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Municipios

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of
Fine Arts

in

Writing

by

Lester O'Connor

Committee in charge:

Professor Rae Armantrout, Chair
Professor Cristina Rivera Garza
Professor Anna Joy Springer
Professor John C. Welchman

2012

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Chair

University of California, San Diego
2012

DEDICATION

I am indebted to the following for their direct or indirect contribution in shaping my thinking about poetry and what not: Rae Armantrout, Michael Davidson, Lorraine Graham, Cristina Rivera Garza, and Anna Joy Springer. And to the following for having to work harder than required to accommodate me: Sue Hawkinson & Tania Mayer.

I am indebted to the following for keeping my priorities straight, and of course, for their love and support: Denise Gilbert, Joshua King, John Pluecker, Ivan Ramos, Yvonne Schmeltz, Beatriz Valenzuela, & Frankie Veoltz.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Municipios

by

Lester O'Connor

Master of Fine Arts in Writing

Professor Rae Armantrout, Chair

Municipios is a poetry manuscript with two distinct sections. The first section is called "Municipios," and the second section is called "Living Arrangements." The poems in the first section are concerned with and/or embody problems of identity and language. These poems often have prescribed processes or form. The poems in the second section are concerned with the everyday and the forms arise more organically

Municipios

Here

I am writing this inside a solitary cell of the New Bilibid Prison, the national penitentiary of the Philippines

You will need to lay face down resting on the forearms palms flat on the floor

From my view there is a Baskin-Robbins, and a Rite-Aid, and an Albertson's and a Hallmark store, and a couple of banks, and a taco shop

My cell is five feet wide, eight feet long, and eight feet from floor to ceiling, Its whitewashed walls are reinforced with concrete ten inches thick

I also have a view of an abandoned Blockbuster, a McDonald's, a Great-Clips, and a Submarina #2, and Choice of Mandarin

You will need to push off the floor raising up on to toes, resting on the elbows

I also have a view of light-posts decorated with tinsel, and a half-dozen handicap spots, and the donut shop where I first learned about 9/11

The door has a heavy steel frame and bars and is covered on the inside a thick wire screen.

In a corner of my cell stands a built-in latrine bowl; near it is a water faucet.

You will need to tilt your pelvis and contract your abdominals to prevent your rear from sticking up in the air or sagging in the middle.

20 Tanaga

1.

Whose woods these are I think I
think with my hand, my handling
of the situational
comedy of, of arrows

2.

The whiskey on your breath could
sterilize the whole damn world
til the population is
nothing, nothing is better

3.

Abortions will not let you
win a red-state primary
just have the thing and flaunt it
you're a better man for it

4.

I make a pact with you, Walt
Disney, you've given me song
throating charming choruses;
for you: first month's, last month's.

5.

You fit into me like a
dick into a cunt, or some
other metaphor; a sharp
noun in an open vowel

6.

What you have heard was true. I
stirred the tea with my tongue,
stopped me from slipping the damn
thing in the reader's eardrum

7.

Because I could not stop for
high tea in industrial
district, the freshest tar-pour
parking on a wet black flood

8.

The neighbor's dog will not stop
yapping at angry vacuum
sucking up all our dander
to a dull animal ball

9.

I want your ugly, I want
to be named hunk of the year.
If not, I'll steal your witty.
Sell it real cheap. Oh la la!

10.

When you are old and grey and
portraits are full of gum
drop to your knees, realism
begets its disfigured twin

11.

The world is charged with the grand
scheming of its media
ideologues pose without clothes
nudity foregrounds brushstrokes

12.

Let us go then, you and I
to a breeze where summer rests
from its tempered flare, nostrils
open to drone particles

13.

I caught a tremendous fish,
future sashimi for ten
on a bed of garnish though
emotionally threadbare

14.

It's my lunch hour, so I go
to lunch, short a few nickels
for the perfect concoction
but sediment's always cheap

15.

The tree has entered my hand
secreting its sweet serum
down my sagging twiggish arm;
a breakfast without pancakes

16.

He loved her and she loved him
the pause between point A and
B, unsatisfactory
heteronormative ends...

17.

in Just- spring when the world is
whistling, an Arab hopscotch
mud-vicious slinging, our lame
piracy: little, far and wee

18.

Arithmetic is where numb
minds extract fingers & toes
into abstraction; the West
counts its chickens with a knife

19.

I have walked through many lives,
some roles were hardly swallowed.
To see through blue, green, grey eyes,
mixed concrete statues hollowed.

20.

I was angry with my friend
the forensic evidence
represents a hit to the
head, my friend the psychologist

“I-H-A-T-E-S-P-E-E-C-H-!”

shh!

heist, paste
phatic chit chats as pastiche

the cheapies cast thesp,
the techies scatthe act

the cheetah hatches sheep,
the chaste ape hitches

the hepcat’s scat teaches ethics,
etches cape sepia seapieces

septic shahs cease peace paths,
escapee pitches sheet teepees

ich ich ich ich

the chap’s pecs heats,
the staph itches seethe

ich ich ich ich

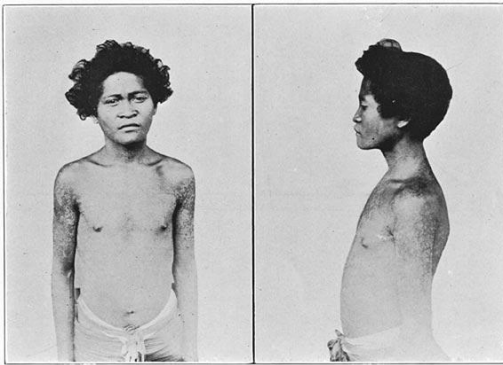
the achiest piths,
the peachiest epics.

An Ethnography

Unions have learned to identify certain of individuals who are more susceptible to union exploitation than [sic] others.

