

AK6

Mary Ellen Peters

A - Interviewer

B - Person being interviewed

B: The first thing I think of standing right here, this is one of the most annoying corners to cross because when I'm trying to get from that side over to Bonwit Teller's, which is quite frequent, cars keep coming around here. When traffic is stopped, these cars keep coming around the corner and I can't get by. They never stop -- yes, here they come. Exactly what I'm talking about; they never stop going down the street.

There are so many things -- Liggett's sign flashing. That's the trouble, I'm too sensitive to signs; I see signs all over the place. I can't even talk about all the signs I see -- St. Clair's, Walton's, and this big clock that I've noticed for years, Otic Clapp, Kays Newport, Institute for Savings, Gabriel Stuart Advertising -- everything is signs -- signs on parking meters. And these buildings -- I don't know, I don't mind them at all. Every single one of them is different. Some are tall and narrow, with lots of windows. Others have solid fronts like the Worth Bldg., Worth of Boston. They don't all fit together in any sense. Still, they don't look badly all joined together. Maybe ~~is~~ it is because they are all so different; 2 or 3 look alike ~~but~~ and others are different, but practically every one is different, and so this makes it nice.

I like the broad, broad sidewalk again on this side. It makes me feel that I have plenty of room to move around in. And the stores being set back. I particularly like the high front of the French Lines and the big high door~~s~~ next to at 419. I don't know, it's not a particularly attractive front, it's so narrow. But on the other hand, the highness of it makes it very nice. I always liked to look ⁱⁿ ~~at~~ the French Line, Cook's Travel Service and Cunard, they always have very interesting displays of Europe, the Far East and all those places you'd like to go. And I like to look at that building, Andrew Lloyd. What is that, is that glass? It looks like some sort of stained glass. It's so fantastic, I don't understand how any one would build a building like that

A: Do you like it?

B: Well, no. It's interesting. I always like to look at Bigelow Kennard and

the one on the corner, Shreve, Crump and Low. It looks sort of luxurious.

I don't like these little basement, step-down stores. They look sort of out of place in this section, which is a fairly nice shopping section of Boston. ^{Then you} ~~They~~ have these little step-down cleaning services and shoe repair. Actually, the other side of the street is more of a shopping side than this, and certainly as far as class goes is a better shopping side than this. It's quite surprising that you have such a startling difference between the two sides of the street.

A: You mean that this is quite a good deal better than the other side?

B: I was going to say what goes on on one side as to what goes on on this side, but actually even the buildings are different. If you notice on this side they are sort of old, rather decorative, dirty-looking brick buildings, at least for these four, whereas on the other side they are not particularly new buildings but at least they look sort of decent. They are taller, a little newer looking, and most of them are of, I guess that's cement, or whatever it's called; clean-looking and decent, and the thing is that they are much taller. Just in the background you can see a corner of John Hancock -- that really looks good.

I've noticed that I haven't noticed too many people, and I think that's because you become so interested ^{that} in noticing what's going on around the street ~~and~~ you begin to lose track of people, because usually I'm very absorbed in signs and people.

There's one thing I like, that's the shrubbery, green around the church. It's so lovely. And I suppose it's particularly lovely because ^{we've} ~~they've~~ just gone through a bare expanse of concrete and buildings and sidewalks with no relief at all from the starkness by ~~green~~ ^{trees,} grass or bushes. But ^{coming into just} now ~~into~~ ~~it's~~ ~~so~~ much of it.. it seems that everything comes together immediately we come by the park with trees and grass. It's really nice but it's a shame they don't run a little more along the way, in back of us; every now and then having a little tree. [?] Maybe it's impractical but I think it would be very nice.

Here we have more of these ugly subway entrances -- low, squat and dirty, black and cold-looking, holes in the ground. And Cadillacs -- we seem to be running into all Cadillacs.

