imposed exile from the circle, enables Jacob to assume an obvious moral stature. We are once again in the world of *Genesis* at this point, where moral preeminence results from non-participation. Yet there is also on Schwartz’s part a new recognition that there are two types of non-involvement, one which refuses to acknowledge common elements in our existence and another which places its faith in a common experience of living (although it does not spare its ‘noble’ criticism when the other is deserving of rebuke). Jacob is asked to mediate in a brother-sister dispute. Rudyard reads at the table. He justifies his habit by claiming that reading at dinner “is a manifestation of the truly human.” Eating “does not satisfy the whole of my being and it is necessary for me to read.” Laura is in favour of conversation, which Rudyard acknowledges to be human yet finds inferior to the more intensely human activity of reading great authors. Full humanity is accessible only to one who turns his back on ordinary human congress and lives in the rarefied air of literature. This is the early Schwartz speaking. Not only is Laura’s conversation not art, it is even insufficient as a representation of actual life. Rudyard reads the newspaper in order to “rejoin the popular life of this city” (53). The “idea of the truly human” supersedes any search for the actual content of such truth. Jacob, however, voicing the philosophy of a mature Schwartz, judges that “Conversation is civilization.”

Whereas unity and conversation dominate the thinking of Jacob, exile is on the minds of the others in the circle. Rudyard announces that an Ark is required, “not an island, not a colony, and not a city state, but an Ark” (68). Ferdinand Harrap immediately takes up the idea: “We will have an enormous poster in huge capitals and on it will be printed: ‘*We have had enough.*’ ‘*We do not like this age*’... ‘*We find it beneath contempt!*’” Ferdinand is described as having an “acute but peculiar intelligence, an intelligence like a squint”, the very language which Schwartz uses elsewhere to describe Eliot’s goodness and perceptions (see chapter one). Ferdinand’s incongruous name also perhaps suggests Sir Ferdinand Klein of Eliot’s “Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar,” the Jew who has ‘passed himself off’ as aristocracy. Ferdinand has likewise passed himself off as an old-money aristocrat:

As soon as he prospered, Ferdinand’s sense of what was good taste became active. His manners became more stiff and more pointed, and he dressed like a dandy, but strangely, as if he were a dandy of the past. And when he had money to spend, his feeling that he must have the best of everything, or nothing, had to be satisfied. He had to have the best orchestra seats at the theatre and he had to have the best dinner at the best restaurants.

Is this yet another of Schwartz’s portraits of his poetic mentor, this time a damning satirical sketch of Eliot as the successful arbiter of taste? It certainly seems as if Schwartz has turned the tables on Eliot, assigning the name and character of Sir Ferdinand, Eliot’s *arriviste* Jew, to Eliot himself. It is a characteristic response from Schwartz: Atlas relates how Schwartz copied the anti-Semitic passage from *After Strange Gods* into his notebook and “substituted ‘Anglo-Catholics’ for Jews” (154). As a response to Eliot’s anti-Semitism, this game of “if I am, so are you” is, of course, wildly insufficient. Anthony Julius takes Schwartz to task for failing to comment in print on Eliot’s racism. It is true that Schwartz almost never committed to print (and especially not in public forums) his anger over this element of his mentor’s work. In fact, he goes

out of his way to avoid such discussion.⁸ How strongly did Eliot's anti-Semitic writings affect Schwartz? In conversation, and at the Princeton Gauss lectures in 1949, Schwartz was apparently forthcoming and bitter. In his published writings, however (and, it appears, in his unpublished papers), Schwartz was exceedingly silent. Julius writes that "It was then and it still is difficult to write about Eliot's anti-Semitic poetry. One risks distorting the work, even defaming the man. When Jewish, one risks even more. One puts in jeopardy one's credentials as a critic. One can seem a philistine" (55). For Julius, Schwartz's reticence is "exemplary of what once was" (56) among Jewish academics.

Schwartz's unpublished chapter on Eliot's anti-Semitism simultaneously praises Eliot for expressing exactly what he sees and feels and ridicules the clarity of the vision expressed, calling that vision a "squint" which compels one to see "things in a given way" (unpublished draft). The fault is Eliot's insufficient sense of the actual. In the beginning, Schwartz called Eliot's critical sense of the actual the poet's greatest gift. Later, he criticized Eliot for identifying the actual too exclusively with the sordid. Now Schwartz makes the final step of denying that Eliot has a strong enough sense of actuality to escape his prejudice. The squint compels a certain way of seeing, and it in turn is compelled by "the circumstances of modern life in authors of a certain kind." According to Schwartz, it is Eliot's understanding of deracination and alienation which makes him the representative modern poet. Because Eliot and his peers are radically alienated from modern society, they are compelled to turn to a radically reactionary concept of tradition which sets the modern order on its head: they become boosters for an idealized aristocratic tradition.

⁸ Julius makes a good point about the obvious evasions in Schwartz's critical overview of *The Criterion* (56). Schwartz's silence are regrettable and inexplicable. Maybe my overview of Schwartz's debts to Eliot goes part way to answering Julius's criticism. To call Eliot an anti-Semite was to throw into question Schwartz's entire poetic inheritance. By the time Schwartz went public with his charges, he had found other reasons to break with Eliot, philosophical self-justifications of which anti-Semitism was only one component.

Anti-Semitism is a misapprehension of reality, but from faulty premises it draws its own infallible logic. If the Jew were not squatting on the window-sill and preventing society from operating properly, then Gerontion would own his own house and be part of an integrated community.

Julius writes: "The 'jew' is on the window sill both because he has been denied any more secure resting place and because he himself may thus deny his tenant peaceable possession of his house" (47). In Schwartz's eyes, Eliot desires order and integrity, and the Jew is just in his way. Eliot is mistaken and insensitive, but for all the right reasons. Julius comes to a different conclusion:

"Though 'Gerontion' purports to be a dramatic monologue, this is a deception. It is not at home in the form; it is in a kind of exile. There is neither revelation nor development, the poem withholding such possibilities" (41). "'Gerontion' resists all consoling visions, including the consolations of anti-Semitism, which is a casualty of its relentless negativity" (59). "The Jew squats on the margins of the poem, his presence explaining nothing" (62).

For Schwartz, Eliot's anti-Semitism is a misdirected idealism. Eliot hates because he wrongly identifies the Jew as an obstacle to his desired social order. For Julius, Eliot merely hates: Gerontion knows that the Jew is not responsible for his state, but that knowledge does not neutralize his derision. Julius identifies many other strands of anti-Semitic thought in Eliot's oeuvre: Eliot's is "an anti-Semitism of considerable range" (146). I have focused on Julius's discussion of "Gerontion" because it reveals by way of contrast why Schwartz had to attempt to fit Eliot's racism into a logical framework. In Schwartz's estimation, Eliot has merely gone astray by favouring ideals over actual observation. Had Eliot seen more clearly what the "actual present and likely future of any landed aristocracy... has been and will be", then the poet would have welcomed the Jews. In Julius's view, the poet does see clearly, yet he still excludes the Jews. The correct perception and celebration of the actual involves not only the love of created things

but also the inexplicable hatred of some of the same. Schwartz's growing celebration of spontaneity has this dark underside: cruelty is spontaneous as well as charity. Schwartz could seldom afford to face that truth in his art or in his relationship with Eliot. Fortunately, Eliot provided Schwartz with a way out of the impasse. Eliot's anti-Semitic prose pronouncements appear in the context of Eliot's elaboration of the good society. In his poetry, the statements were liable to be read in a similar vein. The declaration that "The Jew is underneath the lot" (43) and the dismissal of "Rachel nee Rabinovitch" (59) may be read as examples of bad economic theory and snobbishness. Julius reminds us that they should also be read as unreflecting venom, as negation of one thing without the intent to necessarily affirm something else.

Schwartz gives his portrait of Eliot the name of Eliot's *arriviste* Klein, and implies that if Sir Ferdinand is out of his proper station, Eliot is too. Both are supporters of a hereditary aristocracy and a traditional form of society to which they can never really belong, and which in fact never existed. A secret and faulty logic and a distorted idealism reveals itself in all aspects of Ferdinand's life: "A severe, private, hardly understood code ruled Ferdinand in all things. He regarded certain acts as good behavior and everything else, every difference, change, or departure as infamous and to be denounced". From Schwartz's 1949 essay "The Literary Dictatorship of T.S. Eliot" comes the following assertion about Eliot's own "hardly understood code": "Nor could anyone have guessed or suspected that he would praise Byron and Kipling, among other unlikely possibilities. But on the other hand, there is a real unity in back of all these seemingly contradictory judgments" (*Selected Essays* 314). Ferdinand always judged external actions by a "strict and personal standard", but his "constraint and stiffness made him speak in a very low voice, so that often enough the most extraordinary insult was left unheard." When the Ark idea is suggested, Ferdinand immediately hails it as brilliant and, as I have noted above, elaborates the

idea in a reactionary fashion, denouncing the entire age as "*beneath contempt*". Francis French adds that "discrimination is of the essence of this idea. There is no Ark unless we exercise the most pure, exact, and exacting discrimination" (69). Ferdinand goes further than the rest and declares that "This life... can go and take a flying La Rochefoucauld for itself" (71), his words recalling Eliot's "The 'Boston Evening Transcript'": "I mount the steps and ring the bell, turning / Wearily, as one would turn to nod good-bye to La Rochefoucauld, / If the street were time and he at the end of the street" (*Collected Poems* 30). It is at this point that Jacob's objections to the circle's ideals truly begin to surface. He tells them that "there is something that must be said for life. This idea of the Ark is only an idea, and yet we all hold back. There is no flood of rejections and renunciations. We are all too much in love with many things, whether we have them or not".

