



## Selected Poems: Summer Knowledge

*Delmore Schwartz*

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## Selected Poems: Summer Knowledge Delmore Schwartz

When this book was first published (as **Summer Knowledge**) in 1959.

Delmore Schwartz was still riding a crest, the golden boy of the literary scene—a position he had commanded ever since the appearance of his first collection of stories and poems in 1938. **Summer Knowledge** won for him both the prestigious Bollingen Prize in Poetry and the Poetry Society of America's Shelley Memorial Award. Ironically, indeed tragically, the praise and prizes Schwartz's poems received did not forestall his decline, and this, his poetic testament, proved to be a final one as well. Overcome by mental illness, alienated from his friends and supporters, he disappeared from the literary scene, in the end to die in 1966 in an obscure Broadway hotel. The tragedy of his life pales before the triumph of his art and craft. **Selected Poems** clearly places him among the foremost poets of his generation.

## Selected Poems: Summer Knowledge Details

Date : Published June 17th 1967 by New Directions (first published June 1967)

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Author : Delmore Schwartz

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### **Mauberley says**

Recently, the Poetry Foundation selected 'The True-Blue American' as its poem of the day and that sent me back to this book which I hadn't looked at for about 35 years. Our reunion was wonderful. The author marvelled at my greying hair and found myself less impressed by his philosophizing but deeply struck by his meditations on time and the sense of loss that shades so many of his poems. I believe that Bellow based Von Humboldt Fletcher on Schwartz and it might be time to re-visit that book as well.

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### **Fred R says**

The poem in which he sits down and watches a performance of Coriolanus while Marx, Aristotle, Beethoven, and Freud discuss the action is to me genius, and more than makes up for most of the rest of the book.

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### **Matt says**

I found out about this guy as a reference point of Lou Reed.

I dug into the book and was hooked for life.

This guy wrote so beautifully, it's almost everyday speech with some modernism and assorted philosophy thrown in for kicks.

Very underrated and goes sadly unappreciated for most people.

Check out a piece I did on him: [http://hansonmatthew.com/Site/Flak\\_De...](http://hansonmatthew.com/Site/Flak_De...)

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### **Joe says**

"Some who are uncertain compel me. They fear the Ace of Spades." I was lucky enough to stumble upon Schwartz while in university, and he is still one of my favorite poets.

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### **Grady Ormsby says**

In 1938 twenty-five-year-old Delmore Schwartz burst like a meteor upon the American literary scene with the publication of his first book, **In Dreams Begin Responsibilities**. This collection of short stories and

poems was well received and garnered praise from the likes of T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound. Schwartz was thought to be one of the most promising young writers of his generation. Unfortunately, also like a meteor, Schwartz's success was short-lived. He was unable to follow up on his early achievements. As a result of alcoholism and mental illness, he spent his last years as a recluse. He died on July 11, 1966, at age 52, of a heart attack. His relative obscurity should in no way diminish his talent as a writer. **Selected Poems: Summer Knowledge** was published in 1959 and was his selection of poetic works from 1938-1958. I was impressed by his imagery, much of it being allusions to nature as well as urban life. Many of his poems are philosophical without being obscure or pedantic. One of my favorite pieces is a five-act parody of Shakespeare called "Coriolanus and His Mother." which includes prose pieces between each act. Some of my other favorites areodic tributes to Baudelaire, Shakespeare, Vivaldi, Sterne, Swift, among others. If you think you might want to try Delmore Schwartz, I would recommend **In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Other Stories** rather than **Selected Poems**.

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### **Sofia says**

Depressingly only really comes together in the final section, though "Coriolanus" is near-brilliant. Nigh-indispensable for folks finding their voice, though, I hope.

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### **Jamey says**

Hey Schwartz: I love to love you, baby.

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### **J. Alfred says**

Everyone should read "The Heavy Bear Who Goes With Me," which I take to be Schawrtz' most well-known and most meritorious poem. The rest of his work is well-crafted and pretty strong, but more or less forgettable-- I'm not surprised that he doesn't show up more in classes. He's kind of like a more sedate, less mysterious and more pun-loving version of Eliot-- modernism lite (sic).

While that sounds unaccountably harsh, I'd also like to point out that if you like Eliot or the idea of modernism lite (sic), this is an enjoyable yet challenging guy to familiarize oneself with.

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### **Alex says**

John Berryman described Schwartz as 'the most underrated poet of the twentieth century', and this selection is testament to his claim. Impossible to do it justice in a short review, but the poems are challenging, often philosophical, and the kind that yield up more and more every time you read them. The later poems, in the second half of the book, have generally been critically rubbed, but I believe they represent a different, celebratory aspect to Schwartz: they are best read aloud.

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**Tracy says**

Lou Reed got me here

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**Simonbudwake says**

The section Coriolanus and his Mother makes me want to go to graduate school, to better delve into the depths of that poem. Every few months I either revisit the poem or the Shakespeare play its based on and am further enlightened and further mystified.

The shorter lyrics in the first two segments of the book are also terrific. Especially the 2nd section, the fugues. "A dog named ego the snowflakes as kisses" is both a stunning examination of the nature of the mind, and a portrait of a simple scene. Often I've walked my dog and while there is a light snowfall and the poem is recalled, perfectly fitting the moment.

The last two sections of the book are less strong, but there are some lovely little poems in there.

This book as a whole has totally altered my intellectual landscape, and I'm very happy for it.

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