This is not a particularly attractive church. What would you call this stone, round? do you know? Oh, it's granite, you think? Concrete? It is sort of ~~xxxxx~~ in the front, is that to keep the pigeons out? It's not too bad a church though, because it at least doesn't have all that monstrous ornate work on it that so many churches do, particularly that church down by Copley Sq., but Trinity isn't too bad. I don't consider that an awfully bad example of what churches should or should not look like. This one is simple. The best church of all is in Harvard Sq., First Church of Christ Scientist -- you know the one I mean?. But this is nice, and I like this because it's got a walk of concrete and not of brick. I suppose _____ flat shoes _____ especially I like the tone; it's softer looking, warmer looking/when the sun/shines on it.

Here we come to Neal's. I don't like this place furnishing clothes. You can tell just by looking in the window; everything is so ostentatious, white with fur around it, white leather. This shop always borders on being nice but never is quite. Rotch & Craven. Sometimes they just almost get nice things in the window but Oh, look, R. M. Bradley, For Sale.

Now, we're getting to a section that has a great deal of meaning to me personally. We're getting into the shopping section. All I do is spend all my money down here. It's so nice here though, because you have the park across the street which is marvelous, and you have the Ritz-Carlton which is so clean, and plain-looking for a hotel. Most of the hotels around are so stupidly ornate, so many people wandering around, all kinds of canopies, porters and bell-boys. This place is so quiet compared to everything else. And all the Cadillacs and Jaguars parked out in front give it such an air of what it is, one of the nicest hotels, supposedly, in Boston.

I've always liked Church and Co. I've never been inside but I'd like to.

They always have nice antique earrings in the window.

Now we come to the Ritz parking lot. Of course, they haven't got room; they park them 3 out on Newbury St. It's about the only street in Boston I've seen where there is single parking on one side and triple on the other. They're only double parked today.

And there is Helena Rubenstein's which looks nice downstairs but awful upstairs. It looks as if they cleaned the bottom part and didn't bother with the top part.

And there's a very nice church. I don't know what church that is, but I like that, because it's sort of long, spread out, has brownish-colored stone and ivy all over it. It's not too high at any point. It has nice stained glass windows in the front and that nice brown-wood door with ~~the~~ heavy, big hinges on it. I don't know what you'd call them - they're not hinges.

Do you know that you got me to walk by Stuart's without looking at the window? Because I was interested in the church. I can't really say anything about these stores, I know them inside out -- I just came and ^{paid} ~~paid~~ all my bills here yesterday.

This is an interesting window - Ludwig's. It's always almost empty, but there is something nice about having it almost empty, but they're too empty almost. The window is always sort of stark. It's a little too much; it looks as if the place had been deserted.

And that building! It looks like something out of the Orient somewhere -- all that gold leaf and sort of semi-minaret tops. The Hurwitz building I think is terrific, or I guess maybe it's the Elizabeth Arden bldg., I don't know which. It's so plain with that nice clean brick and ^{just} that one bay window in the front, sort of grayish. And Hurwitz, I like their windows -- there's one sort of wide and then two -- I can't explain what I mean, but there is something very clean about this store, about their windows, much more so than any of the stores in back. There's one nice thing I didn't mention, as I look back I can see it -- that the two first stores project out onto the sidewalk, the first three actually. I was thinking the first is square and the second round -- very nice. Then you come to this flatness. I like the contrast between the projecting ~~buildings~~ stores where you have a few of them and then the flatness. Also I like it because the projecting stores are in good / taste, nothing particularly gaudy or ornate about them, whereas you might find projecting stores out on Boylston St. if they were projecting they might be very ornate, and then again very simple and very flat. I do think that the best looking front, the top is plain and simple, but as far as the store front goes I think it's one of the best looking

store fronts around, very simple, very plain, the background is sort of grayish color. Elizabeth Arden's is sort of nice but, well, knowing/^{what}Elizabeth Arden's is I hate to comment on it.

This building rather interests me. It doesn't look like a particularly old bldg yet it has strange, high windows. The window casements are very odd, and the balcony. It was erected in 1912; it's not terribly old --

Here's the Berlitz School. I was going to come here and take French but I forgot all about it. Here we have two more projecting windows but I don't like these here. Actually these aren't too bad ; too many; you have four of them and then you have flat again. Somehow I don't like the appearance of it. I mean, it would have ^{all} been better perhaps if it were/flat all the way now, aesthetically for the eye if for no other reasons.