Jacob opposes the tide of discrimination and rejection with an image of the world as a wedding, a coming together of "God and Nature. This is the first of all the marriages" (90).⁹ The powerful description of Breughel's "The Peasant Wedding" with which Jacob says farewell to the circle places us on the threshold of Schwartz's late poetic style. The wedding includes both he who actively joins in the celebration and he who wants to stand apart from the festivities, the "suitor whom the bride refused... I know that he is there too, perhaps among the crush that crowds the door. He is present and he looks from a distance like death at happiness" (92). The image within the frame captures everyone, both participants and exiles. The actual fact of living subsumes one's attitude toward experience. The old musician "looks far away as if he were thinking of his faded hopes", but he is unable to remove himself from the larger unity of the scene on the canvas. Exile is an impossibility in this all-inclusive understanding of life: "there are

⁹ According to Schwartz's second wife, Elizabeth Pollet, whom he married in 1949, Schwartz "always said he believed in God" (Schwartz, *Portrait* xi). This assertion, of course, conflicts with Schwartz's statement in "Fiction Chronicle: Dear Uncle James," quoted above.

enough places and parts for everyone" (93). Jacob's monologue is beautiful, but it is so grandiose and tries so hard to give comfort that the disappointed Laura mistrusts it. She offers a dark restatement of Jacob's theme, finding union not in life but in death: "the world is a funeral. We are all going to the grave, no matter what you say. Let me give you one good piece of advice: *Let your conscience be your bride.*" Laura's consciousness of death, a solemn unflinching acceptance and preparation reminiscent of Eliot's "Animula," is a rebuke to Jacob's enthusiasm. Jacob's sermon, however, is too vividly portrayed to be easily canceled out. The two ideas, Jacob's faith in an imagined unity beneath the diversity of experience, and Laura's recognition of unity in life's ultimate limitation, both produce an identification of the self with the other, one through participation in shared life, the other through meditation on shared fate. Jacob counsels recognition of what is already there, joy in the actual. Laura suggests contemplation of what will not be, humility in the face of the dismal potential. The union of the two outlooks recalls the two complementary paths described by Eliot in "The Cocktail Party." Laura's awareness comes, however, not from Celia's type of faith; rather, it comes from Schwartz's experience of disillusionment. Schwartz holds the two perspectives in balance, although the joy he takes in Jacob's language suggests where his sympathies now lie, just as Eliot's attractive presentation of Celia suggests the nature of his preference. Laura's negative way receives pride of place, but such evenhandedness will not last.

The following chapter will explore Schwartz's embrace of experienced actuality, especially in the form of natural process and seasonal rhythms. The portrait of the reactionary, discriminatory Ferdinand Harrap is Schwartz's last, unflattering fictional portrait of Eliot. Schwartz's new masters will be Wallace Stevens and, in a remarkable act of resurrection, James Joyce, who is no longer with Eliot an arch-exile, but becomes instead the ultimate participant. Like Stephen

Dedalus, the artist often must go away from his home, not fearing “to be alone or to be spurned for another or to leave whatever I have to leave” (247), even if, as Schwartz comes to believe, such a move is “a mistake, even a great mistake, a lifelong mistake, and perhaps as long as eternity too.” Stephen Dedalus, however, makes his last appearance not in his diary, but in the “Ithaca” episode of *Ulysses*, where all possible points of similarity as well as dissimilarity between Stephen and Bloom are minutely dissected. It is the Joyce of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* who matches Schwartz’s early understanding of exile, but it is the Joyce of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* whom Schwartz takes as his model of the artist as celebrant and participant. Stephen’s last act is to participate in a natural cycle by urinating, doing so together with a virtual stranger.¹⁰ Exile is now viewed as merely one stage through which the best of artists pass as they come to recognize an identity with and a pleasure in external reality: in the words of Schwartz’s poetic tribute, Joyce created joy

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.

(*Last and Lost* 44)

In Schwartz’s eyes, Joyce, although he continued living in exile, had passed through that stage, whereas Eliot never had. How successfully Schwartz himself passed from “disgust and despair” to celebration of “all things, all beings” remains to be assessed in the final chapter. What is

¹⁰ Joyce, however, never allows us to entirely forget either the differences between the two or their separation from the natural world, both signified by Bloom’s circumcision.

important here is to note that in the moment of greatest affirmation, Joyce nevertheless has each protagonist critique the other's "audible collateral organ" (577). Criticism and celebration are intertwined in Joyce's mature vision. Whereas Schwartz over-emphasized Joyce the exile in his early reading, he tended to enlist a somewhat unwilling Joyce as a democrat in his later vision. When Schwartz's writing succeeds, it is because he himself holds these two tendencies in balance. Pure affirmation of experience has its own pitfalls as well as its rewards, both of which I will explore in my final chapter.

Chapter V

“I can be someone new”:

Searching for New Heroes, Struggling with Celebration

The appraisals of Delmore Schwartz's late work made by friends and critics in the late 1960s and 1970s were dominated by the understandable impact of the dismal decline in Schwartz's personal fortunes. The common perception is encapsulated in John Berryman's well-known remark: “I'd bleed to say his lovely work improved / but it is not so” (*Dream Songs* 169). Schwartz undeniably produced much poor writing in the last years of his life. That fact is, however, not in itself proof of a decline in his art: even in his early years Schwartz had published a great deal of flat, overly didactic work.

His early verse generally failed when he brought in “his ideas and values” too “openly and clearly” (*Genesis* viii). This tendency, I have argued, was one of Schwartz's twin legacies from T.S. Eliot, the other being a belief in objective distance as a hallmark of successful poetry. The early verse is superior where Schwartz is able to wed these two attitudes. In the best work, Schwartz's borrowings from the European tradition lose their independent existence and help articulate his private vision. In the early poem “Abraham and Orpheus, Be With Me Now,” the two title characters are not fully realized. They exist as familiar cultural abstractions which help relate the poet's introspective discoveries to the values of his society and civilization. Their presence guarantees that the poet's private concerns and confusions are worth public attention. The poet reminds the reader that his own obsessions were long ago shared by the most famous figures in Western religion, literature and myth. Harry Morton's self-serving contention that all

the heroes of Western culture were “intellectuals” (“An Argument in 1934”) is a parody of this technique, a parody undertaken by an older Schwartz who had distanced himself somewhat from his early approach but not wholly abandoned that manner. Where the work succeeds, Schwartz’s confessions and cultural citations merge to lift the confession above the private and ephemeral. In turn, he illuminates an ancient precedent by relating it to a specific modern context and image: the poem “In the Naked Bed, in Plato’s Cave” exemplifies this dual process in its very title. Where Schwartz’s early work fails, it is because he engages in cultural name-dropping or ‘idea-dropping’. The intrusive ghosts of *Genesis* and “Coriolanus and His Mother” often exemplify this failure (in both these works, however, Schwartz intermittently achieves, often against his declared intentions, another type of success: the burlesque diminution of great men and great ideas, the ‘vaudeville’ manner developed in Schwartz’s prose interludes to *Vaudeville For a Princess*).¹

To judge success in Schwartz’s later work, one must adopt a rather different critical perspective. Whereas literary and philosophical tradition formerly provided the link between

¹ Anthony Julius draws attention to Eliot’s own burlesque tendencies, exemplified by “Dirge,” one of the sections deleted from “The Waste Land”. He calls “Dirge” “a spoliation of art” which “is parasitic upon and yet destructive of the beauty and riches of other texts” (132), specifically *The Tempest*. According to Julius, it was “Dada’s lesson, which Eliot refused to grant in his criticism, while improving upon in his poetry,... that defacing has its own artistic possibilities.” In his criticism Eliot argues that bad poets “deface what they take” and good poets “make it into something better” (*Selected Prose* 153). Julius responds that “Bad poets cannot get close enough to antecedent works to deface them.... Good poets deface, on occasion; bad poets feebly borrow” (131). Schwartz and Eliot shared a respect for cultural tradition. They also shared, however, a tendency toward iconoclasm. The outsider can claim a place within a tradition by being respectfully conversant with its great works or he may instead smash existing works in the process of “redeeming them from staleness” (Julius 128). “Dirge” “savages both Ariel’s song and the ‘poetical’ sea... recovering them for its own poetry of contempt and loathing” (127-28). In “Someone Is Harshly Coughing as Before,” Schwartz asks God’s pardon for characterizing him as a “poor Keats” who has “caught cold again” (37). The poet extenuates the burlesque metaphor by arguing that “Only the cartoon is lucid, only the curse is heard”. The vaudevillian and the pious were not antagonistic stances for Schwartz. In “Sarah,” the Biblical protagonist jokes with the angel: “Who was laughing? I did not laugh. It was a cough. I was coughing” (*Selected Poems* 232). Schwartz uses burlesque comedy to breath new life into Sarah, to humanize and not to sacrilege the Biblical account.

subject and object, the participation of the artist in his natural and social environment now plays a similar role. In the early work, aspirations of the soul and works of imagination lift the subject out of its exile in the isolated self, the twin prisons of body and consciousness. In the later work, Schwartz celebrates his participation in the life of the community, not only an ideal community composed of great minds, but an actual community of living people, often people lacking his own degree of knowledge and self-awareness. The poet does not lament the emptiness of lived experience, as Schwartz did in "Father and Son" or "Far Rockaway". He instead uses his gift of observation and his talent for self-examination to celebrate those lived events which would otherwise pass by without comment or praise. One of the greatest paradoxes of Schwartz's later years is that even as his literary friends were puzzled and pained by his retreat into apparent solitude and paranoia his verse increasingly celebrated community and spontaneity. According to Berryman, Schwartz "painfully removed / himself from the ordinary contacts / and shook with resentment." Saul Bellow's Humboldt, a fictionalized Schwartz, is ruined (in part) by his retreat to the New Jersey countryside: "He was becoming one of the big-time solitaires. And he wasn't meant to be solitary. He was meant to be in active life, a social creature. His schemes and projects revealed this" (25). The critics are understandably divided as to whether excessive spontaneity, the uncritical worship of mania and frenzy, went hand in hand with madness, or whether, following the opinion of Bellow and Berryman, it was isolation and self-consciousness which fed Schwartz's paranoia. Such arguments obscure the reality of his illness, making Schwartz the sick man a victim of a mere literary style. Such arguments also prevent one from seeing the merits and weaknesses of Schwartz late work very clearly. They obscure the merits and demerits of his early work, which often gains unjustifiably from a sentimental comparison: wonderful promise, horrible decline.