There are seven types of associates who “fit” the mold:

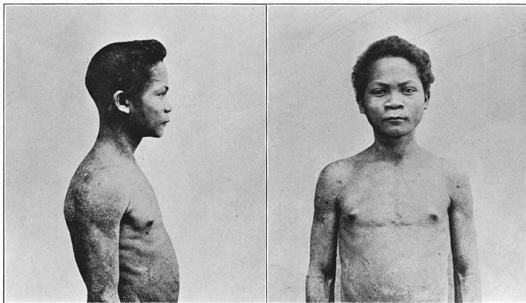
THE INEFFICIENT, LOW PRODUCTIVE ASSOCIATE.



This type of associate realizes that he will not be able to measure up to the facility's standards and will be terminated because of his lack of qualitative and/or quantitative efficiency.

The union organizer seeks out such an associate and this type of associate is mutually attracted to the union because they convince the associate that it will “save” the associate's job and clothe him with the so-called “union protection” and “job security”

THE INDEPENDENT, HAPPY-GO-LUCKY ASSOCIATE.



This type of associate has no great financial obligations or commitments. He typically lives with his parents or is basically supported by someone else. He has nothing to lose by joining up the union forces. He can survive through the longest of strikes and responds to union propaganda of “everything to gain, nothing to lose.” In fact, if he loses

his job in a union-caused strike by being permanently [sic] replaced or because the facility closes down, he suffers no real consequence because he did not depend on the job in the first instance.

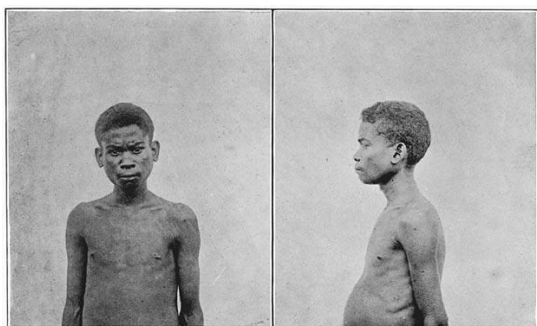
THE REBELLIOUS, ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT ASSOCIATE.



This type of associate is attracted to the union cause and is subject to union exploitation simply because he opposes everything associated with the establishment. Since most businesses and structural organizations are associated with the “establishment,” he is opposed to all management or bosses.

He consequently becomes an antagonist to the employer and a respondent to the union propaganda. (Ironically, he will later turn against the union also because he will eventually come to resent the authority of the union.)

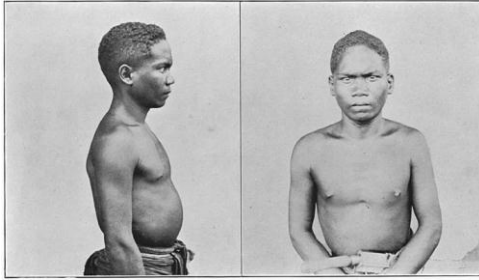
THE SOMETHING-FOR-NOTHING ASSOCIATE.



This type of associate is the typical injury-faker who has collected worker’s compensation from most his former employers. He is the type of individual who is always looking for a deal. He takes every imaginable shortcut available in his job and sincerely feels that the world owes him something. He is the type of associate who

“fudges” on his sick pay or funeral leave and bends every rule to “squeeze” a little more out of his employer. He will obviously be attracted to the union propaganda that he has “everything to gain and nothing to lose.”

THE CHRONICALLY DISSATISFIED ASSOCIATE



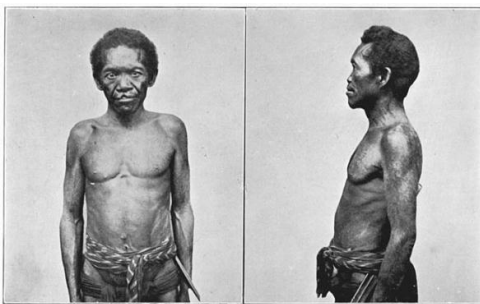
This associate might yell [sic] be one of the most efficient and productive associates at any establishment. But this associate will find fault about everything associated with his employer. He is a hopeless griper and complainer as distinguished from a constructive critic. He is never convinced that his employer is looking out for his best interest or the interests of his fellow associates. He is truly an unhappy individual. He probably was born unhappy, is going to die unhappy, and is going to be unhappy for the duration between.

THE CAUSE-ORIENTED ASSOCIATE



This associate will “jump” on any bandwagon that passes through his area. He was the same individual who joined all of the “off-beat” organizations in high school or college. He typically led demonstrations against everything from “red dye” to “ban the bomb.” He took a trip to India once to visit his personal guru. He views himself a self-appointed “spokesman for all” and the union is able to capitalize on his frustrations.

THE OVERLY-QUALIFIED ASSOCIATE.



This type of associate is out of his element. He will attempt to exert influence over his fellow associates in an effort to bolster his-deflated [sic] ego. He might well be a PhD operating a grinding machine or a former accountant sweeping the floor, but his situation in life has deteriorated to the point that his vanity appreciable suffers.

Here Again

On Wednesday nights, there's Revenge.

The nights are pretty restless, and mornings come too early from the intense dreams.

It is difficult for a clear mind to become cloudy over the account of loss and gain.

The elements going clockwise are in the order of destruction.

The room is quite cramped, full of overdue books, a litter box, two cats, a closet full of boxes.

It is 8 hours 18 minutes 41 seconds past 8 in the evening at Manila.

If Two-and-a-Half Men is on and you chuckle, go upstairs and grab a book.

Noxious rays drain energy and cause illness.

The forenoon was yesterday, from 12 to 2pm was today.

But it depends upon if you measure time by moving with the sun or the other way.

As such, it emerges from the depths of the ocean and soars into the sky.

If it's Tuesday there's a new episode of New Girl, Glee, and Chopped.

Water is plentiful here since we buy cases and cases from Costco.

If you are running into more complications, retreat and examine your motives.

Red, jagged mountains and burning hot deserts are under its rulership.

To find your bearing, read the direction and degree straight ahead of you on the azimuth ring.