On the other side, again, we have quite a difference. I feel quite a difference between what's on this side of the street and what's on the other side of the street. We have still a shopping area, predominately for women's clothing as it is on this side of the street until you get to the corner, but the quality of the shops on that side of the street is so different from the quality of the shops on this side. Well, on this side they're much more expensive. I just can't understand this extreme difference. Also, you have different kinds of buildings on the other side of the street if you notice. They look ~~like~~ more like old houses converted into stores, while on this side of the street it definitely looks like every building here was built for a building, a store, an office building or something like that. They are all fairly flat surfaces in the front with the exception of that one little protruding, ivy'd bay window; they are all flat surfaces, mostly of brick. On the other side, first of all you have the massive ^{probably} (not massive/as compared to the Statler or any other place) Ritz Carlton, massive because these buildings here are so small. Then the church which actually looks very nice there. It's surprising among all these stores, the church seems to fit in. Maybe it's because it seems to set back, it doesn't stick out, it sort of recedes; the yellow and browns and the ivy recede.

Then you have -- is this part of the church, by the way? It must be. It doesn't look like it, it doesn't look like it at all. It looks it's sort of cut off from it. It's newer looking. It's different, the design is somewhat different too. ~~Yes~~ It has those funny spires on the top, little double spires that look quite different. But then the buildings are sort of like houses, brownstone houses. But this is fabulous, whatever this is -- purple wood. It's purple, isn't it, or grayish purple, or gray-lavender.

A: It's not wood, it's concrete.

B: ~~Isn't~~ It is concrete! It looks like wood to me from here, and looks like sort of gray-purple. It's very interesting where it has those sort of slat-like effects between the windows.

There's a "To Let" sign. The whole building looks like it was vacant. There's a restaurant over there somewhere. Yes, the Farm and Garden Shop.

We end up with a store -- Hickson's. (laughter) Everytime I go by I look at that window and everything looks sort of old and/yellowish and not awfully attractive, and I never can figure out how they make a living.

Then we come to Graynor Flowers which ~~is~~ is just so beautiful to look at. Never mind the inside with all that growth all around, flowers, plants, green shrubbery, flowers outside.

And now Brooks Bros. This is always lovely to look at, and I like their _____ I like the green awnings out in front with the wide sidewalk, it's a sort of mannish-looking store. It's not too ornate, it sort of looks like what it is - a good men's, a good conservative, substantial men's store, not too high a building, clean looking.

Look at the lamb [?], what have they done to him?

A: Strung him?

B: Is he really? Why have they got him hung up around the middle? That's on all their boxes, you know, on their bags and everything. It is a nice store, I like it. I like their windows; everything is done very nicely.

And there's Bonwit Teller's again. And I hate that monstrous awning coming out; it's so affected. Besides, it looks so wrong with the building, it looks like a worm coming out of a hole. Probably the worm grew up in the museum. It's so ridiculous having

those curtains in the windows, those monstrous canopies and that awning; the building looks like a museum. I've never heard anything so silly as converting a museum into a woman's dress store and then showing it from the outside. The least they could do is preserve the dignity of the building by not putting up curtains in the windows and mannikins.

These are all the back doors of the buildings? You know, this would be a nice little street if it didn't have so much garbage and waste out back. I mean, a nice little street if you like nice little alleyways. I don't think they're too bad. They're nice occasionally. They're dangerous at night.

Oh, F.A.O. Schwarz, #40 -- that's the toy place where they have all different toys. This is really pretty bad. What are they doing here? It looks like they're throwing out part of the inside. They're interesting from the back. Boy, they sure do look different from the front. They're so dirty. Don't they ever clean the backs of the buildings at all?

Look at that big -- that must be a restaurant because it has that big, ~~skinn~~ what is it, exhaust pipe of some sort?

A: Chimney.