In his biography of Schwartz, James Atlas (concurring with Alfred Kazin) makes the highly dubious claim that there is a special peril in madness visited upon a logical mind. Schwartz's madness, it is argued, "was too intellectual. There was an element of calculation in Delmore's bizarre interpretation of reality, a conviction that logic was at work in the world, and it was this idea that made him so tenacious in his lawsuits" (326). Schwartz's early philosophical idealism is used, unjustly, to explain his illness. Whatever the psychological reality, Schwartz's poetry, at least, belies this observation. Long before Atlas, Plato considered the possibility of a reasonable madness. In the classroom exchange between Schwartz and Whitehead which I quoted in Chapter Three, professor and student debate some lines from *Phaedrus*. Immediately preceding those particular lines in Plato's dialogue is the famous discussion of the poet as madman. Socrates discerns four types of "inspired madness" (Jowett translation 401): that of the prophet; the purifying madness which releases a man's mind "from the calamity which afflicts him" (402); the "possession of the Muses"; and finally, the higher madness which is "imputed to him who, when he sees the beauty of earth, is transported with the recollection of the true beauty; he would like to fly away, but he can not; he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below; and he is therefore esteemed mad" (408). This fourth type of madness is the one Atlas discerns in Schwartz. Kazin and Atlas compare Blake's "saving madness" (Socrates's second category) with Schwartz's faith in a rational order behind the visible creation: the poet's eye "in a fine frenzy rolling, / Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* V.i.12-13). Schwartz's paranoid theories certainly provide evidence of an irrational search for rational order, including as they did everyone from Nelson Rockefeller to Saul Bellow. Yet Schwartz's late poetry makes no such claims for rationality. There is no need to postulate a Platonic world of more beautiful, more perfect forms beyond our experience.

Human perception leads toward the threshold of the infinite, but the mature poet does not try to define the nature of that infinity: that which is beyond our perception and beyond our actual experience is also beyond even the power of the most 'mad' imagination to illuminate. The role of the poet is to submerge himself in actual existence and through that submersion report on and celebrate the disorderly actual. Schwartz's poetic madness is the second variety discriminated by Socrates, that by which one mercifully forgets the self and its private tragedies. As Schwartz's actual relationships deteriorated, his poetry provided a consolatory vision of communion and self-surrender.

Schwartz's late work leaves behind all 'higher madness'; the poetry should be judged by how accurately it, in the words of Robert Phillips, "re-creates a sensuous experience" (Schwartz, *Last and Lost* xiv). Richard McDougall's criticism of Schwartz's "The Kingdom of Poetry" rings true. He quotes approvingly one of Schwartz's own pronouncements from the poem: "For poetry is gay and exact. It says: / 'The sunset resembles a bull-fight. / A sleeping arm feels like a soda, fizzing'" (*Selected Poems* 188). McDougall then charges that "The Kingdom of Poetry" "is neither 'gay' nor 'exact.' It betrays its own definition" (127). To talk merely about the artist's participation in experience is insufficient. The poet must communicate that experience in appropriately vivid language. In Schwartz's early work, one must maintain an exile's distance from experience if one is to represent the actual. Only experience transformed by distance and time can be elevated by the poet's craft to the status of art. To become meaningful or beautiful, experience must be sifted and shaped into an order which, in its raw state, it seems to lack. A mature Schwartz finds that such external tampering with the actual distorts it rather than makes possible its representation. Whether or not he is correct, one must admit that Schwartz's late work often fails to be true to its own mission, a mission anticipated by a very young Schwartz in a

1931 letter where he vows (and makes that vow a manifesto on behalf of his New York circle)

“To use words as translations of reality, not a cheap band music” (*Letters* 8).

“The Heavy Bear Who Goes With Me” had, one recalls, an epigraph from Alfred North Whitehead, “the witness of the body”. The spirit is forced to articulate its aspirations through the very unsatisfactory medium of the body. In his 1959 collection of selected and new poems, Schwartz responds to his own youthful idealism with another epigraph. “Vivaldi” is preceded by the phrase “witness is all” (176). Experienced reality is everything, typified by music, an art which “has no meaning and is possessed by all meaning” (176), and love, “the open secret of everything, / An open secret useless as the blue!” (177). In listening to music, we cease to imagine or desire anything but more actuality: “The answered question is: Our being. Our presence. Our surrender” (178). Schwartz argues that the self must possess and master itself before it can achieve a higher state of self-forgetting. The image of the cough, which represented consciousness in *Genesis* and in “Someone Is Harshly Coughing as Before,” makes a significant reappearance (178). The forgetting of which Schwartz is speaking only becomes possible once one has first attained and then rejected the utmost extreme of self-consciousness. This belief appears so close to that of Eliot’s *Four Quartets* that some comparison is essential. Eliot suggests that we will find escape from time in one of two directions, that of light or that of darkness. In this world, however, we discover neither

daylight
Investing form with lucid stillness
Turning shadow into transient beauty
With slow rotation suggesting permanence
Nor darkness to purify the soul
Emptying the sensual with deprivation
Cleansing affection from the temporal.
Neither plenitude nor vacancy. (192)

Only a permanent exile in a “world of perpetual solitude” (193) can approximate the negative way, which is essentially the same as the affirmative way “not in movement / But abstention from movement”. Schwartz’s recommendation, it now emerges, is that one join the movement of time instead of hunting for meaning in the procession of events. Instead of trying to discover the nature of the “Patterns in motion and in action, successions / Of processionals” (176), one ought to simply celebrate their succession. Eliot’s “time-ridden faces” (192) are “Filled with fancies and empty of meaning” (193): “Men and bits of paper” are sadly comparable; whereas for Schwartz, the faces glimpsed within the procession of time are comparable to flowers, flowers “of fear and hope, longing and despair” (177), to be sure, but nevertheless visions of surpassing beauty.

The question inevitably arises: is Schwartz’s style adequate to his message? He sets out to imitate the loss of self-consciousness which we experience when listening to great music, that state (admittedly much idealized by Schwartz) in which one’s only awareness is that of notes succeeding each other in time. For Schwartz, this experience is as close as we can come to a pure participation in time’s passage. In hearing Vivaldi we achieve pure sensuous existence, uninterrupted by a reflexive consciousness. Unfortunately, the attempt to *imitate* such an experience is not necessarily the same as the attempt to *discuss* that experience. Schwartz’s marginal tempo markings suggest that he wants not only to talk *about* Vivaldi, but also to re-create Vivaldi’s music in a different medium. Such lines as “moving with the majesty of certainty / To part the unparted curtains, to bring the chandeliers / Into the saraband of courtiers who have bowed and curtsied” show that Schwartz is, while not abandoning rational sense, first and foremost calling attention to the rhythmic movement of words, and only secondarily making his ‘argument’. The images, however, strain too hard to be ‘picturesque.’ The language is too abstract to be truly sensuous. Schwartz’s “Vivaldi” is, in large part, the “cheap band music”

reviled in the letter to Julian Sawyer. It keeps time well enough, but it fails to translate reality into language in a manner appropriate to the written word. Schwartz is quite conscious that words are never empty units of rhythm. The poem is fairly clear and rationally convincing about the experience of music-listening. Schwartz fails not by ignoring the meaning of words but by neglecting the power of the image in language. The experience of hearing Vivaldi is pure sense-experience (Schwartz argues), whereas Schwartz's language is too abstract to appeal to the senses. My criticism is exactly that which Schwartz made of Eliot's imagery in *Four Quartets*: "the images seem *made*, self-imitative, forced; they have the look of the artificial, and when they are intended as emblematic or established symbols, they look merely decorative" ("Anywhere Out of the World" 102).

