

Mary Ellen Peters
Berkley and Arlington
on Boylston and Newbury.

Post-walk Interview

Well the first thing I was very aware of when we started out was the day. It was the first thing that struck me because it was such a gorgeous day, maybe also because I have been sick in bed. But I don't think it was that reason, I mean always a bright, sunny, --- its my favorite weather clear, sunny, cool. It was the first thing that hit me, I think it struck me even more so because we started out by Bonwit Tellers, in a sense, if you want to start the walk there, where its sort of a little bit open by Bonwits, where the building is set back, its not all crowded in. The parking space at Bonwits was free of cars, pretty free of cars there were very few in there in contrast to during the later hours., so that you really felt the freedom, it wasn't jammed up with cars; there was grass and bushes, the clean building. And then the next thing I was aware of after that was a Liggets sign on the other side of the street that was sort of flashing red and the fact that we had to stop to wait for the cars, and I knew that as soon as those cars stopped more cars were to come around the corner so we still wouldn't be able to get across the street, and that's exactly what happened. Then I happened to look over my shoulder and I noticed those horrible canopies, stripped, on either side of the major awning canopy that comes down out of Bonwit tellers. Then we finally got across the street, and I noticed as I always do the Clapp, -I think it's the pharmacy, -Clapp clock that stands in the middle of the street. And I don't know if I noticed this

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morning but I now become very aware of the fact that usually there is a some kind of a little book store right there and usually there is a stand, a wooden stand, square, with books on it. And it just struck me now that I didn't notice it so I don't know whether it was there or not. It wasn't there. that's right that's what I was going to say I didn't think it was there because I know I would have noticed it because I always notice it, with all these old second-hand books out there. I remember the French Line window, black doorway, and black windows, and how tall it is with that, that tall arched doorway of a building right next to it, I think it was number 419,—but not certain,—Boylston Street. And the fact that we were coming into,—at about that point, you couldn't really feel the width of the sidewalk because you have the clock coming out, sort of cutting up the sidewalk and also I sort of ignored the fact that theres a subway entrance, I hate those blasted subway entrances, right there just before you come to the clock, just as you get on the other side of Berkley Street. After you get around the clock you notice that the sidewalk is very very wide, and it's a nice feeling. I like the feeling of the very very wide sidewalk in contrast to the sidewalk on the other side which is much more narrow, much more closed in; I would have had a much more closed in feeling, I even felt it as I looked across the street. And I noticed also the fact that it was Thomas Cook and Cunard, the Cunard also have black, black fronts with big silver Cunard letters. And I like the windows because they all had,—Thomas Cook and Cunard,—both had ships with red – a what do you call them – funnels? (red funnels) red funnels on the top. It looked so nice, the miniature ships in the window. I didn't particularly notice any smells, at that point, I only noticed one smell along the way I remember very clearly, I think its because I have

a cold

(What was that?) Well that was later on when we were walking through the alley way when I looked up and saw that someone had brought their lunch to work and they had put it next to the window to keep it cool. It looked like it was a little tomato up there. before I noticed the tomato I smelled a tomato and I saw a little red thing that looked just like a tomato up in the window and I could smell it very clearly. Maybe it was my imagination, I don't know how I could smell anything with my nose all stopped up. On walking down, the next thing now that I remember very clearly and feeling very strongly about was the church, brown, sort of brownish-pink church and that was because just before you come to the church there is a little, a, box of cement or stone of some sort. Growing in the middle of it are some shrubbery and its only about 4 or 5 feet long and a couple of feet wide. And then there is a very little narrow walk in between and then it starts, the church and the church yard which is-, you really couldn't call it a yard - but its sort of blocked off again by this brown stone, and then set into it are bushes and grass and shrubbery which,-its very nice. That the fact that we had just come through a expanse where there were no trees, no grass at all, and then we come to this. And I noticed directly, not directly exactly, but as you get half-way beyond this, the first thing that you see then is the park, and all of the stone and concrete. Also, I was impressed by the difference, which I mentioned, between the opposite side of the street and the side of the street we were on, and it strikes me now even more clearly, the differences in the types of buildings and the cleanliness of the buildings and the differences in the types of shops that you have on the opposite side of the street in contrast to the street we were on. The other

