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# The American Scholar

by Daniel R. Schwarz

*"The world is his who can see through its pretension."*

Emerson, "The American Scholar"

"Write a simple happy poem," she said,  
"Your pain bores me."  
"I can't write what I don't feel."  
"Had you any sense, you would  
not write your damned poems  
of gloom and doom.  
Write a romantic love poem,  
speak of the lovely moon,  
changing colors of October leaves,  
red sunset hovering on Cayuga lake."

"Ah, but when I feel the fine frenzy of a poem,  
my emotions overwhelm me  
like incoming tide surging over sand.  
I need to chew on bones of experience,  
Drink dregs of bitterness,  
taste ashes of regret."

"You need to take out our garbage and walk  
the dog."  
"Do I not know well that  
cynicism is mortality  
of attitude and sarcasm is  
mortality of speech?  
I need sing of unrequited love and early death,  
hear woozy bluesy sounds of saxophones,  
think of the Sorrow and the Pity of my people,  
and render my vast capacity to feel pain."  
"Are you having delusions that you are Shelley  
or Wiesel?"  
"We poets respond to agony  
driven by the lyric spirit."

"My advice to you," said my muse,  
leaning forward in her chair,  
"is work hard enough to pay the bills;  
write funny poems  
if poems you must;  
avoid burdening your readers  
with narcissistic accounts;  
above all, dear man,  
take small steps  
accompanied by modest words."