Elsewhere in his late poems Schwartz better succeeds in simultaneously speaking *about* actuality and creating a literary translation of sensuous experience. The nature of "Seurat's Sunday Afternoon along the Seine," a poetic description of George Seurat's painting "La Grande Jatte," ensures that the poet cannot neglect exact description. The poet begins with the question "What are they looking at?" (190), and immediately suggests two tangible, obvious answers ("the river"; "The sunlight on the river") and three very intangible, abstract answers ("the summer, leisure, / Or the luxury and nothingness of consciousness"). The holiday scene is essentially that of the early poem "Far Rockaway," and once again the artist is near to yet excluded from the picture. The "one who beholds them" is "himself unseen" (whether 'he' is God the creator or Seurat the sub-creator, Schwartz refuses initially to differentiate). The project of this artist is, however, very different from that of "Far Rockaway"'s "nervous conscience amid the concessions". Instead of an introspective or critical intelligence, this artist possesses a capacity for "supreme concentration" on external reality. He unites "the love of life and the love of light":

by repetition of the phrase, Schwartz's privileges the "love of life." Schwartz accepts his own prescription: the first two pages of the poem are a record of multiple visual sensations. He encapsulates his new aesthetic in the words "If you look long enough at anything / It will become extremely interesting" (191). This pronouncement is then varied slightly to make it an ethical imperative: "If you can look at any thing for long enough, / You will rejoice in the miracle of love". The artist is celebrated for having a simple vision which is "also ample, complex, vexed, and profound / In emulation of the fullness of Nature maturing and enduring and toiling with the chaos of actuality" (195). Merely by showing his figures in full enjoyment of an afternoon, Seurat has helped them escape time. The holiday escapes which Schwartz derides in "Father and Son" are tickets to immortality for these people. The artist has fixed them in a picture for all time, but it is their own unselfconscious enjoyment of the moment which is the prior and truer method of eluding time:

Assured as the trees is the strolling dignity
 Of the bourgeois wife who holds her husband's arm
 With the easy confidence and pride of one who is
 - She is sure - a sovereign Victorian empress and queen.
 Her husband's dignity is as solid as his *embonpoint*.
 He holds a good cigar, and a dainty cane, quite carelessly.
 He is held by his wife, they are each other's property,
 Dressed quietly and impeccably, they are suave and grave
 As if they were unaware or free of time, and the grave,
 Master and mistress of Sunday's promenade - of everything!
 As they are absolute monarchs of the ring-tailed monkey. (191)

As in "An Argument in 1934," actuality has a "dignity", which is once again punningly related to human anatomy.

In the promenade "of everything" there is bound to be injustice: the repose of the scene depends on the wealth of Victorian imperialism, suggested by the monkey stolen from Africa, for whose keep the husband will "tax the Congo" (190). There is ignorance: the conviction of the

strollers that they are immortal is illusory. Yet Schwartz's poem is primarily a vision of inclusion. Once more the world is a wedding. Both artists, Seurat and Schwartz, delight in the ephemeral details of existence. Schwartz further diminishes all the dark realities which have been banished from the Sunday scene. Those dark elements peek through, but their impact remains small until the poem's final page. There Schwartz, without diminishing the value of Seurat's vision, admits that the canvas is a dream-image for one like himself, and indeed for every human being. Such repose in delight is fleeting. Its image only survives because the painter was "fanatical" (194) enough to master his technique and then use it to record one afternoon's tranquil actuality.

References to architecture and fanatical attention to craft, as well as Schwartz's lingering over the details of the painting's Victorian bourgeois milieu (especially the "*embonpoint*" and the "cane"), ought to lead one's thoughts from Seurat, the ostensible subject of the artwork, to another artist of fanatical patience, intricate design, and bourgeois subject matter, James Joyce. Schwartz's *Selected Essays* contains three essays on Eliot, three on Stevens, and two apiece on Pound, Yeats and Faulkner. It contains, oddly enough, no full-length appraisal of Joyce. The editors of the volume defend the surprising omission by quite correctly arguing that "Two short pieces could have been included, but the editors thought them too perfunctory, too hastily journalistic to represent adequately Delmore's vast knowledge of the work of his chief literary hero" (xiii). In the little that he did write on his idol, Schwartz celebrated the way Joyce, "Despite his love of style in itself and language for its own sake" moved "constantly from word to thing, and from language to the experience which language should illuminate" ("The Early Joyce"). In an act of self-discipline and compassion Joyce employs his baroque "verbal genius" to represent "actual things and actual human beings": "he is at once a great stylist and a great realist." In "Our Poor Dead King," Schwartz takes to task those critics who have pigeonholed Joyce as solely a

verbal virtuoso: "*Finnegans Wake* at first reading obviously encourages such a view, since one encounters Joyce's method at a level of complication such that one does not recognize the immense *actuality* which the method has illuminated and *grasped in language*" [my italics]. By 1959, Schwartz was extolling Joyce as the only proper mentor for American thinkers and writers, turning him into an Irish emigrant who sailed the wrong way: "*Finnegans Wake* is, as Joyce says, a letter to the New World, a guided missile, a text of hope addressed to the future and to America" ("Ulysses in Nighttown" 17). The distortions of reality imposed in the fifties by "a new 'Russian general'" (the Soviet Union) are portrayed as the polar opposite to Joyce's intense realism.

Joyce is still acknowledged as the supreme example of the literary exile. Schwartz, however, paraphrasing Meyer Shapiro in a 1951 essay, redefines what exile means in the postwar, post-Holocaust world. Joyce's identification with the Jews is at issue. Schwartz and Shapiro claim that Joyce, like the Jew, is "at once alienated and indestructible, he is at once an exile from his own country and an exile even from himself, yet he survives the annihilating fury of history" (*Selected Essays* 23). Joyce's fidelity to his poetic vocation is his guarantee that he cannot be destroyed. The nature of that vocation and why it guarantees Joyce indestructibility is not explored by Schwartz in this brief passage. It seems to me, however, that Schwartz does attempt a more considered statement in "Seurat's Sunday Afternoon." The entire poem is a manifesto of Schwartz's mature aesthetic. The poem is a tribute not only to Seurat, but to the ideal artist described in the poem, an artist who resembles James Joyce in essential points. The Paris setting encourages such a reading, as does the nature of Schwartz's praise: "Subtle and delicate too as one who played a Mozart sonata, alone, under the spires of Notre-Dame. / Quick and utterly sensitive, purely real and practical, / Making a mosaic of the little dots into a mural of the

splendor of order” (195). The dedication to Meyer and Lillian Shapiro also provides a hint. Shapiro’s lectures on Seurat ostensibly inspired Schwartz’s poem, but one can easily assume that Shapiro and Schwartz’s private discussions about Joyce fueled Schwartz’s imagination to an equal degree. It is Joyce’s spectacular and dignified attention to actual and apparently trivial details such as “tickets quickly torn and thrown away” which makes his work resistant to history’s “fury”. His small acts of preservation within a grand design are powerful testimony to humanity’s indestructibility. The phrase “thrown away” itself recalls Leopold Bloom’s “throwaway”.

While the final page of “Seurat’s Sunday Afternoon” does not negate what has come before, the conclusion does severely qualify Schwartz’s message. As in “The World is a Wedding,” Schwartz first describes a picture which includes anyone and everyone, and then follows that description with a voice lamenting its own exclusion from the scene. The delight which Schwartz takes in the painting is now revealed to be the pleasure of memory: “Seurat’s *Sunday Afternoon along the Seine* has gone away, / Has gone to Chicago: near Lake Michigan, / All of his flowers shine in monumental stillness fulfilled” (196). Seurat’s vision remains, but the actual work of art is distant and invisible. The voice of Kafka concludes the poem on a note of despair, which is also the poet’s own fear:

Flaubert was right: *Ils sont dans le vrai!*
Without forbears, without marriage, without heirs,
Yet with a wild longing for forbears, marriage, and heirs:
They all stretch out their hands to me: but they are too far away!

Kafka’s sense of alienation is also that of Seurat, whom Schwartz describes repeatedly as a “fanatic” and a “saint”. It is Joyce’s sense of dispossession in exile, although Joyce’s “wild longing” was, in his private life, fulfilled. The hands of the strollers reach out to the artist: his welcome into their kingdom is not in doubt. The exile, however, is unable to come to them. He

needs a new aesthetic in order to approach that kingdom, and gaining that artistic method will entail sacrificing an important part of the self. Unless the poet develops a strategy and takes a new attitude toward experience, the attitude elaborated in Schwartz's poem, despair will be not only Kafka's lot but also the lot of the poet.

This stage of Schwartz's artistic development corresponds to Harold Bloom's *askesis*, in which the poet "yields up part of his own human and imaginative endowment, so as to separate himself from others, including the precursor" (15). Schwartz separates himself from Eliot by forfeiting his own distance from the lives depicted on the canvas. Michael Seidel writes:

Narrative forges two kinds of scenes, the first a counter or allegorical space where the 'I am' of character projects a being that sustains an inscriptive sovereignty, and the second a mimetic space that limits the absolute otherness of the 'I am' by supposing a recognizable world to which it is answerable." (15)

In Schwartz's opinion, exile from the community gave Kafka his imaginative power, his "inscriptive sovereignty". In the name of community and participation, however, Schwartz must himself relinquish that type of sovereignty: Seurat's mimesis and Kafka's inventiveness (or Eliot's idealism) cannot coexist. Schwartz denies himself "part of his own human and imaginative endowment", believing that sympathy, rejoicing (as opposed to Kafka's "despair"), and fidelity to what Charles Taylor labels the central modern moral source, "the affirmation of ordinary life" (211), are all higher artistic goods than detachment. The thought that the poet's beloved Kafka might have to be given up in the process makes an insoluble dilemma of the poem. Furthermore, there is the undeniable fact that Schwartz himself is, if not "without marriage", certainly "without heirs". Schwartz's aesthetic celebrates a state of existence which the poet fears he cannot have *in actuality*. The commandment is to rejoice, but the natural inclination is to despair. The poet reaches out to the bourgeois strollers, and must, as a result, draw back from Kafka (or Eliot).

According to Harold Bloom's theory of influence, the poet clears himself an imaginative space by separating himself from the precursor. Schwartz, however, no sooner clears himself an imaginative space than he fills the hole back up with new precursors, Seurat and Joyce. For Bloom, such a move is a betrayal of the poetic self: "Poets as poets cannot accept substitutions, and fight to the end to have their initial chance alone" (8).

