Calmly We Walk through This April's Day

By Delmore Schwartz

Calmly we walk through this April's day,
Metropolitan poetry here and there,
In the park sit pauper and *rentier*,
The screaming children, the motor-car
Fugitive about us, running away,
Between the worker and the millionaire
Number provides all distances,
It is Nineteen Thirty-Seven now,
Many great dears are taken away,
What will become of you and me
(This is the school in which we learn ...)
Besides the photo and the memory?
(... that time is the fire in which we burn.)

(This is the school in which we learn ...)
What is the self amid this blaze?
What am I now that I was then
Which I shall suffer and act again,
The theodicy I wrote in my high school days
Restored all life from infancy,
The children shouting are bright as they run
(This is the school in which they learn ...)
Ravished entirely in their passing play!
(... that time is the fire in which they burn.)

Avid its rush, that reeling blaze!
Where is my father and Eleanor?
Not where are they now, dead seven years,
But what they were then?
No more? No more?
From Nineteen-Fourteen to the present day,
Bert Spira and Rhoda consume, consume
Not where they are now (where are they now?)
But what they were then, both beautiful;

Each minute bursts in the burning room,
The great globe reels in the solar fire,
Spinning the trivial and unique away.
(How all things flash! How all things flare!)
What am I now that I was then?
May memory restore again and again
The smallest color of the smallest day:
Time is the school in which we learn,
Time is the fire in which we burn.

Delmore Schwartz, "Calmly We Walk Through This April's Day" 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)