If it's Thursday then Project Accessory, Parks and Recreation, and The Office is on.

On Mondays, I don't watch anything in particular, but that can't be right.

Therefore Thursday was yesterday, today and tomorrow are the same day.

One loses a day going west and gains one coming east.

The nine spatial directions are analogous to the nine stars.

To read a compass correctly, stand squarely toward the direction you want to read.

If you live in the country, look out the window and doors and study the terrain.

The pantry is always full of potato chips, vanilla sandwich cookies, and movie theatre candy.

Perhaps we may say profit or loss, when the account is closed.

The mystery of the meridian becomes something dreadful.
The outer level consists of horoscope, compass, form, and divining technique.

If you live in the city, study the shapes and colors outside your window.
The air-conditioner is kept full blast so the guests will want to buy more coffee.
Ship time begins a day at noon (and ends another).

If westward the course, Manila is a third of a day catching up with Madrid time.
The rice cooker is almost always on.
I hope this adventure doesn't come off as self-indulgent, but what's wrong with that.

The latter city lies 124 degrees, 40 minutes, 15 seconds, east of the former.
My first impression of the house was of a broken neck.
The absence of the right day spoils all holiday.

Function Keys

Mango

Heart pendant of.

Money Box

The charges oval, coin money, the organs.

Book

Chopped grass that are hidden in the heart.

~

It has a leaf and fruit, it has been a sponsor.

Net

Repair of the hole was a hole.

Eyes

Palms of applause, but the neighbors cannot hear.

~

The two black stones that go much more.

~

When the shout the cries of the same, with a princess who lived on either side of the mountain.

~

There are two parts that went to heaven.

Shoe

I saw two boats, one person was on the board.

~

Takes you wear.

~

Take me, I'm taking. We were able to share in the same way.

~

Trouble-free after forced to resign.

Starfruit

The princess, are facing the front back.

Window

We are, every night, repair, every morning I peel off it.

Scissors

Leaves of sugar cane is moved to the whole.

Salt

I was baptized earth the appearance?

~

Go to the source that gem, shining from the mine will lose its luster.

Moon

Point C is converted into O, O be C.

~

I planted citrus in half, the three priests cannot dig.

~

A half coconut scraped overnight.

~

There was a lemon that I took in the vast plane. I guess I'll be you...

~

A unique dish, winning in the world.

Mosquito

They are to meet the fate. He does not want to go back to the land of his birth.

Pineapple

Casa de Santa Maria is surrounded by a sword.

~

Spine, sweet mother.

~

A woman with a crown has eyes everywhere.

~

In the eyes of many Queen, the devil between.

Heart

You are the man of the lever of minutes.

Eyelids

The two furry things, it's good, and followed them.

Egg

I have a hangover in Manila, has no mother.

~

Public house of enchanted with no windows or doors.

Cock

King of the crown, but not the king; the priest is to address but does not cure.

~

This creature of our Lord God carries meat but has no hands.

Cashew

There was a princess, cup place.

Floor

Providing captain bath, not wet your stomach.

Candle

Son burn the intestines of what his mother?

~

If you kill me, I should live long, live in you if you let die immediately.

~

The tree take only a thin sheet.

Fingers

Five coconut palm, on the other hand will be high.

~

Five a prince, is a way of their hat.

~

There is a pigeon walk among the people. The king is said and done. We have added a half if you must, be twenty.

Hair

Sugar cane, clay, seamless (section).

~

Trim one factory, does not fade.

Forehead

Not seen a high mountain, on top of it.

Guava

Are classified as double-queen, crown also.

Face

Guava is one of seven holes.

~

Seven orifices of a small hill.

Bats

Wise you are, and literate, the birds flying in this world is suckling the child.

Clock

Day and night, I cried.

~

To understand the word I hear is hard to understand, what he says when you look at his face.

~

Creature of God, I do not have arms and legs, can I speak?

Comb

When I fixed my head, my hair is the order and have a friend.

Hat

I went back, I bought one with a slave.

Papaya

Santa Ana House is full of bullets.

Nit

Watermelon stop some, do not.

Water

King Cake cannot be divided.

~

If the tribunal, while it heals.

~

Mrs. and her daughter, daughter become a mother.

Violin

I drown, I saw him through the stomach, cried fiercely.

Confessional

With windows, but homeless. A door, but not a staircase.

Bells

When I pulled the vines, the monkeys came around.

Mouth

A small source, shells.

~

Deep well full of fleas.

~

Select the box full of chisels.

Key

There is a small thing like a piece of pencil, but can be seen by a woman like a lion.

Small Pox

Human life is eaten by termites.

Tongue

It is under the shed, but always under the shed is humid.

~

The coffin of the cemetery is to start the sermon.

Undershirt

Inputs, three outputs are provided.

Jackfruit

I breeding island, my fur.

Window Shutter

Although thought you think, you can slide.

Gun

The thrust bad, life can return.

Coconut

Santa Ana house is surrounded by the bottle.

~

Below, above the sky, sky, water medium.

~

When the young man is hard, but when you get old is fat.

~

He has three mountains are blown down before it reaches the sea.

Coffin

An order made by it is crying, one of them, that is not theirs to give. No one cares about anything he owns.

Earrings

Two birds, take the balance with a stick of bamboo.

Caribou

Four earth posts, two air posts and whip.

Cake

From above the fire-clown cooked rice.

Basket

Office that is useless, the picture is not said.

Ladle

Full vacuum is left branches.

Teeth

Flat land has grown to ivory.

~

First bar, and then deliver the message.

Rice

If it is not going there to die.

I'll Be There

It's as if Daffy Duck is headed somewhere important
and being erased as we speak and what do we have left
but a but a despicable display of the one drawing attention
to the fact that what we are is how we are animated!

It's all context, buster! It's like the dream we had the other night,
my father was there and it involved really expensive yoghurt for dinner
or he was my high school history teacher, one of those anxiety dreams
where you try to handwrite your name but fail every time
until you have a pile of crumpled up attempts.