Schwartz acts as a moralist, but he is *also* acting as a poet: the artistic successes of his early mentors pale before the greater artistic successes of his new role models. Schwartz wants to attach himself to the highest good (which now appears to be Taylor's "affirmation"), but he also wants to attach himself to the most glorious artistic lineage (which now appears to be that of Seurat and Joyce). Morality and poetic self-aggrandizement need not be antagonistic. In *The Republic*, Socrates enumerates "the prizes and rewards and gifts which are bestowed upon the just by gods and men in this present life" (Jowett translation 406): although recompenses after death are infinitely more important, Socrates is obliged to prove, in order to convince his audience of the benefits of being just, that even in the here-and-now justice is no worse than injustice, and is in fact much more lucrative. Likewise, in adopting his new aesthetic, Schwartz has the double benefit of aligning himself both with the good and with Joyce, the best of poets (Schwartz, in "The Vocation of the Poet," argues in favour of labeling *Finnegans Wake* poetry, not prose). The mechanics of Harold Bloom's argument are, nevertheless, quite painfully sound: Schwartz can never entirely give up his critical distance from reality. The last page of "Seurat's Sunday Afternoon" registers Schwartz's intense sorrow that Seurat's vision, however morally and aesthetically supreme, is either alien or inaccessible to many of his favourite artists.

Schwartz's new aesthetic is one of participation and joyful immersion, but adherence to that aesthetic requires strength of will and frequent self-correction. In a passage from the late story

“Tales from the Vienna Woods,” Schwartz’s alter-ego Tobias makes explicit the author’s philosophy. His need to fortify himself with drink, however, demonstrates the unnaturalness and extreme self-consciousness of the author’s new-found embrace of nature and unselfconsciousness: “One for the strength never to despair..., one never to forget how hope is a way of being alive and living with the real people. One for Emma, one for Ethel, one for Arabel, one for the Danish girl, one for Isabel, one for the power that moves the sun” (*Successful Love* 51). The poet has always wished to see himself as an exile from his society. The conclusion of “Seurat’s Sunday Afternoon” reveals that Schwartz maintained that sense of alienation even as his new sense of art demanded communion. When his work required critical distance, the young Schwartz found, to his irritation, nagging proofs of community. Now that his art requires community, the mature Schwartz can perceive only proofs of his exile. His journal from 1944 contains this telling meditation:

... walked to the doctor’s, returned to the barber’s, finding both of them closed because it was Patriot’s Day, in Massachusetts a holiday.

Even to this fact, some significance can be attached; for my kind of life and awareness so places me in the community that I do not know what is closed on Patriot’s Day. (*Portrait* 177)

An artist, a Jew, and a self-conscious intellectual could never, it seemed to Schwartz, share the unselfconscious joy which others so easily took in imminent experience. Joining in the celebration of actuality and preaching infinite hope is a difficult task for such a writer. The characters of Schwartz’s late fiction (collected in *Successful Love and Other Stories*) attempt to join the mainstream of American life, often against their own better judgment. They are not rebuffed by society at large; indeed, they are warmly welcomed. It is, rather, their own reservations about their participation in the joys and vulgarities of American life which keep these characters on the outside. Professor Robbins, in “The Fabulous Twenty-Dollar Bill,” is a scholar whose “fame was

such that distinguished visitors to the university were flattered when he entertained them" (59), yet "he never was at ease with strangers". He therefore drinks heavily to prepare himself for the cocktail party. His students mistake "his failings or his weak days as cunning devices and pedagogic methods", a situation any professor would envy. Robbins's acceptance by his community is complete, but his own acceptance of that acceptance is problematic.

In "An American Fairy Tale," one of the characters is accused of being a "lackey of the lower middle class" (*Successful Love* 102) because he does not share his friend's admiration of the Soviet Union. Sylvester replies "hopelessly and hopefully" that he just wants "to be a human being... a human being and an American". The fate of Paul, his accuser, points out the difficulty of fulfilling such a desire. Paul gradually comes to admire the "pleasures and comforts" (107) of success as fervently as he had once admired Communism. Paul's father had often told him "he ought to be a capitalist himself... instead of joining the traitors and revolutionists who were trying to destroy capitalism and take over the family business" (103). Paul becomes a success as a jazz bandleader, but he nevertheless gets no applause from his father: the businessman father has become, rather implausibly, a serious artist in his spare time, like Wallace Stevens. The son has achieved the easy integration with society and with the existing order which the father has preached all along. Now, however, the father unexpectedly asks Paul where his integrity has gone: "Don't you see that you will be much more satisfied with yourself in the long run, if you stop wasting your time on pleasing the public" (108).

Roger Calhoun, one of the protagonists of "Successful Love," says to his wife in a moment of exasperation, "Sometimes you make me feel just as I feel when I read the Sunday edition of *The New York Times*... contemplating a world I never made, nor desired, nor like, nor trust, and about which no one has ever consulted me" (4). He tries to make the mental leap from his own

vanished youth, his “tormented shyness” (11) in love matters, to the world of his daughter and her seemingly unromantic suitors. Sent to clean up Susan’s New York apartment, Roger discovers the last letter of her Korea-bound boyfriend. He is pleased to see that the letter “was not precisely a proposal of marriage, but surely it expressed genuine affection and sympathy, assuming that he was capable of recognizing those sentiments in a generation so distant from himself and the life he had lived” (35). Roger is grateful that Tony has been affectionate toward his daughter, yet “without knowing why, he felt acute relief that there appeared to be no need to meet the young man.” His imaginative identification with the young man is both pleasing and difficult for him.

Roger is admired by his daughter, but the irony and mistrust with which he approaches modern existence drives a wedge between them. This wariness is somewhat a result of his age. The contrast of Roger Calhoun with his wife shows, however, to what extent mistrust of the actual is not age-related but is instead inherent in Roger’s nature. In Susan’s words, her mother “understood what it was like to be a girl in 1950” (3), whereas her father was too “clever”: “if you thought too much about things, you never had any fun” (5). Susan’s easy gospel of self-affirmation, which she derives from her relationship primer, a textbook called *Successful Love*, is terrifying to Roger. He tries, nevertheless, not to be a “romantic snob” (11): Roger repeatedly attempts to discover elements of identity between himself and his wife, himself and his daughter, and himself and Susan’s suitors. The story, however, ends with Roger fleeing his daughter in a coffee shop, making “an escape from a penitentiary and from a period of history” (36). He feels “entirely lost in the terror and jungle of innocence”.

Schwartz’s late fiction explores the extreme difficulties of integrating the self-conscious intellect into the community, even into a community which welcomes the individual with open

arms. In Schwartz's poetry, such identification and integration is much more effortlessly achieved. "I Am Cherry Alive, the Little Girl Sang" is a natural outgrowth of the philosophy expressed in "The World is a Wedding." The identification of oneself with one's environment or one's fellows is taken to an extreme: an amorphous child's self merges with the external world. The child's self is not locked in its own body. It becomes, rather, multiple sensuous items from the external world: "I am apple, I am plum" (*Selected Poems* 161). It becomes, in spite of barriers of sex and age, absolutely one with the other ("I am just as excited as the boys who made the Hallowe'en bang"; "When I like, if I like, I can be someone new, / Someone very old, a witch in a zoo"). Here Schwartz's use of sensual detail is fresh and memorable, as it is not in some other late poems, such as "Vivaldi". The child's being is open to all stimuli, and Schwartz's images have the same spontaneity and fluidity. Kathleen's discussion of truth and certainty belies her age. This is a sage young girl: "I know, I know, the true is untrue". The little girl, in fact, transforms herself into the poet in the course of the verse. The singing girl easily and intuitively identifies herself with the other. The boundaries of self and world are not yet firm enough to prevent such bleeding between internal and external. The poet, by silently merging himself with this child, is simultaneously suggesting the proper role for the poet and concretely demonstrating how such identification may be made. Schwartz's young girl points the way, and Schwartz as poet follows her example: he inhabits her character just as she invades the independent being of the plum or the cat.

The self-confidence which she displays ("When I sang my song, I knew, I knew!") is a certainty not of knowing, but of the rightness of the act of singing. This philosophical child understands that, to quote Schwartz's introduction to *Selected Poems*, "every kind of knowledge and every kind of experience is limited and ignorant" (10). Kathleen thinks she understands that

“The peach has a pit, the pit has a peach”, but she is aware that “both may be wrong when I sing my song”. The poet is aware that celebration, the act of singing, is only one way to approach knowing: there is a further awareness which the poet must keep from the grown-ups “because it is sad”. Rudyard Kipling’s declaration that joy is our duty becomes an artistic commandment, conformed to, like all commandments, despite one’s strong inclinations to an opposite course of action. The act of singing, the pure act of celebration, is more important than achieving knowledge of truth. Schwartz knows that “the peach has a pit”, that the sensuous pleasure one takes in living for the moment, must eventually run up against one’s dim awareness of time passing and of one’s own eventual passing. We know the pain of becoming other, perhaps in the end of becoming nothing at all. Yet our knowledge that the “peach has a pit” is itself tentative. It may be that in the end the “pit has a peach”, that rebirth succeeds death. In either case, our grown-up ‘knowledge’ is only speculation, no more verifiably true or untrue than the zeal with which we enjoy and celebrate temporal existence.

Faced with the choice between on the one hand “sad” knowledge, which is no knowledge after all but merely speculation and fear, and on the other hand celebration and singing, the poet chooses Kathleen’s celebration. The desire for certainty no longer leads of necessity to a complete exile from actuality, as it did in the case of Dr. Bergen. Certainty has been redefined as the very limited certainty of the rhapsode, in which momentary consummation vouches for itself and only itself. One is certain that one is singing, but no more. The child’s joy in imaginative play or sensual experience is now a grown-up aesthetic. Schwartz’s new aesthetic is one which places actual experience ahead of knowledge about that actuality. Singing does not give one knowledge about living; rather, the very fact of being alive and enchanted by existence is a form of knowledge which surpasses the fruits of metaphysical speculation.