side you have more apparel, women's clothing stores, oh, and they have that Lloyd's building with the funny stain glass windows, the sort of whiteish stain glass windows. And a,—whereas on the side we were on there were just little places, and there were two step-down places that I didn't like at all, one was a cleaners and one was a shoe repair shop with those plain wrought iron,—no not wrought iron,—just pipe, plain pipe railings. They looked sort of sad and dingy down there, especially in contrast to the other side of the street which has fairly nice stores. Then there is the Fredly's store with it's black sign, black background with white or silver or some saying Fredlys. And then we came to the corner, and on the corner again were those horrible,—this was one that came up out onto the street,—those horrible subway entrances. It was different from the first one, the first one was just, again iron railing that went down, this one was of that horrible dirty concrete that came up over the street and just sort of stood there, monstrous and ugly. And then after we turned the corner at this point and,—I remember, I think, up until this time there wasn't very much traffic, as a matter of fact. I think I commented on the fact that up until now there wasn't too much traffic. I think it was afterward, after we came through the alley that the traffic started to pick up, and would probably be the people coming into town, for shopping and various other things. And as we walked along in front of the church I was very aware of all the green across the way from us in the park, al the trees and the grass. And the church, there was the church and the fact that they had the screening to keep the pidgeons out , so there was a big fat pidgeon sitting right inside in the hole. And then we came to a little alley-way which we crossed and then there was Neals, a garish store with

with those horrible white leather coats with big fur collars and – sort of fawn colored leather jackets and all kinds of outrageously cheap clothes. And there was a little, –right after that came this little interior decorating store that I like because its, –I like the store because its set up high, the window is up high its sort of a little bit above my head, which doesn't make it too high, but higher than most, it doesn't come right down to the street. I never like what is inside because its always sort of old and sort of, –not old, that's not the right word, –sort of period furniture, and a little bit overdone, overstuffed chairs, small but overstuffed, and gilded chests things like that. Then something else that I didn't comment on but I noticed, there is a little glass case, there is a doorway of some sort just before you come to Antells, just before the door is a little glass case where they always have the most obnoxious hats I've ever seen, in that case, and it sticks out onto the sidewalk so that you can't help but notice it, and the sidewalk also, I noticed and I can still feel it seemed very warm because it was brick; we had gotten off the cool appearing concrete and onto the brick which was surprisingly even at this point and very very warm in color. Then we came to Antells, I don't like Antells because they have a front that somehow sticks out onto the sidewalk and its all glass and just jammed full of shoes and all kinds of decorations in the background. It's really just piled full of things, And then I became very aware of the Ritz and the fact that now there were Cadilacs around and big luxurious cars. I like the building of the Ritz because it is plain and big for that section, but not overpoweringly big, not rambling all over the place, very clean cut, clean lines, everything is straight, nothing projecting out with the exception of a few awning over the dining

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room windows, but everything was clean, no canopies sticking out, no door men in ornate uniforms, everything plain and clean, very clean looking brick, with nice little clean jewelry shops down in the bottom. Then we turned the corner and some more of Antells and then Church, the Church store,—jewelry store or something or other,—antique jewelry I guess, with a step-down which I like because it didn't have any of that railing around it, that pipe kind of railing but just a simple step-down. Next to that was the Ritz parking lot which I also liked because it was open and it wasn't a dirty parking lot, it was a clean parking lot. Most parking lots I don't like at all because they are, I don't know, they are sort of dirty, littered with papers. This one is always a nice clean parking lot, the cars in there are always nice and clean and shiny looking and there weren't too many cars in there even today. And then we came into what I call the shopping section proper. And several stores,—I can see them very clearly,—three of them with the straight fronts that project out onto the sidewalk, glass, in front of the store, not flush with the wall, out from the wall; one square one, one round one, and then another square one, and all straight for a long way, nice straight line with nice stores. And I can still remember the fur store, I think it was Litvin, Steele-Litvin (it was Ludwig wasn't it?), I always remember that store because it always looks as though someone has just moved out and left it empty even though there is one fur piece in each window. It is in such contrast to most stores that have so much in their windows. The stores on Newbury Street, usually their windows are very nicely dressed; they have a chair or couch in the window with just a few pieces of clothing, a skirt or a dress or a coat, somehow casually flung over the couch; they have that in Stuart's window. But this Litvin place