We haven't thought about my father until a man in a white outfit
on a bus whistling a country song from the 80s!

His beard, maybe? And then here I am begging to be included
in this story somehow.

The background is changing, context is key,
and a key is a dick, and I am now in the Huk Rebellion
where I've put myself in the middle of a losing battle.

I used to be a communist and I'm sorry for not sending my love
and money to my cousins affected by the volcano,

I was distracted like everyone else, the revolution was happening
and I think I was a crucial member.

My grandmother was a Huk too and then a compulsive gambler
and then she lost her house to a fire and another house to debt
and started begging for change on the busy streets of Olongapo,
they sold chicken feet there as a midday snack I remember that.

What's with all this begging? We beg for an audience we beg for bread
and sometimes you just look at the viewer in the eye

and you tell them your exact motivation, either handshake
or the promise of a handshake that becomes fingers through your slick slick hair.

You want to talk about Sasha Gray, the budding cinephile retiring
from a lifetime's worth of XXX films.

What is it that's behind the metaphor of a gaping asshole
after a gangbang that's displayed on the screen?

I am Sasha Gray and that gaping asshole on screen
does not symbolize the void that must be filled, filled, filled,
or at least not directly. I am Sasha Gray for now but pornography is all center
uninteresting and too center. A herd of cows on the edge of the screen
does not mean conformity, rather it's the beginning of agriculture

and that changed everything I've been told. So there we are in a field in Hungary
toiling toiling away and someone's accused me of being a Titoist spy
and I accused her of being middle-class, all legs and the scum between
the toes of Liz Taylor or Lindsay Lohan.

What happened to my usual politeness as she gives me the finger and walks away
and I'm begging to be more sympathetic, likeable,
or even marketable like a gaudy action figure or a glass statuette
in a Del Mar art gallery. Its beach is sandy today as always,
why would it change now, and who knows how long I'll stand there
letting the seaweed wrap around my ankles
and those little gnats hovering and my ankles are fine
and haven't been devoured by the salt or the gnats or the acid rain
or the hole in the ozone layer. I need ankles to truck along,
we need feet and we need hands to stitch one surface to another surface
like those surreal paintings where the main figure is clothed by the landscape
and that's not exactly what I'm trying to articulate but we're closer, closer.
Towards investing in end-of-the-world insurance, cash for gold,
specials on pizza and beer on Tuesday nights.

Lights turning red signaling pedestrians
to cross the street and a conversation overheard by the bus stop:
you want to take everything I own! You only want to see your daughter
whenever you need money from me, these walking the boulevards
who are living in loud desperation. Like a trailer park pothole,
the muffler is missing so we announce to our neighbors that our muffler is missing.
And there's the boy, five years old, attached to his grandmother.
He is running towards a Jeepney, not running, sliding on black ice
through the blizzard of '93 where everything south of Lake Ontario is buried,
he is sliding to catch up to see his fate probably sitting in the passenger side
with his head pounding against the dashboard but oh god that might be too painful
to witness too soon, that image will haunt him through the years
and he couldn't have known of the possibility
of witnessing his own future frustrations.

Who forgot the blue tape to post the list of names
who've auditioned successfully for a theatre troupe that will attempt
to liberate the elephants at the zoo in the second act.

It's these restless legs and prescription drugs that require me to truck on,
when the going gets tough too soon you might be born Russell Jones
and cut a few tracks with Mariah Carey and other disciples
but die like Big Baby Jesus too young like all those Romantic heroes

Brad Renfro and Heath Ledger, where have all the cowboys gone
playing one of the Bob Dylans not unlike the way we we've heard
about the middle passage maybe through a shortcut through Space Mountain
this disappearing act through constant appearances.

Then I'll be all around in the dark -

I'll be ever'where—wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight
so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop
beatin' up a guy, I'll be there... I'll be in the way guys yell
when they're mad an'—I'll be in the way kids laugh
when they're hungry and they know supper's ready.

An' when our folk eat the stuff

they raise an' live in the houses they build—why, I'll be there,
but only perhaps.

Homotransplantation

*

Rarely I am permitted to return to the *homotransplantation*,
though it is a scene made-up by the mind,
that is not mine, but another's, as if it is
a field fenced in with wire
with rows & rows of thoughts cultivated,
but of another's
as if it were private property of the mind
whose secret we see in a game of grifting
& grafting.

*

That which is not mine,

I mine

(as in I dig)

I undermine,

(as in I cheat),

as it cheapens the mind

to mine

for that which is not mine

*

Every word has been so kind to me:

They make images so crisp,

so ripple-
less

I've thanked every word that has helped me

I've taken such words in the mouth

such girth, words

a gasp, and then grasping,

*

What I thought were rows in a field
are aisles, and each aisle has a name
and this aisle is the Aisle of Woman
and not every inhabitant of the aisle
are citizens, citizens of the aisle
don't have to work, and citizenship
is not birthright, and inhabitants
that are not citizens wear vests
and stock the shelves at night
with ammunition, which are words
and the words are ammunition
but only for the citizens to use
but for everyone to be used on

*

In the Aisle of Woman
there are windows
and through the windows
there are kitchens-
without-kitsch

in the kitchens-without-
kitsch stand a citizen
of the Aisle, pacing

in her kitchen-without-
kitsch she paces as a form
of meditation, of dance

of cultivation,
and as she dances
in her kitchen-without-
kitsch, she is reminded

that in the Aisle of Woman
there are laws,
they call copylefts,
to protect her cultivation

she is reminded as I
pocket her every gesture-

*

There is a blur coming toward the window.

The blur is humming and it's coming toward the window.

The blur that is humming is coming and it's blurring as it hums.

The blur that is humming and was coming is not coming but still blurring as it hums.

There is a palm tree swaying in the horizon.

The humming blur is blurring everything between the window and the head of the palm tree swaying in the horizon.

There are red neon lights buzzing that spell *Paradise* outside the window.

The hummingblur hums and blurs the word *Paradise* until the fog left behind is buzzing and neoned.

