

POETRY

Lane C

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Summary

This poem for the “hundreds” in honor of Kathleen Stewart is about anthropology, life and death, and doing fieldwork in an [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) warehouse.

KEYWORDS

Amazon.com, fieldwork, hundreds, Kathleen Stewart, poetry

“I’m so busy,” the renowned lit professor flutters by.
Why are academics always complaining?
Few bother at the Amazon warehouse
where I, Mr. Undercover Ethnographer, load trucks.
Everybody knows \$15.50 an hour is starvation pay.
You try to get by somehow.

And while I’m doing the old white man grumble:
woke anthropology gets me down.
Ritualized righteousness squashes bumpy singularities
Like the pallet jack that ran over my toe by Lane C.
Who appointed us guardians of the universe?

I’m still up for fighting the power
but Katie’s right about human worlds:
Both flighty and hardwired, palpable too.
My Depend smelly heavy by shift’s end:
Undergarment of us cancerous men.

Death doesn’t much worry me anymore.
Aren’t the boxes we ship akin to human lives?
Different dimensions, full contents unknown.
Each gets a joy ride along the conveyor belt
only to end up in the truck’s black cavity.

We straggle out to the parking lot at quitting time.
Weed wafts sweet in the hazy rose twilight.
A West Coast beat thumps from a car.

I'm thankful for what I have.

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