In another late poem Schwartz calls such living knowledge “Summer Knowledge”. ‘Summer knowledge’ is not knowledge about natural cycles, but participation in those cycles. It is not “picture knowledge, nor is it the knowledge of lore and learning” (157); “in a way, summer knowledge is not knowledge at all: it is second nature, first nature fulfilled” (158). Consciousness is required to lift such understanding out of the realm of instinct and unreflecting animal existence. The poet must pass through a phase of separation from the external, a phase in which the self is constructed and differentiated, before he can consciously appreciate his connection with that outside world. Realizing the infinite distance between the individual and truth, he celebrates both his own finitude and his access to the infinite in the realms of imagination and becoming. The child in “I Am Cherry Alive” states it more elegantly and accurately than any intellectual formulation: “And I want to be everything sometimes too” (161).

In another of Schwartz’s child portraits, Jeremiah Dickson, “The True-Blue American,” feels that he must “Think about everything; because that’s all there is to think about” (163). The “infinite belief in infinite hope” is painted as an essential American characteristic. When offered ice-cream from an elder benefactor, Jeremiah chooses not one or the other but both flavours. Schwartz, as so often in his work, brings the entire weight of intellectual history to bear on a very common event, humourously insisting on a wide significance. Jeremiah’s refusal is emblematic of the way his elders reject “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”.² As in “I Am Cherry Alive,” the child is spectacularly knowledgeable. His refusal *is* the intellectual refusal of his nation. Schwartz makes his own

² In *Jeremiah* 24, Jeremy Dickson’s namesake is shown two baskets of figs, one containing “the good figs, very good”, the other containing “the bad, very bad, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad” (24:3). The ultimate discrimination, that between good and evil, is figured by a Biblical equivalent to ice-cream.

concerns Jeremiah's: as in "I Am Cherry Alive," Schwartz becomes the child.³ European thought, with its discriminating tendencies, must be mastered and then denied by the artist before he can properly value the capacity of the American mind for hope and affirmation. Jeremiah Dickson, however (for the sake of analysis I sharpen a distinction which Schwartz purposefully blurs), has "no need to think of it": he is able to participate, with minimal self-awareness, in the American tradition of "infinite belief", a tradition democratic enough to include "Columbus, Barnum, Edison, and Jeremiah Dickson", democratic enough to include, despite his strong reservations, Schwartz himself. This "infinite appetite" is shown to be absolutely at one with the American soul. The scene is set in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the epitome of New England intellectual tradition, and Jeremiah is always referred to by his full name, with its suggestions of Puritan Anglo-Saxon heritage (Schwartz's real-life godson was normally called Jeremy).⁴ The connotations of lamentation and social criticism which attach to the name Jeremiah (the Puritan tradition of the Jeremiad) are, however, noticeably absent from this portrait. Only the author

³ This is not entirely an author's conceit. Schwartz takes his cue from Jeremiah's real-life counterpart, the son of two Cambridge friends. In a 1943 letter Schwartz reports that "When I ask him his name, he says it is Delmore. When I ask him my name, he says, 'Jeremy Dickson.' You must admit that this is breath-taking genius?" (*Letters* 195).

⁴ In the memoir "An Author's Brother-in-law", Schwartz describes a similar experience at the ice-cream parlor with another young protégé. Claude, like Jeremiah, is unsatisfied with one treat. Schwartz is amazed to find that he shares this appetite: "I surprised myself by wanting a second ice cream soda and Claude surprised me by wanting one also" (*The Ego* 51). Claude suggests some ways that his brother-in-law could make money, as a caddy, "an usher at Madison Square Garden when the circus came to town", or through "the giveaway programs on the radio" (57). Schwartz refuses, explaining that he would rather make less money yet have time to write poems and stories. The artist chooses observation and reflection over participation. To that choice the boy retorts: "T.S. on you". The author later learns that the initials mean "Tough Situation", although "for some time I supposed them to be an esoteric and ironic reference to that very great poet T.S. Eliot." Even when he is apparently let in on the secret, the poet remains the naive outsider (T.S., of course, also stands for Tough Shit). Schwartz's play on Eliot's initials is significant. Eliot represents the kind of haughty and self-conscious intelligence which keeps Schwartz apart from his brother-in-law. What 'Eliot' has separated, baseball and sodas attempt, not always successfully, to connect. Even as a baseball fan, however, Schwartz is an outsider. Claude has to relinquish his Dodgers and cheer for the "no good" Giants (61) in order to cement family solidarity and, not incidentally, to benefit from Schwartz's brotherly generosity.

offers a note of disapproval, recognizing that along with the “grandeur” of the American’s absolute affirmation comes a proportionate measure of “vulgarity”: Jeremiah has been 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 light...

The overtones of John’s account of the Incarnation (“Taught by Christmas”) are clear: “And the light shines in the darkness” (*John* 1:5). The reference to “advertisements of the imagination of light” suggests John the Baptist, who “was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light” (1:8), who was sent to “advertise” the Incarnation.

The ‘vulgar’ entertainments and preoccupations of modern America now embody infinite hope, a hope which at one time came to the society from its religious faith. Most significantly, Schwartz does not disapprove of this substitution. Instead of penning a jeremiad lamenting our falling away from traditional faiths, Schwartz looks for “grandeur” in the new mindset. A new valuation of the actual, a trust in the alternately great or tasteless realities of the world which we inhabit, has replaced the old valuation of an imagined higher reality, the old faith in Plato’s “true beauty”. ‘Incarnation’, the merger of the divine with the temporal, is not a one-time occurrence but is something that is common in existence, to be recognized and celebrated.

“The True-Blue American” bears comparison with Eliot’s 1954 “The Cultivation of Christmas Trees” (Schwartz’s poem was first published in 1959).⁵ The vulgar elements of the Christmas

⁵ Schwartz’s vignette takes place on “an April Sunday”, a fact alluded to twice in the poem. This suggests another comparison: it is Eliot’s “cruellest month”, which mixes “memory and desire” (63). Jeremy lives in a Waste Land (“moon pictures”, “Shining in the darkness”, “the Grand Canyon”) where desire is not necessarily painful, where memories of movies and the circus assure the child that desire will be gratified, that hope is reasonable.

season, which for the mature Schwartz become the epitome of light in the darkness, are the very aspects which we may, in Eliot's opinion, disregard: "The social, the torpid, the patently commercial, / The rowdy (the pubs being open till midnight), / And the childish" (*Collected Poems* 117). Eliot's wondering child sees the candle as a star and sees the symbolic angel as a real angel. Such mediation of symbols plays no part in Schwartz's new aesthetic, although Jeremiah's actions are themselves suggestive of a well-worn metaphor, that of "the endless frontier, the deathless West". Eliot discriminates between the child's pure "delight in new possessions" and his society's commercial preoccupation. Schwartz collapses the two. They are both aspects of an American appetite for the actual, for more and more experience. The line between vulgarity and wonderment is ill-defined. He who draws that line risks denying wonder, an emotional reality and a moral force, in the name of taste, a very dubious good. For Eliot, each memory of the childlike emotion of wonder is a reminder of the events of the Incarnation and of the second coming. For Schwartz, Jeremiah's pleasure in and greed for the actual is itself one manifestation of the Incarnation, the strain of the limited self toward the infinite. Jeremy's desire for both types of ice-cream is the event itself, not a reminder of an event. The greed for ice-cream not only signifies but also exemplifies the boy's delight in reality and his desire to touch the infinite. Ice-cream employed in such a manner immediately recalls Wallace Stevens's use of the image in "The Emperor of Ice-Cream,"⁶ where actuality takes precedence over potentiality, where

⁶ Schwartz often called Jeremy Dickson "the King":

"Jeremiah, what have you been doing?"
 "I have been *thinking*," he said with italics.
 "What have you been thinking *about*?" I queried.
 "I have been thinking about *everything*," he giggled.
 "How can you think about everything?" I asked, still under the
 influence of Sidney Chop [Hook].
 "That's *all* there is to think about," replied our growing ruler in
 triumph.
 Long live the King! (*Letters* 240)

we are directed to "Let be be finale of seem" (64). The cold reality of death and the sensuous reality of life, united in the multifaceted Emperor of Ice-Cream, take precedence over all speculation thereon. In a 1954 review of Stevens's *Collected Poems*, Schwartz draws a comparison between Eliot and Stevens:

...the fact that Pound and Eliot chose to live in Europe is enough to show how peculiar and isolated a poet felt in America. It is still true that there is a fundamental conflict between the vocation of poetry and the middle-class business community. Nevertheless Stevens' career is a parable of what is possible. Too much and too little can be made out of Stevens' example. But one can be sure, at least, that Stevens has made the most of the conflict of his situation; has made a fecund virtue out of a difficult necessity. (*Selected Essays* 188)

Stevens has been both part of the community and a secretly accomplished poet, an equilibrium which Schwartz admires and cleaves to as an alternative to Eliot's exile from America. How Schwartz himself might bring about such a miracle of participation in both the community of Western intellectual culture and his actual American community was, however, a problem which Stevens's example did nothing to resolve.

One of Schwartz's superior late poems, "Abraham," deals with this difficulty in a rather more abstract form, the difficulty of reconciling attachment to things temporal with an attachment to things spiritual. In an early poem entitled "Abraham and Orpheus, Be With Me Now," Schwartz asks Abraham to assuage his fears of "the price of care" (73), which is the annihilation of self.