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is always so bare in contrast. The next thing I remember very clearly is the Hurwitz-Elizabeth Arden Building, which I like very, very much. Again it gives me this feeling of cleanness, of clean lines, not cluttered up, the windows weren't cluttered up and the building wasn't cluttered up. I remember seeing air-conditioners in some of the windows, sticking out. But it was a clean building; all it had on it,--and this was nice because it gave relief from the complete starkness of the brick, and most of the buildings that we had seen so far were brick. There were others but I think a good many of them were brick. And what was nice and gave you relief from the brick was the fact that you had a big bay window with all the little,--what do you call the little (panes),--panes with wood, little panes with wood all on it. A round bay window and under the bay window a grey, wide border of some sort that also curved with the bay window, below that the Hurwitz store. I like the shape of the windows at the Hurwitz store for some reason, I don't know that they are so very different from others but there is something about them,; one is wider than the others but not too much wider, then two more with the doorway in between. Across from this was the church I liked best of any of the churches that we had seen along the way because it was lower and cleaner looking and sort of more friendly looking, the church on the corner of Arlington and Boylston facing out into Arlington is sort of dirty looking, that's what bothers me about it; the stone was dirty, it was nice on the side because it had all of the shrubbery, but in the front, it didn't look well kept; it looked sort of as though it needed a good dusting or something, or whatever it is they do to clean buildings but that's the impression I got, do you know what I mean, the feeling was that what it really needed was a really good dusting.

Something to blow all that dirt and dust off because it looked as though it had just settled on it and had not gone into it. It didn't look like dirt that had settled into it and I think that is because of the stone's sort of pinkish-brown; it gives this effect.

Skip here to the alley-way

Well I was sort of surprised when we started wandering in there. It seemed sort of natural to wander in there the way we just wandered around in general. I wasn't taken aback and I wasn't startled by the fact that we were going into an alley-way, we had just walked along two fairly broad streets and I always feel, by the way, that Newbury Street is broader than Boylston Street although I am sure this is not true. But I feel this because there is less congestion on Newbury Street, even though the Ritz triple parks their cars, everything is lower and cleaner. there is less rush, people walk a little more casually on Newbury Street than on the other streets, and I like it better, its cleaner looking and there is a little more green around; Traynor's window has so much green in it. When I went into the alley this didn't startle me in contrast, so narrow, so dark, so dirty, anyway it didn't strike me that way, as a matter of fact I felt, and I think I commented on the fact, that if they took out all this refuse that was hanging around, the garbage and the dirty tins and that wood that had evidently been carted out of one of the buildings, it looked like burned wood broken up, then it wouldn't be bad. Somehow as we got to the end and looked back and you could see all the dark brick, it was almost black brick, with the fire escapes, it somehow, it was nice to me, I don't know why. Again I suppose because this is a part of the city it's the back part of the city, I suppose you have to have it in all cities.

