Where the Tiny Things Are: Feathered Essays

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Microgas

Fry’s has the cheapest gas in town—cheaper still if you have fuel rewards from doing all your grocery shopping at Fry’s. The grocery store is one of the best places to get all self-righteous. Look at my cart, it’s full of blueberries, raspberries, peaches, tomatoes, organic broccoli, free-range chicken, orange juice not-from-concentrate, recycled napkins. You with your Stouffer’s and Lean Cuisine and Keebler products. How will you manage all that recycling? How will you metabolize all that sugar and salt? Look at my grocery bags—canvas and brought from home. Oh, I see you didn’t bring yours. You know, don’t you, that Fry’s wraps one item per plastic bag? I see you don’t know that it takes a thousand years for each of those bags to decompose. I see that you don’t know that precious gasoline goes into making those bags every second. Oh. You see that I’m filling up my car with some of that precious gasoline. But at least I don’t drive a Suburban like you or leave it running in the parking lot while you take your child into day care. I have a dream to climb into the driver’s seat and turn your car around or move it three spaces down. Small subversions. But yes, you’re right, I’m still filling up my car with gas. I am driving to the same places you’re driving. I’m ferrying groceries. I’m taking my kids to school and dance. I’m yelling at the car in front of me to please for Chrissakes do you not know what a signal is?
And then I see you, out of the corner of my eye, take the empty plastic water bottles out of the hands of the woman who was walking
them toward the trash can. I hear you say, “It’s fine. I have a big recycling bin. I’m happy to take them for you. It’s hard to recycle when you’re on the road.” And then I see this human. The one small thing. Her heart as big as a recycling bin. I finish filling up my car. I drive back over, a whole twenty feet or so. I let the car idle. I go back in the store, not a single canvas bag in hand. I head to the frozen food aisle. Stouffer’s and Stouffer’s and Stouffer’s for all.

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