Schwartz clearly charges his early philosophical mentors with an over-emphasis on categorical thinking, and suggests Jeremy's childish holism as an antidote. Refusing to discriminate between thinking and being, Jeremy is the King (or Emperor of Ice-Cream), a philosopher-king in tune with the times. In the same letter Schwartz calls Jeremy "our Socialist King" (239). Discrimination in thought goes hand in hand with social discrimination, whereas inclusion in thought equals socialism. The idea of a socialist king recalls Schwartz's contradictory images of Joyce as both the "King of the King's English" (*Last and Lost* 44) and the perfectly inclusive writer who employs echoes of, as Schwartz noted in 1951, "American radio comedy and Yiddish humor" (*Selected Essays* 22). In a note to that 1951 essay, Schwartz argues that *Finnegans Wake* can and ought to be defined as poetry, alleging that "If we freeze our categories and our definitions, (and this is especially true in literature) the result is that we disable and blind our minds."

The Biblical patriarch is one who understands the fragile nature of human attachment. Love has deprived the author of his accustomed position as spectator, “No longer the grandstand, nor the balcony, / Nor the formal window” provides “cool perspective”. Now that the poet has been “sucked” by love to that “moving street below” which so troubled Dr. Bergen, he requires the wisdom which Abraham possesses. Schwartz rewrites Eliot’s prayer from “Ash-Wednesday,” “teach us to care and not to care” (*Collected Poems* 105). Love of the things of this world must not blind one to timeless realities: “Love love exhausts and... / Time circles in its idiot defeat”. Such wisdom is Socrates’s higher madness, in which beauties of the earth remind one only of beauties beyond the earth. Certainly Abraham’s obedience to God’s commandment is an act which resembles madness to the average human understanding.

The mature Schwartz presents a similar portrait of the Biblical patriarch. In the later poem, however, Schwartz allows the character to speak his own thoughts and thereby discovers an Abraham who is wise but not omniscient, acting not out of conviction and certainty (“You saw and knew”) but out of fear and humility. “Abraham” begins with the hero’s exile into Egypt, called by a “soundless voice” (230). He leaves Egypt and prospers, although his great wish to have a son is unfulfilled. When the angel asks Abraham to sacrifice the near-perfect son which he has been granted in his old age, he is horrified but not surprised, “shocked and passive” (231). In the face of this potential loss, Abraham recounts his fortunes: “I have had great riches and great beauty. / I cannot expect the perfection of every wish / And if I deny the command, who knows what will happen?” Abraham is humble in the face of the unknown and complies with God’s request not because he, as the young Schwartz described it, knew “how near ‘no more’”, but precisely because no one can know very much at all. Abraham does not knowingly sacrifice his son to a higher good. With humility, and in the grip of superstition, he prepares to sacrifice Isaac

to avoid an unknown contingency. Most of the old man's desires have been fulfilled. His humility before the deity allows him to do without the object of his greatest wish. To signify his satisfaction with his blessings in this world, he is willing to forego the consummation of his desires.⁷ The word 'satisfaction' is not quite correct. Abraham says, in fact, that he is "not gratified / Nor astonished" by the ambiguous fulfillment of the angel's promise. Perfection and perfect fulfillment are not elements of the good in the stoic philosophy of Schwartz's re-imagined patriarch. The condition of exile turns out to be, as a young Schwartz described it in "Song", "innate" (Valenti 212) for the Jews and for Abraham himself, the founder of the race. Contingency is all, "withness is all". Abraham's descendants must be content to be "dumbfounded by riches" and by "great beauty", seeking no ultimate fulfillment and remaining empiricists instead of mystics. Abraham is not attracted to but "dismayed by the infinite sky". The young Abraham is told that he will be responsible for fostering a populous race. His angel, however, equivocates. The patriarch believes he will not only father heirs but found a great society. He fathers instead an alienated, homeless people. The dream of society becomes the nightmare of a people perpetually "wandering... / Estranged among strangers". Yet Schwartz's stoic Abraham shares some of the far-seeing wisdom of his namesake in Schwartz's early poetry. If he is not impressed by the fulfillment of the angel's promise, neither does he despair over the state of his people. The "angel of death" founds the one true society which subsumes all

⁷ James Atlas writes that "Delmore's longing for a family had been one of the crucial issues in his marriage, for it was through the institution of the family that he hoped to recover from his own damaged childhood..., and his poignant relationships with his friends' children were perhaps an expression of that impulse" (*Delmore Schwartz* 224). Abraham's longing for a son must have had great resonance with the poet's own experience. Some of the poem may easily be read as personal confession, with Hagar standing for Schwartz's first wife: "I put away Hagar, with the utmost remorse / Because the child was the cause of so much rivalry and jealousy" (230). Strife over an actual child in the Biblical account equals strife in Schwartz's own marriage over a child which was never to be. Atlas writes: "Delmore was always mourning their 'unborn Shenandoah,' while Gertrude was opposed to having a child" (143).

apparently permanent human approximations. The “alienated and indestructible one” will be as much a part of death’s “famous society” as those who shun him. For the young Abraham, as for Jacob Cohen, “the world is a wedding”. He possesses an assurance that the world has a vital role for him and for his descendants. In his old age, however, Abraham endorses Laura Bell’s contention that “the world is a funeral”. The conclusions of “Abraham” are tentative. Abraham himself is an active man who learns to be “passive”. That is really no knowledge at all, but instead an awareness of his ignorance.

“Abraham” is a return by Schwartz to Eliot’s manner and Eliot’s preoccupations. It, along with its companion pieces “Sarah” and “Jacob,” is an attempt by Schwartz to write the sort of monologue with which Eliot had repeated success. Schwartz was able for once to harmonize the lessons of his early mentor with later developments. The passivity and humiliation of Abraham in his old age recalls the narrators of “Prufrock” and “Gerontion”. A more pertinent comparison, because of the similar treatment of Biblical characters, may be made between “Abraham” and “Journey of the Magi” or between “Abraham” and “A Song For Simeon.” The disposition of Abraham’s descendants “among strangers” recalls the way the Magi find themselves “With an alien people” (110), and the resignation of Abraham, patiently waiting for death, recalls both the Magi, “glad of another death” and Simeon, “dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me” (112). Simeon is denied the “ultimate vision” because he cannot know Christ. Schwartz’s Abraham cannot know ultimate fulfillment because such a state does not exist, except perhaps in death. Schwartz’s vision includes everyone, although he therefore denies a special “ecstasy of thought and prayer” to any individual or group of believers. Eliot’s “A Song for Simeon” grants a special dispensation of truth to Christian believers, but at the cost of excluding the Jew who “stands solemnly, humbly, outside Christianity’s gates” (Julius 71). Schwartz’s “Abraham,” by

denying “ultimate vision” to everyone, makes room for all in death’s “famous society”. Abraham is neither pleased nor dismayed by the inherent imperfection of human desire. Rejecting ideals of perfection is the only way to counter Eliot’s exclusive vision of salvation. Schwartz’s Abraham is fascinating in that he understands both the necessity of such a view and the bleak consequences which must follow.

It is not coincidental that in the three Eliotic Biblical monologues Schwartz achieves an artistic success which eludes him in such more typical late poems as “Vivaldi” and “Summer Knowledge.”⁸ Actuality is once again to be critiqued and not easily accepted. When the angel asks Sarah why she laughs, Sarah tries to pass her laughter off as “A cough. I was coughing” (232). Once more in Schwartz’s work, the cough is fashioned into a symbol of consciousness and self-awareness. Sarah caught her cold “nine minutes after / Abraham married” her. In marriage, she is able to scrutinize herself from the perspective of another. Sarah comes to appreciate her own beauty: a reflexive consciousness helps her take pleasure in her physical being. Love shows her how to stand outside her own body. Only after she possesses this knowledge can she take pleasure in inhabiting her own human form. This is another version of that informed surrender which Schwartz describes in “Summer Knowledge” and “Vivaldi,” a state in which the self intuits its submersion in the external world and refuses to struggle against that submersion. Sarah describes such a surrender, but she also describes the perils of consciousness. She would like to be at peace with the self, she would like to celebrate the contingencies and beauties of physical existence as she did when she was a young bride, but “something inside of me / Is continually

⁸ Schwartz’s favourite among his lyrics, “Starlight Like Intuition Pierced the Twelve,” deserves mention alongside the three later Biblical monologues. Its subject matter relates it even more strongly to Eliot’s “A Song for Simeon” and “Journey of the Magi”: the Advent has made life under the old dispensation impossible. The disciples have experienced ultimate goodness, and nothing or no one merely earthly can “fit / His measure’s heights, all is inadequate” (239).

telling me something / I do not wish to hear: A joke: A big joke". Abraham calls this tendency Sarah's "sour irony" (231). It is a tendency which he hopes his son will evade. It is, however, an inevitable result of being self-aware, and an exile cannot rid himself of such awareness. The laugh/cough cannot be cured. Schwartz's suggestion that "witness is all" does not hold up to his own scrutiny. Consciousness separates us from the actual. In Sarah's case, consciousness brings forward self-criticism and sour irony at the most inopportune moments, making her laugh during her conference with an angel.

