

The Billboard

By: Ernesto Meléndez Miles-Morais

Doing 100 in the borrowed Eclipse only in an attempt to beat the sun to the ground, its ground, somewhere out West, my ground, East Worthington Street, it behind me, it racing away from me, I behind it, I racing away from it, I checking its progress on the rearview mirrors rather than on the car clock since I've crossed so many time zones of late that I'm really not sure whether the time on the display is current anymore, and this race mindset tinged with thoughts of my immediate goal, this being to savor my competitor's last few rays of life while sitting on my East Worthington Street home's West-facing porch, Cuba Libre (C.L.) in hand, thinking about what the hell I'm going to show Cadwell tomorrow, wondering what it is that is amiss from my perfectly functional, stair-and-ramp linked, corn & soil samples storage / examination room / observation deck trio; so, anyhow, if you add on top of that the discomfort introduced by a bladder screaming to be alleviated at a moment when the sole idea of bringing the rpm's down, however slightly, is pretty much equivalent to that of say chugging down yet another gallon of coffee; so given all this, then, I thrive to find some kind of solace from the stress inflicted upon me by the situation, in the divine stability of the vast, endless really, scintillating expanses of Indiana corn fields golden in the afternoon sun to my constant left and right, where the mind is able to become lost, and quickly is in fact hypnotized, in a trance really, in the, in fact, kind of car-accident inducing trance you're in when you drunk-drive, especially if you add to that the relentless lash of the wind at something like 500mph since I'm driving against it, this wind lashing at your face and numbing the senses, then the mind, and the windows can't go up because, hey, it's summer; so then when the search for tranquility in the gigatopetic inertia of the corn seas backfired, I found that my uninsured ass was saved from total shredding in the event of, while in a trance, ramming right into the back of some unlawfully left-laning semi in front, thanks to the sporadic appearance of these large, rectangular, timber-framed, heterogenizing icons of colorful skins that stood firmly where erected and kept me alert, broke the monotony of the landscape that seeks to dull the restless mind, broke the monotony visually in a way that even Casa Babylon aurally could not, and thus saved me from E.C.T.I.O.P.I.A. (Endless-Cropscape-Trance-Induced-Or-Provoked Interstate

Accident), and I, now revitalized, exalted the Maker Of All (Natural) Things for the gift of ingeniousness with which He's endowed humans, and exalted, too, humans for the drive to Put-Up, violently swerving then to the right lane in order to avoid ramming right into the back of some unlawfully left-laning semi in front since in my euphoria I have completely buried the gas pedal, revving up by almost a K, and upon veering and just missing the gigantic bumper by two to three fingers, uncovered before my eyes, and quickly approached, this sublime image; the ancient, enormous skeleton of an abandoned timber-framed billboard, looming conspicuously orange in the late sun, looming conspicuously orange on the side of the highway under my competitor's last few rays of life - and I knew then what was amiss from my perfectly functional, stair-and-ramp linked, corn & soil samples storage / examination room / observation deck trio. The remainder of the emotional trip home I put "Super Chango" on repeat and listened with tragicomic ears, now basking in the irony of life, now lucid as ever, with eyes watery and face chiseled in the immortal expression of a Creator. When I arrive at our East Worthington St. house I join swimsuit-clad Liz and Justin for C.L.'s (of course, after racing through our idiosyncratic living-kitchen to our even idiosyncratic-er, berugged, one-for-all, lime green WC, with eyes now *furiously* watery), and, sitting with them barefoot on our West-facing porch a man who has beat the sun, us basking in it, our shadows, long behind us, attesting to my victory, my mind drifts tranquilly and procrastinates, and but with a single lukewarm preoccupation now permeating my brain. And I softly say, as I slowly close my eyes, after a sip of the bittersweet C.L.: "I see orange."