

TIM SEIBLES

## Walk

Dusk in the body,  
starlight near the heart.

One half-lit street  
heading into night: now

the insects magnify  
their small vocabularies

as if talking to you  
your shadow sharp,

almost alive  
beneath the lamp.

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Do we live to scuff each  
hour dragging the hours

past?— as if you could  
see best by turning back—

the Present with Her lips  
soft on your neck / the future

filling with ghosts.

I still remember  
the first dog I ever saw:

that crazy tongue, the one sound  
flashing between its teeth.

Days when *Crackerjacks*  
crashed their music in me,

and crabgrass sizzled  
with chiggers, us playing tackle

till the sun ran out of breath.

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Where was it  
that your heart first

opened? Where, when you first  
began to shutter its rooms?

Your mind gradually bending  
beneath the suspicion

that life would not  
save us, that *love* itself

was little more than a hook  
for the mouth—time spent dying

quietly, driving to work.

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Car radio: the yammer,  
that itchy fuss, each bit

a ballpeen hammer  
chipped against your skull,

and the street somehow  
miles away, the funhouse

distance between your *self*  
and everyone else. To be awake

means what? Hearing

that voice start over  
in your head, the worries

walking in place: the argument  
backlit—*why do you*

*do this?* Thinking,  
thinking: your brain caught

in the swarm. Words  
telling you what not to say.

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I have tried to pass  
as an almost reasonable man,

as if that could mean much  
these days: Cruelty showing off

His sample tray of meats.  
Have enough

people died? Has first dark  
found your shadow

in a vague circle of light?—the day  
walking off, hard news

turned rot in your mouth.  
Is it true the mirror

has confused you  
with someone else?

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Maybe it is too easy  
to say *darkness* and mean

trouble or whatever it is—  
what we can't fight, what

the years do to us:

that smoldering sense  
of having been taken

prisoner, though you sit  
there, almost a fly feeding—

sunlight like sequins  
on your faceted eyes.

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A woman goes by with pants  
like liquid glass and I catch myself

leaning on memory: the promise  
of people we don't

know. I have been  
a stranger: that first hour

in someone's arms

when it seems we will  
never want again—

as if touch held  
the cure to this

chronic condition: the  
half-knowing / being half

understood: this blink  
and smile, the way we go

outdoors with the other things  
held inside our faces—

so I'm older now,  

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but maybe the safest thing we can do  
is insist on what might not be

found here, this hopeful walk  
toward *Neverland*. I think about

Fear, its steady governance  
all over and what people

are willing to believe  
to keep from being alone—

the mind spurred  
to build its own cage:

hatred or the hunger  
for *God* an ache for

money, how a  
mob becomes a

country becomes the  
history against

which we must break  
our lives.  

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What I've become: this  
running clock, this heretic, these

brushed teeth, this cock  
covered in cloth, this gang

of muscles wearing down,  
my brain a nest just starting

to burn: this *this*

that I carry around.  
Tell me,

wherever you are, tell me  
just how hungry we might be:

forks wet with food  
filling the opened faces,

all day the daylight  
eaten.

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From his garage, a man  
and his hammer rattle birds

who'd been near sleep: now  
the branches chick and chatter,

now the ants reconsider  
their silence and something else

comes clear: the veins  
in the leaves are the same

in your hands—Time starts walking  
into voice—you see yourself

on a street: three miles  
before starlight, one late wasp,

almost blind, climbs back  
to its nest in the eaves.