

# Towns, Tables, Rats, Seats, Cats, Castles, Dogs, Trees, Birds, Streams

Of what do I speak? Some objects, of course. Plaster, wood, colours, ink, paper, etc. — pictures. In these pictures: larger worlds made up of many small worlds — mosaic, assemblage. Sometimes in a quite concrete sense: formations of small parts forming large motifs; other times, less tangibly so perhaps, I speak of mosaics of ideas and signs.

How?

I was looking out of my window—it was somewhere on some continent, I think— across to the facade of the building on the opposite side. Here there are ornamented iron railings and concrete platforms. Here streams of smoke meander leisurely along the faces of buildings before disappearing into a blue sky. Here there are blinders, flowerpots and shiny glass surfaces are framed by white moldings. Here there is stucco, stone and plaster. Here light curtains play with a gentle summer breeze under the first rays of the sun — only barely covering the openings of mysterious dimmed portals with their shy yet seductive display. Are there really rooms behind all these darkened rectangles? Do people live in there? Do they have living rooms, kitchens — bedrooms? Do they decorate? Do they paint their walls white, or in colour? Do they make observations there, from atop their lofty perches?

It has been said that today's world has forgotten how allegory thinks. I go into the forest to forage for nuts. Before long, I come across my own footprints there, leading in amongst the trees. I come away from the expedition with a bundle of twigs and a handful of berries - the occasional mushroom perhaps. Absent from the story thus: the squirrel — an absence a fact as telling as a presence. Neither is here cheese or cream; but seeds, perhaps? Seeming to sense the signs, a chain of visitors follow on, one after the other: rats (always in the plural form) — not solely for their typographic qualities — fundamentally present though mostly unseen denizens of in-between spaces. If rat: cat. If cat: dog. Or bird? If bird: horizon? Tree? An eclectic meal, richly textured — filling?

I once read a tale which went almost like this: In the tale, the uninvited guest comes across a half-eaten meal — abandoned by the host and the guest, who seem to have retired for the evening—still a feast given the proper attitude. As this wily third party is about to start its surreptitious feast, ears suddenly spring into alert position: something stands out from the background, a signal — noise! The creaking of a door being opened? No, soft paws, lithe measured steps (what manner of sounds do such barely audible steps make? What sensitive individual can distinguish such even above the howling of the stomach?). So, this house already has a permanently employed parasite, reflects the uninvited, before scurrying away into the nearest nook or cranny, there to begin the search for its next meal. As I read these thoughts, thought by someone else before me, do they not also abide with me?

What then, about these elusive chains of signs and symbols? In fact, there seems to be no cunning plan behind this meal; yet neither is there a simple throwing of the dice: While, for instance, a sentence written in sand shares its horizon with water and wind in the most fleeting way, the writing of stones is inscribed so slowly and thoroughly that the syntax falls under the eternity's gaze. Can I lift as much as a grain of sand without describing myself?

Once, many years ago, I surprised myself by answering a voice of critique like so: "I think pictures should be allowed to proliferate." A rhetorical victory - an investment it is high time I write off (even if the hook and sinker are lost, can the line not still be saved?) Instead, I place my concern here: in images which are allowed to dwell on themselves. Here townhouses, trees, lampposts perhaps, are enveloped in the sounds from which we draw the conclusion: there are grasshoppers, in the evening. Here there is a gentle summer breeze. Here there are birds frolicking in a water fountain. Here there is the enthusiastic barking of a playful dog. As for the rest, and of all the paths that were followed, is it not written in these rooms?

- Eirik Senje, 2022