But its not just because you have to have it, I liked it; I liked the narrowness, I like narrow streets and it was here walking along the street that I noticed the women had put her lunch up and I smelled the tomato. There were several cars and trucks parked in the alley and I was thinking that they must have a difficult time bringing in the big trucks that pick up all this refuse because the street was so very narrow. I liked the way the sidewalk came down and curved around and then cut off almost into nothing but just a curbstone. And I was fascinated by these little workshops with these exclusive shops up top which were so clean and had these little basement workshops where everyone looked like they were working in sort of what you thought of as the old sweatshop sort of business. All the women down there sewing, and the men putting buttons on and altering clothes for women that probably cost between \$200 and \$400 a dress, and they are down there those poor little old people working. I remember the windows with the grates on them and I thought that they probably had grates on them because if anyone was going to break into the stores they would break into the back rather than the front. And then I was very relieved though when we finally came out into,—and the first thing that struck me as we came out, the first think I mentioned,—was the Ritz parking lot, it was open, open space and the sunshine came in, and I wasn't so pleased by it because I didn't like this (the alley) but because it was so dark in there and it was such a beautiful day that it was a pity on such a gorgeous day not to have the air and the sunshine. in there you didn't feel that it was a beautiful day, and you didn't feel the air and the sunshine. You just felt sort of dark, not closed in, but just dark. And then the feeling that you came out with into the open parking lot where you could just see the Ritz with their blue and yellow awnings, everything

looked so sunny and so clean and nice. Then we came out from there onto Boylston Street. Oh yes, I remember looking into the window and seeing the children's schoolroom, it looked so nice and clean with the children's drawings along the wall. And coming back out and ending up right beside that horrible Neals again, with their awful clothing. And I think that just about takes us through. Oh I remember people passing by I remember two boys particularly, one with a wine shirt next to a very effeminate young man in a sort of orange-rust shirt. Yes, I remember people generally, I remember as we came around,—the first time going around the corner onto Newbury Street— the first thing I noticed was two men who were in complete contrast to the people we had been seeing on Boylston Street. two men had just come out of the parking lot, they had evidently just parked their car there; both looking extremely prosperous, extremely conservative, very well cut clothes, very nice-looking men of about forty-eight fifty. Other than these two men I wasn't too very aware if people which as I said, is in contrast to what I usually notice. I usually notice people a great deal. Oh yes, I also remember seeing the F.A.O. Schwartz sign on the back of the store whereas when I walked by F.A.O. Schwartz in the front, I was very aware that it was Schwartz's store but I wasn't aware of the sign in the front, although I believe they have a very nice, clean building, from I what I remember observing in the past, with an expanse of concrete of over the store, onto which the letters F.A.O. Schwartz are placed, on, not in, if I remember correctly, I could be wrong. I remember the Traynor sign on the store window, written in gold on the window. Traynor's something or other, I don't think its flowers (florists), florists, yes. I know the area very, very well, particularly the Newbury Street area. Nevertheless, despite the fact that I know it very well, and I know that

after Ina Clairs comes Stuarts then comes some other store, and then comes Sumners, Hurwitz, Elizabeth Arden, so on and so forth. I know practically all of the stores along there down to Brooks Brothers. Despite the fact that I do know these stores and that one leads to the other, I don't feel continuity, if I think I know what you mean, or order, or the sense that there is any connectedness between one building and the next. No, I feel somehow, and I think it's because I feel this particularly about Boston in general; each building is somehow itself, and is not too much related to the building next door to it except for the fact of contact. They are different, most all of the buildings are different, even where you have plain brick buildings on the side of Newbury Street we walked on. I commented on that as a matter of fact. On the side of Newbury Street we were on most of the stores were fairly similar, I mean they were brick, they were fairly new looking and clean. Whereas on the opposite side of the street every store was different, every building was different. So that I suppose that if there is any, I felt a sense of order or continuity anywhere it would be on that side of Newbury Street (the side we walked on). Because if you remember there were several stores that projected out onto the sidewalk, these were similar. There were at the beginning of Newbury Street, at the Arlington end two square ones and a round one and after you got through the flat area, you came to four more; I think they were predominantly square, very similar to the first two. So in a sense there was,—they were built evidently,—I'm sure these buildings were built at separate times, they are different buildings, the tops of them are different but I am sure that if the people up the street saw the buildings down the street they sort of modeled them after them, otherwise there is no reason for them to have been so identical.

And except for there I didn't feel any sense of real order and yet I didn't feel that everything was jumbled and I suppose that is because I am familiar with the area. To me it didn't seem confused, it seemed right. Even on Boylston Street where I think things are a little more jumbled up as far as the buildings go than on the particular side of Newbury Street we were on, I still don't feel order in the sense that everything fits or belongs to everything else but I don't feel that they don't fit.

