



Home > Poems & Poets > Browse Poems > Dogs Are Shakespearean, Children Are Strangers by Delmore Schwartz

Dogs Are Shakespearean, Children Are Strangers

BY DELMORE SCHWARTZ

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

Tell us, Freud, can it be that lovely children
Have merely ugly dreams of natural functions?
And you, too, Wordsworth, are children truly
Clouded with glory, learned in dark Nature?
The dog in humble inquiry along the ground,
The child who credits dreams and fears the dark,
Know more and less than you: they know full well
Nor dream nor childhood answer questions well:
You too are strangers, children are Shakespearean.

Regard the child, regard the animal,
Welcome strangers, but study daily things,
Knowing that heaven and hell surround us,
But this, this which we say before we're sorry,
This which we live behind our unseen faces,
Is neither dream, nor childhood, neither
Myth, nor landscape, final, nor finished,
For we are incomplete and know no future,
And we are howling or dancing out our souls

In beating syllables before the curtain:
We are Shakespearean, we are strangers.

Delmore Schwartz, "Dogs Are Shakespearean, Children Are Strangers" from *Selected Poems (1938-1958): Summer Knowledge*. Copyright © 1967 by Delmore Schwartz. Reprinted with the permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation, www.wwnorton.com/nd/welcome.htm.

Source: *Selected Poems (1938-1958): Summer Knowledge* (New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1967)

RELATED CONTENT

Discover this poem's context and related poetry, articles, and media.

POET

Delmore Schwartz

SUBJECTS

Living, Relationships, Pets, Philosophy

POETIC TERMS

Blank Verse

Report a problem with this poem.

POETRY

The oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English language.



[July/August 2016 Table of Contents](#)

[Buy This Issue](#)

[Subscribe to Poetry Magazine](#)

[Browse All Issues Back to 1912](#)