

ants

when I'm in an airplane
I never see people on the ground,
as if I were in an episode of Twilight Zone
where Rod Serling makes you ask the existential question
are there other people when you're nowhere
near them, when you can't see them.
no matter how close to the ground, when
the plane is taking off or landing, I don't see
people walking around, or out of buildings. sure, I see cars driving
along roads, but that's like seeing one of
those big scale-model displays
at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago;
lots of activity, but no moving people.

but when I'm on the ground and I look up, I see
plenty of airplanes flying by like snails on helium
too far away to touch or hear. I wonder if anyone
on the plane can see me, if when I look up at them
can someone looking down get a glimpse of me.
You know, does it require simultaneous acknowledgement
for people to really see each other as they are.

I wonder if that's why some people don't see
each other, why some people know nothing about
other people and their cultures. does it require a
matched glance, a similar passing interest for people
to notice one another. I mean, I know a lot about other
peoples' cultures but they seem so disinterested in mine.
I feel as if they don't really care. hold up, I know they don't,
or no one's taught them to care.

I watched this game show where all these smart people
got stuck on three questions
most black people know like their phone number:
Lady Day's real name, the city where the '55
bus boycott took place and the name of B.B.'s guitar.
you know those.....right?
I know it's not critical information, to get anyone
through the day (except me), but one of these pieces was
critical to my existence on the planet and I will not accept
that everyone in America needn't know
about Montgomery and claim themselves smart.
I expect that people will look like ants when I'm in
an airplane; little, black, hurrying about, my having
no knowledge of what they do during the day, whether
they sleep at night, do they get mad when I block
their way with a pencil, do they get scared when my shadow
cools the ground they're walking on, does it hurt
when I step on them. I suppose that might be what's going
on with a lot of other people, who might as well be
in airplanes when they're on the ground, walking
around oblivious to anyone else's existence, or just as
uncaring about people, their struggles, triumphs and pains
as they are about ants. can't we all just come back to earth.

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