The hummingblur is humming and again it's coming and it's it's fogging and the fogging is neoned and buzzing and the buzzing neoned fog left behind as the hummingblur does it humming and blurring.

What was once a row of bicycles chained to the awnings is now part of the neoned fog left behind the hummingblur's blurring and humming.

What was once a thrift store welcome mat is now in the buzzing neoned fog behind the hummingblur's humming & blurring.

As are the thin wires that connect one apartment complex with the next.

As are the doorbells.

As are the stairways.

As are the footsteps and the feet that produce the footsteps.

As are the kneecaps and hips that are attached to the feet that produce the footsteps.

As are the hands and wrists and elbows and shoulders that are reaching toward the window the hands and wrists that are attached to the hips and kneecaps and feet that produce the footsteps.

As is the background, middle-ground, foreground.

As are the newspapers, billboards, license plates, banners.

As are the mannequins, dog-parks, intersections, alleyways, picnic tables, recycling bins.

As is the liquor store, wig store, animal store, bamboo store, shampoo store, lock store, chicken store, sleep store, buddha store, futon store, bible store, water store, reggae store, rainbow store, tennis store, dance store, cookbook store, cactus store.

As are the pinwheels, yield-sign, flagpoles, wind-chimes.

As are the apologies, the pet-peeves, the nonchalance, the pet-names, the gratitude, the circles the squares, the breaths, the rests, the whole notes, the altos, the basses, the troubles.

*

What I thought were rows in a Field

what I thought were Aisles

what I thought were Lines of poetry

what I thought were between the Lines

of poetry, what I thought was White Space

was thoughtless space, what I thought was thought-

less was illuminating

~

What I thought were rows in a Field

what I thought were Aisles

what I thought were Lines of poetry

what I thought were between the Lines

of poetry, what I thought was White Space

was thoughtless space, what I thought was thought-

less what I thought was illuminating was a road

with signals to point me to the Right Direction

~

What I thought were rows in a Field

what I thought were Aisles

what I thought were Lines of poetry
what I thought were between the Lines
of poetry, what I thought was White Space
was thoughtless space, what I thought was thought-
less what I thought was illuminating and
what I thought was a road
with signals to point me to the Right Direction
what I thought was the Right Direction
the direction given to me by my ancestors
that I will in turn give to my descendants

~

What I thought were rows in a Field
what I thought were Aisles
what I thought were Lines of poetry
what I thought were between the Lines
of poetry, what I thought was White Space
was thoughtless space, what I thought was thought-
less what I thought was illuminating and
what I thought was a road

with signals to point me to the Right Direction
what I thought was the Right Direction
was the only direction
the direction given to me by my ancestors
that were given to them by their ancestors
that I will in turn give to my descendants
which was the direction
towards a field with rows & rows
of thoughts cultivated,
but of another's.

Notes on *Municipios*

Here- This section takes language from Philippine revolutionary Luis Trauc's *He Who Rides the Tiger*, an about.com article on ab exercises, and a personal letter.

Twenty Tanaga - The first lines belong to the following: 1. Frost, 2. Roethke, 3. Gwendolyn Brooks, 4. Pound, 5. Margaret Atwood, 6. Carolyn Forché, 7. Dickinson, 8. Billy Collins, 9. Lady Gaga, 10. Yeats, 11. Gerald Manley Hopkins, 12. Eliot, 13. Elizabeth Bishop, 14. Frank O'Hara, 15. Pound, 16. Ted Hughes, 17. Cummings, 18. Carl Sandburg, 19. Stanley Kunitz, and 20. Blake

"I H-A-T-E-S-P-E-E-C-H!"- Title is from Robert Grenier's famous proclamation. Each word in this poem uses only letters from the phrase.

An Ethnography- This section is excerpted from "Labor Relations and You at Wal-Mart Distribution Center #6022, 1991. The images photographed by Mr. J Diamond are from William Allan Reed's *Negritos of Zambales*, 1904.

Here Again- This section takes language from *The Story of the Philippines: Our New Possession* by Murat Halstead, *Feng Shui: Step by Step* by T. Raphael Simmons, and a personal letter.

Function Keys- The title of this piece comes from putting the words "Tender Buttons" through Google Translate, through languages of peoples who have invaded, occupied, or colonized the Philippine Islands (e.g. Spanish, Dutch, Japanese, English). Each entry comes from a Filipino riddle compiled from several sources from all over the web, though most come from *A Little Book of Filipino Riddles*, collected and edited by Frederick Starr, 1909. These translations went through the same process as the title of this section.

I'll Be There- Poem ends with direct quote from famous speech in film version of *The Grapes of Wrath*

Living Arrangements

Poem

Please take the guts
out, spit it out

you have only one
minute

to convince me

~

One pop star differentiating
herself from another:

“we both mix all these things
in a pot and spit them out differently

but she spits them out
exactly the same!”

~

If I say
I fit into this
history

I mean

not unlike

hair in a drain.

Just Stand There

Entering the grounds &
our buildings

signifies

that you are giving us
unwritten permission

to use your photo
or image.

~

One poet to another,
quoting yet another:

“I can never remember lines
of poetry, but this always
comes to mind, out of nowhere:

‘Masturbation will always be my favorite
form of sex, though if I was a tree
I’d just stand there in the breeze’”

~

I dreamt I was trying to capture

the moon, and the stupid thing

just let me.

Craft

Thinkering...

~

On the 150,

a broke mother bears
little resemblance
to a queen.

Assembly lines are a thing of the past.
Assemble lines to move past the thing.

~

For the next election,

our message should be craft
beer, not supermarket
variety.

Their chilled glass hearts
should be filled
with hops.