The poem "Jacob" asks some unanswerable questions which all of Schwartz's insistence on celebration cannot address. It summarizes the dichotomy in Schwartz's thought and work. America is disguised as Egypt, "a country like a gift" (234). Joseph is fostered by Egypt, but can only dream of ever being at ease in that foreign land. He is the prototype of the poet-exile.⁹ Jacob in his time has known the same sense of "The solitude of eminence, the exiled intelligence". He wonders why a gift must "be the cause of pain" (235). The gifts of great sensitivity and abilities serve to elect the poet, "the favored favorite / As scapegoat or turncoat, exile or fugitive". Jacob wonders if he ought to have concealed his affection for Joseph and let him remain an unremarkable brother, "wearing the coat / Which is customary, the coat his brothers wore". In order to have the pleasure of "unjust" love, of passionate attachment to people or things, we must also accept an unjustly discriminating existence in which "the second must be second that the first may be first" (233). In order to remake the world we must accept the gift of mind, the consciousness which suggests other potentialities: the clever Jacob usurps Esau's place;

⁹ Schwartz's contemporary, A.M. Klein, draws a strikingly similar portrait of Joseph as the archetypical poet. This Joseph is also pulled in two directions, that of community and tradition, and that of originality and innovation: "Rooted in the common soil, he turns his eyes to new directions. He is, indeed, a fruitful bough; he springs from earth fed secretly by a well; but his branches run over the wall" (148). Joseph dreams, "but through the haze of the dream, he grasps reality" (144).

Joseph accepts exile and thereby achieves more than his brothers would ever allow.

Consciousness is the exile of the self from the actual, an exile which is always painful and, Schwartz is saying in this poem, always necessary to our desires and loves. The mind which separates us from our surroundings also tells us to attach ourselves to one specific element of that actuality. Unreflecting peace with the actual is living death, a state without love: “justice is loveless.” Jacob defends his need to love, while acknowledging that the claim of the wider community on the self is strong and reasonable. “What should I desire?” asks Jacob, “Not to have loved my son, the best of sons? / Rejected the choice of love?” The questions are rhetorical: Jacob has already declared that we have no choice. To have Jacob’s gift, the poet’s gift, is to be an exile and a discriminator. It is to be Schwartz’s Eliot, always at odds with one’s environment. It is to love one’s private good. The pull of community is, however, always strong. Eliot certainly acknowledged its force. Jacob says “The gift / Like every gift, was guilt” (233). It is not surprising that in his writing on Joyce Schwartz emphasizes Joyce’s “extreme sense of guilt” (“Our Poor”).

There is an ideal balance between the critical work of the artist re-making the world and the celebratory work of the sympathetic being living among and identifying with his fellows. Schwartz achieves that balance in much of his prose and in a number of poems, both early and late. His work reflects the dilemma of being an artist in America, trying to negotiate between the private compulsion to love and protect the self and the democratic imperative to sympathize with all. To paraphrase Schwartz’s famous title, dreams coexist uneasily with responsibilities. Potentiality intrudes on the “dignity” of actuality. Schwartz had high expectations of his art. In “Hallmarks,” a lengthy stream-of-consciousness notebook experiment, joking to obscure his seriousness, Schwartz writes that “thus through words I expect as the last Platonist to come at

last back to the actuality where conscience is". Another fragment from the unpublished "Hallmarks" describes Schwartz's all-encompassing project and hints at its inherent contradictions. It also suggests the value of Schwartz's example when he was somehow able to unite observation with imagination, celebration with criticism, responsibility with frivolity, actuality with potentiality, and the physical with the spiritual, a necessarily rare and precious occurrence:

... Genius as an extreme variant - a new form of being; breathing changes the air into something, changes the air into a spiritual thing, the emotion, the sigh, the Agh of disgust - a new relatedness of body and thought and the times and the city - foliation of the trees, girls cutting across the lawn.

Epilogue

“In Dreams Begin Responsibilities”: A Career in Miniature

Schwartz's early story “In Dreams Begin Responsibilities” remains his best-known and most admired work. In it are forecast all of Schwartz's later themes, and it thus provides a good perspective from which to survey his whole career and draw conclusions. The story exemplifies the state of equilibrium which Schwartz achieved at times in his writing but almost never attained in his private life. From his exile in the dark theatre, the narrator criticizes actuality. Then, unexpectedly, the “dignity” of the actual reasserts itself, and the story ends with hope, satisfaction, and fear in a strange mixture.

The technique of the story has often been commented upon. A young man watches a movie of the pivotal episode from his parents' courtship, in which an argument threatens to undo the unborn narrator entirely. The movie device lets the author explore the period quality and take in a wealth of visual information. The movie is actuality, unrolling to the amazement of its actors. The narrator is meanwhile given a privileged vantage on the events. He is Shenandoah, witnessing but not influencing the action. He is one of the ghosts of *Genesis* and “Coriolanus and His Mother,” perhaps Freud, knowledgeable and powerless. And voyeuristic: Elisa New asks what he is “*doing* at the movie of his parents' courtship” (258), wonders what Shenandoah is “*doing* witnessing his naming with such vampirish attention”. The act of sympathy across the generations is difficult: the narrator is Roger Calhoun, trying to understand the courting practices of his daughter; this courtship, however, defines the narrator's own self for good or ill, so he is profoundly identified with these alien beings. Most of all, the narrator is critical, treating the

unstoppable film as if he could influence its outcome by shouting. His criticism is so heated that he must be reassured that “all of this is only a movie, young man, only a movie” (5). Such knowing indifference does not calm the narrator’s anxiety or stop the flow of tears.

The setting is familiar: it is the Coney Island backdrop of “Far Rockaway.” The people stroll “in their Sunday clothes”, “The tide does not reach as far as the boardwalk, and the strollers would feel no danger if it did” (4-5). They are as self-contained and secure in their immortality as the crowd in “Seurat’s Sunday Afternoon.” The narrator is, however, “Far Rockaway”’s critical but silent conscience amid the concessions, amid peanut concessions and amid the mutual concessions of a woman and man courting. Is the scene, then, one of escape or of the “kingdom of heaven on earth on Sunday summer day”? It is both, as it is both actual event and filmed entertainment. The boardwalk photographer is trying to get a correct picture of reality. He is Ferdinand Harrap or T.S. Eliot, and “he criticizes each revised pose according to some unknown idea of rightness” (7). “The photographer charms me”, says the narrator, significantly. He takes his pictures from underneath a black cloth. In order to get the picture right, the photographer must hide himself and criticize. He is the artist/exile who spends so much energy setting the scene that he loses the smiles of the sitters.

The lovers ride the merry-go-round. The narrator is dazzled by the “eternal circuit for the single purpose of snatching the nickel rings” (5). It is like looking “down on the avenue from the 50th story of a building”, with a similar sense or bewilderment to that of Dr. Bergen. The narrator does not want to see the tragedy of his life begin. He tries to stop his parents’ mistake. Then, when he is to get his wish, to not be born, to end the film, he becomes hysterical. While the narrator is “walking a tight-rope a hundred feet over a circus-audience”, his parents are about to make his exodus irreparable. This late in the story, he discovers that he owes his being to these

strangers and has no desire to sacrifice it for “some unknown idea of rightness”. The ending is ambiguous: “everything you do matters too much” (9). His parents’ disastrous marriage mattered too much and produced “only remorse, hatred, scandal, and two children whose characters are monstrous” (6). Actuality is a nightmare. His parents have forgotten themselves in the waltz, and at that peak of intoxication, the father seals the son’s fate with “awful daring” (6), recalling “The Waste Land”’s “awful daring of a moment’s surrender / Which an age of prudence can never retract / By this, and this only, we have existed” (*Collected Poems* 78). The narrator’s protest against reality also matters too much: it makes him a scandal in the theatre. Yet at the end he is screaming for the chance to live, not to be obliterated. The alternative to actuality is also nightmare.

“In Dreams Begin Responsibilities” reads as an allegory of Schwartz’s poetic development: an early fascination with recording the details of experience (“It is Sunday afternoon, June 12th, 1909”) gives way to self-consciousness and criticism of experience (“I am awakened to myself and my unhappiness just as my interest was rising”) and then to a desire to escape the difficulties of experience, to find the ultimate exile, to accept one’s obliteration (“Don’t do it”). There is a recognition that art based on criticism of the actual must often fail to capture that actuality (“my father’s smile turned to a grimace and my mother’s bright and false”). Finally, there is a late attempt to seize experience as it is slipping away, and an ambiguous awareness that every type of attitude toward actuality has its limitations, and that a satisfying balance of criticism and celebration is hard to maintain.

In Schwartz’s first literary success are contained the seeds of all his later development. At the end of “In Dreams,” the narrator is thrown out of the theatre, exiled from the reality unreeling itself onscreen. Paradoxically, he also awakes from a nightmare, the nightmare of *his own* history,

and emerges into the actuality of a particular morning. The story ends with images of snow and morning's "cold light" (9). In my discussion of *Genesis*, I quoted these words from Richard McDougall: "What above all gives snow its symbolic power to embrace these extremes is its whiteness. White is both the absence of color, as such suggesting annihilation and death, and the color of light, which is the source of all color" (40). White suggests the fecundity of the actual. It also suggests the overcoming of actuality by abstracting from some positive essence or by negating all. The narrator's windowsill is possessed by the snow, as Gerontion's windowsill is possessed by the Jew. For Eliot, the Jew is a figure of decay, and his ownership is another reason to despair. For the mature Schwartz, "the Jew" had a dual symbolic significance: he "is at once alienated and indestructible, he is an exile from his own country and an exile even from himself, yet he survives the annihilating fury of history" (*Selected Essays* 23). Schwartz's snow shines where Eliot's Jew squats. Schwartz's willingness to see actuality, whether snow or Jew, as luminous and beautiful, however, coexists with his chilly distance from that actuality. The narrator awakes to the "bleak morning" of his "21st birthday". Actuality and potentiality complement each other in a bittersweet equilibrium of praise and fault-finding. The achievement of that balance makes "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," and the core of Schwartz's work which shares such poise, equally worth both celebrating and criticizing.

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