(How does it blend in with the area around it?)

Well, do you want to take Boylston Street or Newbury Street or the whole section? Well you see, its hard for me to take the section because I feel very, very definitely that the newbury Street section that we were on, although it is a shopping district like the Boylston Street, it is really so different, and it is actually if you come right down to it. Its different in the type of shop, its different in the type of people it caters to, its different in price-range. Its different in just the type of people that walk down the street. So its bound to be different, you have different kinds of people coming there for different reason, well for the same reason but I mean for a different range, lets put it that way. So that I can't link them together but this is my own experience. I mean this is just my own feeling about the place. But it is also in a sense reality, because-actually Boylston Street is not a good example because some of the people who go to the shops on Baylston Street would go to the shops on Newbury Street, but not too many; so it is reality in a sense. but trying to take it as a whole, it fits in with what I think of Boston.- in that all the bigger buildings are individual; I think of Boston in this way. They fit fairly well with the section, I mean what is the section, its sort of

commercial section; I don't really consider it the commercial section of Boston. I don't know, I can't explain what I mean, I think it fits because it is a commercial section but it is not "the" big commercial section of Boston. It is not Tremont Street, it is not Washington Street where you could expect large stores. It is little shops, everyone by itself, set off from the others. How could it be anything other than that because that is what it has grown up to be, I mean you can't say 'does it fit in with the area?' Of course it fits in with the area because that is what the area is. I know what you mean, is it set off from anything else, is it cut off by itself? I know exactly what you mean, but it is difficult for me to— because I am picturing up in back, I'm picturing up in back there where the railway station Back Bay is, and if you come along, what is it, Columbus Street, well the streets up in back that run parallel are so different. So this is what is all in my mind. If you are going from Boylston Street and Berkley, and you are going uptown, yes, there is a flow in a sense; there is also the same thing. It all blends in from one into the other. Even though each one is different they blend in together. You have the park on the other side balancing it off, in a sense. If you want to take it that way, fine. If you want to take it crossways I don't think there is any flow between Newbury Street and Boylston Street and the next one over, whatever it is. Although there is a flow if you want to go in the opposite direction. If you want to go from Boylston Street— which is fairly nice, not too bad architecturally, nor as far as the type of shops and their windows and signs are concerned, not too bad, not too cluttered, not too jumbled — to Newbury — which is a little bit better, less jumbled, less cluttered, nicer things, nicer buildings, cleaner, less people, less traffic — then over one more

to Commonwealth, I think, you don't have any shops at all, just houses. Somehow you can make the transition between the shops on Newbury – in other words, it is a gradual transition. You go from Boylston, which is fairly cluttered, right into old Boston, the old brown-stone houses. you don't feel a shock going from one to the other. There is this gradual transition because each street is a little less than the preceding one; a little more residential looking, a little neater, a little cleaner, a little less cluttered, fewer signs, fewer cars, fewer people, until you get right into your residential area. There is one street though, if you want to go a little farther – that I think is Marlborough Street – it is between Commonwealth and Beacon. Marlborough looks like it should be on the other side of Boylston, almost, if you know what I mean. The houses are all bunched together, all sort of old, all sort of dirty. One seems to continue, they don't seem to stop, they just seem to run one right into the other, all the same; it doesn't look like it belongs there at all. For this is a place where each house is sort of an individual, by itself, as a person. going the other way, as I say, I can't see it at all, from Boylston on up to the other side. But maybe that's just – Boylston is more cluttered so maybe you get into a sort of residential area with little corner stores – I think that is what the next street up is like. I can't remember what the name of it is, if its Columbus or not. (Its Stuart) Stuart – that's right its Stuart Street, of course. Well that's what you'd sort of expect on the other side of Boylston in a way, but not quite that drastic. (How about in back?) What do you mean by back? (Directly back, West).

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You mean going back to Stuart Street? (No, going back to Berkley) I'm still not quite certain what you mean.