B: Chimney, flue. Look at that funny looking streetlight, painted silver on the top. What do they ever do with it? Hey, there's another one -- silver-painted streetlight.

Chalk marks for the numbers, looks almost painted on. 421. Someone's building a new concrete back with a new concrete ----

Oh! What's all that in the window?

A: The china?

B: Is it china? I can't see very clearly. It's china, not porcelain, you know like they use in lamps?

A: No. It's china and there's some crystal.

B: It looks nice from out here, doesn't it? It's the first really clean-looking thing, the window looks so clean, and the china looks so clean and nice. Hey, this looks nice, too. The [?] is clear and the brick wall. That must be the Schwarz Bldg. still. That looks very nice, nice and clean. You don't suppose any of these are apartments, do you?

A: I don't think so.

B: No. These are interesting. I've often wondered . . . You see these windows that have

lines on them, is that some kind of, is that just a design or is that burglary. That looks like a design to me. Have you ever seen the windows that seem to have something on them?

Miss Harvey. Gosh. Her customers should see her back entrance.

I don't think
This is really something. /I've been through a back alley for a long while. It's getting considerably cleaner up here, also ~~narrower~~ wider. I always liked streets that have sidewalks that curve around and then go straight, that curve in, cut off and then go straight down.

This is considerably cleaner. Ah, this is much better. You can tell -- now you're getting to the backs of the good stores. See how much cleaner these buildings are.

This is interesting. I wonder what store that is -- people selling down there. This is really interesting. That is a store -- I don't think it's a cleaning establishment of some sort -- the back of a store. Isn't that wonderful; I wonder what store it is.

It's a pretty bad street but I don't suppose .. It must be used quite a bit because it must be used to make deliveries. I don't think they'd make deliveries to the front.

Oh, look. Here's a little yard with a poor little weed tree trying to grow. It looks like the wall of a school where you bounce the ball from. I'm surprised how people put up with a street in such a very, very bad condition as just the pavement here, the driving, when obviously they must use it for a great many deliveries, pick-ups.

This is really marvelous! Who would guess that these little tiny stores up on top have such great big workrooms in the bottom.

. so she brought her lunch and stuck it in the window to keep it cool. Now we get back to more ~~refuse~~ refuse which we haven't seen for a long while.

Oh, here's Stuart's. My gosh, what a miserable little workroom! Bars in the window. There's that design again; it must be just a design or they wouldn't have bars in the window too. . . . Fire escapes.

All backs of brick buildings. All black brick.

What is this?

A: Boarded up [?] ~~_____~~

B: But with backs of draperies? Oh, someone lives there. A blackboard! It must be a school. Is it? A nursery school. How wonderful! Kid's drawings on the wall -- it must be a nursery school or kindergarten, a private school of some sort.

What have they done. I wonder if this is all specialty house.
I wonder if that could always do it too up there.

Stained glass windows. Oh, we must be getting near the church. There's part of the church, yes; it must be part of the church. Now we're getting the stained glass windows. What a relief! This Rita Carleton parking lot with the open space -- thank God it isn't jammed up with cars today. It feels so good coming out of that dark, dirty alley, although it isn't so bad when you look back at it. It was very narrow and you could just see/ the sort of very front of Bonwit Teller's. It centers the N. E. Mutual tower beautifully. It looks as if the N. E. Mutual tower is a continuation of Bonwit Teller's. All those fire escapes.

. . . . it was a shopping district. You especially notice the stores, I mean other than the stores with the clothes or the clothes in windows.

A: This is important.

B: The clothing in the windows? Well, see, the high point is this; maybe I should make it afterward, not right now.

These little columns of _____. I like this; this is wonderful, especially right here. I don't like this point because of that subway coming up with that ~~knuskyx~~ hole in the ground sticking above the ground again. But what I like about it is that again you have this wide, wide sweep of walk; right at this point it's so wide. I love to walk, when I'm walking down Boylston St., not to walk on Boylston St. but rather to walk in here because it's shaded by the trees, there is grass and bushes on either side, and the walk is wide. It's very wide.

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