~

The man lining up coke
midday
in a crowded room
is actually hunched
over his phone
its insides
scattered
and put back
together as
new.

misshape after mishap

misshape after mishap: to onerously smuggle own broke bones from tingling limbs over patrolled border. to hold your breath for interrogation. though the questions never come. no one listens to poetry anymore. the spicier the language, the more attention one brings to oneself.

a culture clash, symbols as weapons at customs. cursory exchanges of wit, or the stifling of expression. be yourself, you're a child of the 70s. ah! to be young, gifted, and blank. so much bubbling. the overflow of combustible feelings. everyone should have the chance to explain, even if in the right. you mean so much bubbling in. your spirits can transgress the allotted space, if one so pleases.

Holes

There are
holes in what I'm trying to say-

My voice
is almost gone again the third time this year alone-

My voice
is underrated, can't carry a tune, underrated and it will make me famous even it's
almost gone-

My voice
wants to say that it's competent & honest-

What I'm trying to say is that my voice is competent and honest-

Featherless dead bird inside freezers makes me want to thaw dead bird with my warm ass
and glue feathers on dead bird and revive dead bird and let dead bird fly to somewhere
warm like Florida, or wait, it's supposed to be warm here too-

That's not what I'm trying to say, that's my voice again trying to be honest-

My voice
wants to join the gym and laugh at the muscular voices but can't afford the initiation fee-

My voice
thinks it can sculpt itself a new voice at the gym, a leaner & meaner voice, a voice so
sturdy and dependable. My voice wants to be sturdy & dependable.-

My voice
wants to join the gym but is insecure0

Featherless dead birds for lunch again, is that good for my voice?

Lemon slices are good for my voice.

I have a question for my voice. When will you use metaphor effectively.

My voice
understands that this was not a rhetorical question and a timeline with progress
benchmarks will be set.

I don't have any further questions for my voice at this time.

My voice, wants to take flight somewhere tropical, warm, accommodating for voices like mine.

Or drive through the Arizona sunset but will have to hide behind other voices.

My voice wants to apologize about being too political.

What I'm trying to say is

I'm sorry for bringing politics to this forum.

There are appropriate places and inappropriate places to speak of such matters.

I will tell my voice to stay neutral and refrain from talking about religion too.

My voice

understands that this forum respects the individual rights of voices and encourages them to express their ideas, comments, and concerns. What I'm trying to say is that my voice understands that this forum believes in maintaining an environment of open communication and that there is no need for third-party representation.

Featherless dead birds are not part of this culture of respect.

Culture is not part of this culture of respect.

There are

holes in what I'm trying to say and my voice wants to fill these holes.

artisan peanut butter

artisan peanut butter now is a liquid with grave potential to explode in high altitudes. it don't pass the muster, but maybe if it's stirred for maximum oil integration. what a solid plan. take the matter in one's own hand to be closer to one's own manual labor. close the disparity. alienation is yesterday's business, such fads won't be tolerated in the new era. of a pat-down? a put-down? but what about the noise complaints against the noise complaints. what *about* the noise complaints against the noise complaints? engines still roar, seats still cushy. clouds still take the form of animals. such sky, a zoo.

yesterday, a cabby

yesterday, a cabby, as cabbies do, questioned my ethnic background. who is kidding whom? the attempt at a chinese fire drill, but on green. the fare is up for indian-giving. how do you do? fine thanks, how do *you* do? why! slam your story to the ground. the snaps, they'll fuel you, for every item belonging to you as good belongs to me: you are not your hair, your brother's keeper, yam's what I yam, the whiskey *it is what it isn't*. criss-cross applesauce. and you will know us by the trail of dead language, languages.

Dissolve

The residents voted to dissolve

the village

after years of density
loss

industry has gone elsewhere

the dam sees less visitors every year

there are no women anymore
to win winter pageants.

~

The electronic version
of the book tells us:

This page intentionally left blank

~

Dirt and snow
coalesce
to form a solid
ground we walk on.

Some Buildings

Dildo store demands
us to find
our inner-adult

through rhyme:

pleasures & treasures,

as example.

~

When asked what's the most
famous piece
of architecture
in your city,

the resident hesitated
to answer

the chicken-of-the-sea
building off the freeway,

(though the actual
canning, probably,
is done elsewhere).

~

Logic
of the living archive

is permission to wear
what you need

to wear, from sealed

laundry bins marked

with your
name.

~

“Hey child,

You got any religion?”

~

Stretching the truth
is not the opposite
of condensing a lie

is not the same

as retracing your
marked steps, slowly
and backwards

is not the same

as having the officials
doing it for you

with weapons & wits

as to convince good
people, you're
not fit

to live in your own
ending.

~

Bad meals
are expected.

You pay
for the ambience.

Each room represents
only your fond memories:

The curtains
do match.

Top-notch
interiority!

They do such a good job
at taking you back.

Unforgettable, that's what you are.

The margins

The margins

are annotated with wit

& anecdote

with rough dates

of Movements-

And there on the horizon, we spot
a cargo piled with metal, perhaps.

Or maybe a whale,

This book is heavy and there's something over there.
Really.

Look.

It's headed toward the peripheries,

in both directions.

Recall

I touch myself

is probably the title song of the last century
this one too

how bold of us
to expose our particulars
in public

out of casual conversation

let's do this again
soon

I sketch myself

I sketch myself
on an atlas

to blend with the topography
to pretend vacationers find me
as an attraction

on their to-do lists
(before they die),

a deception
(I can live with)

a t-shirt need

a t-shirt need not remind you that there's laughter in manslaughter. you are fully aware of the joys of other people's pain. are you down with it? but the real question is: can you feel the loofah tonight? oh such extreme exfoliation, just scrub yourself out until you're not yourself anymore. your skin's a clean slate, ready to transplant the face of good people, publicly good people onto yours. or a gentle cycle: a quick swish so to wake you up just a tad, just enough to comment on the eucalyptus smell that you've forgotten just sits there. and then what, mr. clean? we can think of something to do with the ugly water.

Preserve

What's been left out
I'm afraid
What can spoil

What can spill over into a new era

preserves
the old guard

Something to do with what they call

Spoilage in the state
of nurture

Even if we have enough or not

What if the hangers-on
stake a claim
on all that's been undone.

