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3.1 MORE FROM *THE HUNDREDS*

by KATHLEEN STEWART (*tagged by Lauren Berlant*)

Minds at Work

I still had the neck headache the bed at the beach had given me the night before. The cheap pillowcases with embroidered edges left two inches of dirty pillow uncovered on the open end. The sheets and the carpeting were slick with humidity. I threw open windows to let in the wild wind but that only made the air swell. I dragged over a fan, pulled out the dresser on the other side of the room to plug it in, wrestled with the broken white plastic lever. The sky over the ocean was a blotchy black. I couldn't bear to lower myself but there was nothing else to do.

Dark Co-Competence

There was a message on my cell phone from Fran's daughter, Mimi. I called her back. She has a singer's voice. We talk in details and tones, a conspiratorial co-competence. This will be the last time the old love-birds see each other. Pop is frail, his senses shrinking in; Fran has lost her mind.

"You think, ok, she's like a twelve-year-old, but really she's more like five."

"Oh. You'd never know."

"Well her social skills are beautiful."

I hang up. I try to wrap my mind around this. Fran is 5. No more leaving them alone. But I don't think Mimi has children.

On Nature Post Storm

Days later, we are still waiting for things to calm. The pelicans are beginning to come back. The sanderlings are still racing back and forth in the yards as if they were in the surf as usual. The intracoastal waterway is brown with agitation. There will be no clamming until the saline level rises and the bacteria can be certified as down. The air is asthmatic.

A Real

A real is what compositional writing worlds. A more or less nimble associational register of what's throwing together and falling apart across some designated zone of sensations and paths. Things might end up in relation but remain unglued. Selves might try to align with a jumpiness or with the flatness or with something else. On *Blue Bloods*, a really bad guy tells detective Danny Reagan that he has three selves – a public self, a private self and a secret self. He says everyone has a secret self – “What's yours?” Reagan says “Not me. I don't have one. What you see is what you get.”

Place

Place presents in singular but not accidental things. The timeless granite, the Dunkin' Donuts sign, a common hand gesture, the biting air in January. It's two-dimensional and it's three. All talk and icon and then the taste of a Macintosh apple. Less a structure than a prism, less a grammar than a collective search engine, it's like scratching on a chalkboard already overcrowded with lines and erasures. And that means it has a body. It weighs, hesitates, sticks out like the raised knap of corduroy. If it endures, it lays down an infrastructure of energies. It promises all the details of habit and mood.

My Town

In the town I come from, there's a threat of a kind of depression captured by the failed gesture of a curtained window, a loud town accent, a few pansies stuck in a window box in the spring. People say the beach is grey in the winter (and windy in a bad way). The woods are dark. It was weird but made some recognizable sense when midnight mass was finally canceled to keep out all the drunks with all their falling down and giggling.

The American Road

Is a national macadam of living form. A live detritus of the family vacation, the road trip, living on the street. A heartless sprawl, a realist bore, an infrastructural problem, it's all speedy glide, gridlock and drift, the spectral sight of black bodies floating. Opportunistic gifts to its potential are made in the form of a giant spinach can/paper cup/milk bottle/roller skate. It's a hinge opening onto a Vermont I walked one cold dark night, the footsteps following me in the woods, the sudden appearance of the aurora borealis across the sky, or that winter that defeated New England, the snow piles narrowing the roads to one tentative lane with corners you couldn't see around, the rooftops collapsing under the weight of the snow in Connecticut.

Pop's House

Pop's house was an infrastructure of matter and practice standing upright like a model life. The same can-opener mounted on the kitchen wall for forty years, a bottle-opener in the pantry you clamped the bottle onto and then pulled a lever over in one smooth motion that plunged the corkscrew down and pulled out the cork. A tool to core tomatoes, another for strawberries. A pan for poaching eggs. Soup bowls with silver rims that had to be washed by hand every day. Tiny bowls for the potato chips that occasionally replaced the oyster crackers with the soup at lunch. He kept an inventory, revised monthly, of the food stocked in his freezer in the basement: barbecue sauce (1), barbecue (4), marinara sauce (1), chili beans (1), chicken broth with chicken (5 quarts), chicken broth pints (8), yellow squash (2), green peppers (1), mixed greens (17), vegetable soup (2), chicken and vegetable soup (14), turnips (4), chicken and pasta soup (9), deer sausage (1), deer steak (2), chicken legs, long (10), chicken legs, short (8), deer steaks ground (1), pork ribs (2), sirloin steaks (1), sweet potatoes (22), biscuits (30), rolls (1 box), chicken and broth (5), sugar cake (1), turkey and broth (3), spaghetti sauce (27).

3.2 THE FIDDLER TUNES, WARMS HER CATGUT

by DJ DOLACK (*tagged by Anthony Madrid*)

in the fifth floor apartment.

But below, a van backs slowly into the street,
whining,

and the falsettos
spar.

The catgut is taut.
Its friction sings

off the apartment walls'
leaded sheen, out

through the ancient
window screen.

The van is only cautious,
or perhaps covering

its own ass _

in case it's *your* man that's
out for a smoke in the piss drizzle,

taken by

a bit of fog passing over
some stop light;

and night, its palms-up
caress

beneath the chin
enthralls.

And he gets thumped hard
by the back bumper
to the pavement.

But at least he was warned.

The fiddler doesn't hear it
go down; she's tuning

up the neck for some
tough Wagner.

But eventually a siren somewhere off
begins

and grows
 only slightly;

then it surely grows.

She tunes harder, with elbow
and crescendo. She is forceful.

She is ever forceful while her man
lies in the street, bloodletting,

attacked

by a less friendly
countertenor.

But she knows nothing,
and in the battle for pitch

is eventually victor:
she is tuned. He lies injured.

She undertakes her Wagner;
he asks for her, the night

now screaming
but stolid.

For our man below, looking
inward became

sudden atonement. The night now
also some fiddler

lifts its fog and eases
its piss as our lovers hum along

up into its cold air. Up
into some unfathomable

silence _ higher,
farther than we could climb

or run, up into some
terrible,

terrible harmony.

Listen. And you will hear
the fugue,

and your fingers will move
slowly

to curl gently
around the tuning peg;

and your breath _

and you will be taken,
and you will be taken.

KATHLEEN STEWART is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin, where she holds an additional affiliation in Women and Gender Studies. Her publications include *Ordinary Affects* (2007) and *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an 'Other' America* (1996).

DJ DOLACK is the author of *WHITTling A NEW FACE IN THE DARK* (Black Ocean, 2013). His video reviews and *Tourist Trap, NYC series can be found at Coldfront Magazine*. He teaches writing at Baruch College and lives in Jackson Heights, Queens.