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A Tentative Draft of an Academic Eclogue

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These gave us life through death:
 Jesus of Nazareth,
 Archaic Socrates,
 And such as these.

O small and fair of face!
 In this appalling place,
 The conscious soul must give
 Its life to live.

A TENTATIVE DRAFT
 OF AN ACADEMIC ECLOGUE

Buster Brawl was energetic,
 Electrical, and plain emetic.
 He had attained to eminence:
 Master of his mistakes in sense
 And wise by his own mastered rules,
 A perfect paragon of fools.

He placed his feet with solid thump
 Reverberant in paunch and rump.
 Behind each fierce dogmatic antic
 There lurked his love of the Romantic.
 Each pun of Lamb he made a note,
 Knew Byron's every quip by rote,
 Puffed doglike by the Noble Bard
 By cataloguing very hard.

A solid scholar of his kind,
 With something working in his mind,
 With footnotes littered on the floor,
 In travail behind bolted door,
 By measuring his words each way
 And guessing what he had to say,
 He trimmed the whole Romantic School
 To a convenient classroom rule.
 Byron and Keats, our little dolt
 Compressed into a word: Revolt.

Sad day! when Brawl conceived a grudge
Against the grave Elijah Smudge.
His genius ran the other way:
A dilettante of delay,
He lay submerged in monstrous size
And opened dim heroic eyes.
His presence irked Brawl's formal bent:
It was a case of temperament.
He had the virtues Buster lacked,
Enveloped him when he attacked:
Brawl sunk in his inchoate blot,
And where he had been, he was not.

This poem might have better ended
Had I known well what I intended.
My theme was mildly Hudibrastic
But not sufficiently elastic.
The fault lay wholly in my hero:
He started, was, and ended zero,
A purely academic Nero.

YVOR WINTERS

THE HARVEST: 1942

Spring was the perilous season,
And sowers that entered the gate
Were plowing the earth with treason
And scattering seeds of hate.

And now the harvest is ready,
And I with foreclosed breath
Must rise from my dreams unsteady
And reap with the sickle of death.

BYRON HERBERT REECE