

# The New Criterion

Poems October 1984

## Children walking home from school through good neighborhood

by Donald Justice

They are like figures held in some glass ball,  
One of those in which, when shaken, snowstorms occur;  
But this one is not yet shaken.

And they go unaccompanied still,  
Out along this walkway between two worlds,  
This almost swaying bridge.

October sunlight checkers their path;  
It frets their cheeks and bare arms now with a shadow  
Almost too pure to signify itself.  
And they progress slowly, somewhat lingeringly,  
Independent, yet moving all together,  
Like polyphonic voices that crisscross  
In short-lived harmonies.

Today, a few stragglers.  
One, a girl, stands there with hands spaced out, so,  
A gesture in a story. Someone's school notebook spills,  
And they bend down to gather up the loose pages.  
(Bright sweaters knotted at the waist; solemn expressions.)  
Not that they shrink or hold back from what may come,  
For now they all at once run to meet it, a little swirl of colors,  
Like the leaves already blazing and falling farther north.

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**Donald Justice** is the author of *Collected Poems* (Knopf).

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