

Paul Taylor's Rantings

The universe is made of stories, not of atoms – Muriel Rukeyser

Signs

August 19, 2013

I should simply close my eyes. I don't see dead people. So, there's that. I see signification. Sign, sign, everywhere a sign: blocking out the scenery, breaking my mind. Not significance, not necessarily. Signification. Faces in the floor tile.

Use your words. Not talking about stories, word signs. Teller: "I know this story is true." If I see a story in the words, the story is true. Never fails. I am blessed. For some reason, the gift does not translate well in the pre-linguistic world of sense impression.

Driving between Webb City and Kansas City. Noah's ark. Must be all the recent rain. They come two by two but they are all dead. Road kill. Not the expected carcass or two. Must have been a fecund, procreative spring. Raccoon. Armadillo. Squirrel. Turtle. Groundhog. Deer. Skunk. Opossum (can't play dead with a squashed head). Snake. Cat. Dog. Red fox. Grey fox. Thing one. Thing two. But pigs? A dead pig as road kill is an uncommon thing. It was a sign.

I hope the marching orders went out to more than two of every kind 'cause some of them didn't make it. Not everyone does. The arc is safe harbor but there are rough seas and heavy winds blowing and a hard rain falling outside. Who gets voted off the arc? That would be a story, wouldn't it?

Along the way, there was a line of trees looming above the highway. Sunset. The trees were beginning to block the sun except for gaps in the line. "Your troops are spread a little thin along the west flank, captain. Reinforce your line." The sun drops a little lower and there was a stretch with no gaps in the line. The road lay all in shadow. Suddenly, a patch of sunlight appeared in the road ahead. There was a rectangle cut in the line of trees—a perfect rectangle. Tree limbs do not grow straight and parallel to the ground at that height. Yet, they had. Who was the sculptor? The carpenter? I could well imagine a u-shaped or v-shaped window to the sun, but this was a full rectangle thirty feet long and twenty feet high—and the green wall above the window was at least ten feet in height. It was a sign.

I should simply close my eyes. As I drove through the rectangle of light, I looked ahead and saw one, large cumulus cloud blocking the road. When I was young, there were more well-defined cumulus clouds than there are today. The world is all dried up—or it was until a month ago when spring usurped summer, and the call went out to fill the arc. Two by two. One large cumulus congestus cloud sat on a vapor floor at 6,000 feet above the earth, rose 10,000 feet high and spread 3,000 feet wide. I know the science. I tried hard to focus on that. I tried not to stare but it is hard to drive at eighty miles an hour with eyes closed. It was a boy kneeling at the

side of his bed with hands folded in prayer. His face was turned up to the heavens and his mouth was wide open. His eyes were closed and his face was full of joy.

It was a sign.

At eighty miles an hour, perceptions that depend on light and angles do not last long. I looked for that rectangle of light the next time I made that drive and could not find it. As the world turns, perceptions that depend on eyes and ears do not last long. Perceptions that depend on imagination and faith can last a lifetime.

Mostly, I try to close my eyes.