Sweaty

You're just the sweaty I was looking for. Pouring out of your tiny pores. You've made my entry for today. So what if I imagine what your sweat tastes like. It's fresh, isn't it? From your long bike ride. It was a serious bike ride, I can tell. This is a serious poem. I turn off the music and I strain to hear what you have to say through my overpriced headphones. You're so pre-9/11 with your Murder City Devils t-shirt. Your wife's breakfast regimen sounds delicious and boring. There's a spaniel waiting to be unleashed, and I mean that without innuendo. I don't believe in metaphor, at least for today. There's an hour wait for a haircut. The light posts are decorated with tinsel. It's that time of the year.

This guy

I can pray for him even
if I don't know him
I can pray for him even
if he probably doesn't
want me to pray for him
I don't know him
but he looks like
my uncle who lost
his index finger in Korea
I don't know him
but he looks bored
Is he missing
How long has he
been gone
I don't remember
having the soft
spot on my head
I don't remember
The Russians Are Coming
The Russians Are Coming
I don't remember
driving up Mulholland
Dr. for the first time
getting lost
but thinking I'm
on someone's horizon
So whenever he points
to the horizon, it looks
like he's telling god
or something
to fuck off
We can discuss him
when I have the time
Nice thick eyebrows

Blanket Statement

All this we are.

The gutter
catalogs.

The chalk delineates
perimeters.

There's no power-line going through this part of town.

I generate. You generate.

Together,
We isolate:

"Excuse me, how do you get to-"

Well, at least the pavement is even.

Pavement is field,
vehicles passing by as
the conduits for
accumulation.

Lube

The title is slick

It pandhandles

to a certain type

of audience:

a narrow trope

to tap

them on the shoulder

Kid, here's a tip:

What's the point,

if the bookstores

now only sell

designer lube

muscle-t's,

zipcodes printed

on towels.

Postcard from the Hinterland

exurban backwater floodlit dwelling bayou weather rusting trailer

aromatics rowed up aerodynamic confederate pride parked speedboat

on gravel driveway piggly-wiggly midnight daiquiri running on foot

upstairs scuttle danger droplets headlights through inkling of clouds

Synapses

our yesterday stumped

to synopses

hindsight clarity

beer for only a buck

collapsing intersection

for intersection

the tunnel, the bridge, still

marveled after all these

years; tendrils

in the wires

the tenderloin

the alleyway where

we untangled

without recording

all the cracks

Q & A

I wonder if in the end

the U.S. Census Bureau representative asked

me questions or I
her.

(I *told* you I was stoned)

There I was wearing nothing but a sheet (feels sexy)
So young (so beautiful) the visitor asked if I had any
family in

The Land of the Jews.

I don't drive (which pleases me)

(mostly)

The discourse was so clear so beautiful (so young)

The men (or women) knock on the door
(check things off)

must deal with my mood
(moods).

And deals with my answers,
questions

until it's mixed up
and smooth.

dodge

i'm dodging the craft again. oh, but i'm behaving like a martyr-in-training for months now. there are thousands of minions just like me. i've been witness to and participant in the greatest hoax of your generation. i've fallen into the gap. is this a joke? there is drama in your voice. your voice is the agent, your body the agency, and memory has become viral. a woman on the television is on the telephone, sobbing, and the title asks the question Where Is She? where is she, really? every month brings hormonal changes but i have no male friends. you have to trust me, dodge the bullet. your favorite's in pieces.

living arrangements

ruckuses truncate mornings
to stubs of days, tropical storms
throwing jabs through
scrapyard rooftops
eden's on the minds
again, fidgeting on couches, buckets
to the brim, politician
trysts risking candidacies
celebrity endorsements
from unapologetic
card-carrying
marijuana patients
teleprompter prompting
shying away from stock
footage flashback rehash
rationing the last of the basmati
in emptied ragu jars
thumbing through catalogues
highlighting wildlife
frozen & delivered
free of charge
dishes piling up in kitchen

confusing clean laundry
 bins with soiled bins
 soiled from cats whose litter
 boxes sopped up
 all the urine it can handle
 even litter boxes are edens
 next to certain *hetero-*
topias: asylumsprisonscemeteries
 crazysexycool
 or none of the above, please, retro-
 actively injecting flavor
 into flimsy sheets of flank, landing
 a gig to speak but uh what that
 can't but filibust-

erring

austerity measures interests
 disproportionately thorough
 oh the europe we've been wanting
not on my dime
 without the passport lines
 dismal cannabis wisdom
 wins out, thinking is a past
 time, rehearsed speeches, flubs
 crushed cans in 99cent
 only bag
 a parking ticket
 on a monday
 morning with added state fee
 institutionalized gift
 con-

join body to breath
 in an effort to keep fit
 through backaches
 bone marrow transplants
 prescriptions poking holes
 in the gut, virtual
 ulcers in the retina, reminder
 that disease is dis-ease
 the popping of every joint

the urge is mandatory
 to keep a log of every
 arousal, every tickling of the
 senses, the cats bathing
 each other while television
 blasts deals for egg-choppers
 painless exercise regimens
 the faint vacuum next
 door, storms elsewhere but
 nor'easter never paying
 these alleyways visits
 the accidental vining of
 the neglected cherry
 tomato plant up black painted
 awning, neo-retro neon sign
 designed with no hum
 beside nodding palms
 downstairs soccer
 post-

tryout party, pantry
 stocked with non-perishables
 five different kinds
 of sleek bottles of olive oil
 drying of dishes on vinyl
 chopping board, cilantro
 bits speckling green on green
 counters, family photos
 on an endless loop
 debut ball of young cousin
 mistaken for premature
 wedding, red eye
 reduction quick as ramen
 no season packet but
 butter, overboiling

rare
 need for umbrella for
 rain of wood
 shavings from top
 floor balcony, friendship

