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Rounds

Thomas Swiss

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Rounds · *Thomas Swiss*

In the blue distance, an orange speck:
The paper-boy at afternoon's end.
That sack he wears over his shoulder
Is "day-glo," hoisted like a warning flag
And visible for blocks. And he is too—

Visible by implication. As autumn implies
Dying, it is left to us to imagine him:
Doubled up under that pulpous, inky weight.
Now he short-cuts the long corner,
Crossing the well-kept but leafy lawn

Of the First Lutheran Trinity Church.
No doubt he's memorized his route by now,
The zigzag six-block round he makes,
Always more interested in the daily distractions
Than in this job he's lately taken on.

Today's action includes: two girls, young,
Their arms filled with groceries,
Struggling up a drive; then a runner comes
Towards him in a striped-blue sweatsuit.
And a yellow spaniel follows at his feet

Or runs ahead and waits. He is lost in thought.
That's why he still misses our house.
It's new on the route, and he hasn't
Got it down yet. My complaining to his boss
Will no doubt fix that, sooner or later,

But meanwhile I feel a measure of guilt.
Do I ask too much? Still that seems
To be how it works: some light pressure
Is applied, prodding us into remembering.
And seeing him has such an effect on me.

Watching the birds flutter down from the trees—
Made miniature by the great gulf of air
Between us—it could be ten years from now:
This child my own son, daughter.
Or twenty years back! I was that boy,

Getting up early for three-fifty a week.
Jobs are earned admittance into the miserly,
Ordinary world. As evidence, here I am:
Thinking to write down something of autumn.
His art, I see now, reminds me of my own—

Balancing memory with expectation.
The long perspective deepens. Past, future:
We guess from what surrounds us,
Though they extend over the horizon endlessly.
It is enough to have our rounds to make,

Sometimes entering the lives of others,
Sometimes with such precision! Outside
The Trinity Church, a lighted sign
Comes on with the evening, blinking
The weekly warning: *Redemption Center:*

No Stamps Needed For Your Full Reward.
So much floating up into our field of vision,
Catching the eye, demanding attention,
Demanding the mind make anything it touches its own.
The way a sparrow, diving, goes

Under the paper-boy's overhand toss,
Our allegiance and those objects
All head into evening. And the paper
Is headed towards someone else's porch,
A neighbor I hardly know. I let it go.