

Cole Swensen

On Walks

5.17.12

On a quiet street, a very busy street during the day, a narrow street, a street lined with shops and filled with no one at the moment, a night with nice light still around and a few people, and all is calm.

I'm walking east on a quiet street, 9pm, warm, and an extremely well-dressed, even elegant, and very handsome young man—mid to late 30s—stops me, I assume to ask directions, and asks for spare change.

The street is calm. The night is warm, though it has rained, and it is not yet dark. 10:15, a man walking his cat. Unlikely, I know. He knows it, too. But it looks like an established routine. Man goes one way. Cat stays at corner; man comes back, making here-here kinds of noises, cat goes the other way, man follows. The street is calm.

5.21.12

The rain has finally let up and though it's cold, it rises, and rain stays on the streets in the way that it sticks. But has stopped. It's May. So I go for a walk

along the river, but it's cold enough that pretty much no one else is out, and the river clouds under, grey and the falling light just gets greyer. But it keeps not raining, so I keep on walking. I pass a man scowling, wearing a top hat, not seeming to get his own joke.

I pass a young woman in a skirt probably too short for comfort, as it is, after all, quite cold. I walk once around the island, pass a older man with two dogs going in different directions, then pass the young woman again (she looks colder), then the top hat. It feels good to walk when it's cold because it makes you warmer.

There goes the top hat again, this time across the bridge that connects the two islands. And then one of the dogs, alone, unleashed, perhaps a little relieved. I walk on. Another time around the island, again the young woman, who smiles, starting to get the joke, then five minutes later, the other dog, simply delighted. The others, I presume, are elsewhere by now.

6.3.12

In the balmy night, is still on the street, is a stillness, steady in presence and the ring of heels. A woman in a hurry and coming the length. It's a long street, which as that term is used (after all, most streets are long) means you can see a long way down it. I can see a long way down the street and a woman walking toward me, hurrying, her head down and her shoulders hunched as if this more streamlined silhouette will speed the whole thing on. It's urgent. And I am leisure. And I sense a collision as she gets nearer and nearer and passes and as she passes, looks up and directly at me, but I know for a fact, that she doesn't see a thing.

I see no one else on the entire walk this lovely evening in early June and think it must be the leisure, that leisure is both invisible and blind. Is folded time, and just a block from home, I notice a rat, calmly walking down the opposite side of the street. We walk in sync until I reach my door, though I have to slow down to do so.