motel's bearded man in tutu
and g-string asking directions
towards some name of street
named for state, maps
often flatten but ground
is rough, full of pock marks
browned pine needles in what
was once desert, plastic
mardi gras beads, splintered
red dixie cups, universal
truths are okay, says a book
if they preserve the strange
particulars, individuality
or solitary confinement, options
stay on point with the message
a tragedy in the day in the life
of a woman who wakes up
to find family disappeared
wardrobe malfunction holes
where holes oughtn't be, ripped
from already mended seams
the universe is expanding
the direct correlation between
age and size, meat
grass-fed or otherwise
wrapped-up shawarma
rages against the digestive
system, the bowie crooning
over drugstore speakers
ashes to ashes
funk to fungi, critic
gives women permission
to make fart jokes on screen
a website devoted to humor
for supposedly anyone enrolled
in at least one credit hour, still
can't crack the mystery
of testosterone
driven yuks, failed

arugula salad experiment
 with toasted sesame wasabi
 dressing, avocados don't turn
 if kept with its poisonous pit
 kiwi curdles the whipped
 greek yogurt, a match
 in the mouth prevents onion
 tears, sucking onions
 is aspirin for toothache
 rubbing raw side of garlic
 on pimple reduces redness
 drink plenty of water
 gallons a day, money
 gurus tells us everyone needs
 help with plastic
 the rolling out of a brand
 new

concept album around
 imelda marcos, the next drag
 superstar won't be announced
 until next week, pills to squash
 motto of always tomorrow
 next year's models roaming
 for a parking spot
 surely the drivers have
 nothing in common but bitter
 proximity so they form
 an exclusive club, never
 eat at restaurants with
 pictures on their menu
 duck testes, good for puree
 but wait, did she prick
 her boyfriend's condoms
 with a needle or push him down
 a flight of stairs, or
 installed webcam in her bathroom
 or steal her neighbor's poodle
 to receive the \$2,500 reward, of
 these possibilities, lean

more toward the asian
flavor, reading about
the multitudes, the things
the dictionary definition
of *thing* is an object that
one need not, cannot,
or does not wish to give
a specific name, personal
belongings, a love affair
a matter for which one is concerned
in action or in speech or thought
a concern, a subject, an event
an occurrence
a matter before the court
example asks what's so *thingy*
about a dick, coming
together, the multitudes, but not
in the note of reifinstahl
so clean & put together, but
frayed and spent, together
in what fuel-efficient car
company calls the quiet revolution
that slowly turns expectations
why women make better
cheaters than men, which
college is the top of the nation
for coffee lovers
which los angeles hot-spot
earns james beard prize, why
liberals are smarter than
conservatives, the nine
most popular viral
videos of the week
the transparency of cries
for more transparency
when the cause itself
is the message, urban
outfitters' jewish star
t-shirt taboo, the cheap

wicker chair on its
last leg, some metaphors
are synonyms of x
rather than an approximation
they ought to be, lack
of natural light
in the kitchen forces
fluorescent migraine
to shine through, bathtub
reading electrocutes
the careless, imagine waves
clouds and ships
in shampooed lukewarm water
ships landing ashore
led by the sirens
the sirens replaced
by klaxons, klaxons by
cat lapping at the faucet
neighbor calling himself
maintenance as he knocks
from door to door, goldberg
variation aria, pundits
doing the verb form of pundits,
dissecting trivial morsels
with their flair for blunt tongue
the truth about pills, false
sense of security, a border
fence is good for preserving
the fragile desert from foot
damage, runoff of
colorado snowpack melting
into flood, but not water
for drinking in deserts
where conifer lookalikes
grow into medusa wigs
seducing amateur enthusiasts
into nomenclature
into no man's land, to no-place
no man's an island but a bunch

a glued together archipelago
 fracking triggering
 seismic activity, the human kind
 is typically quite shallow
 the shift that knocked the log
 cabins out, out
 from the fringes
 the g.o.proud has british
 sister called l.g.b.torries
 the contradictions in
 fortune cookie, feng shui
 a chipped bust of moz-
 art, haggled
 half-price at am-vets
 the restoration of a surplus
 store, across the street
 uninviting, tightly
 spread sheets freshly
 washed, tumbled-dried
 wrinkle-free like military
 the nation-state is on the way
 out, the empire is in
 owls are out
 hedgehogs are on their way
 fly-fishing bait caught
 in the earlobes of millions
 think like a man stuns
 hunger games
 cannibal empanadas
 from brazilian street cart
 cremation is a fad
 for the advanced
 a hurried octogenarian doesn't
 have time for the flu
 self-expression is on trial
 aslaska's exclaiming
 this is the year
 there's a fiber that goes
 with everything, finger-lickin'

good enough to join the world's
 local bank, escalating disputes
 the globes are off
 their axes, anyone
 can become one
 of the freshest
 places on earth, think small
 lone woman on a stone
 bench thinking through
 queer time and space again
 a man's t-shirt announces
 he loves haters, pigeons
 fat from all the red
 velvet cupcake crumbs
 bearded musicians debating
 next year release
 as l.p. or thumbdrive
 the body language warm
 poised, maimed bodies pose
 with soldiers' broken psyches
 wallowing in the post-
 urban
 cowboy recession
 the unveiling of trillion
 dollar budget, cupid
 coupon, valentine's day heap
 of muscle down on floor
 legs pulled up close to fetal
 position, one scorched cadaver
 of the 350 plus in gutted
 prison, lugging the dead
 hurled to a heavy thud
 good luck message
 on a soccer ball en route
 to the states from japan
 since the tsunami, definite
 article apt until next time
 charged for some rainbow
 chard absent from canvas bag

coins in japanese lucky cat
keeping time
with its gaudy gold paw
the coins for laundry, for
slot machines, reading theory
of the leisure class
the parts about the belief
in luck, the part where
gambling propensity is another
subsidiary trait of the barbarian
temperament, bingo altar
of saints, no elbows on the table
turn the shirt right-side-in
the calling of numbers on balls
responses through thick smoke
off brand-exhalation
stale film on denim jackets
the breath of fresh air's behind
the casino, past the parking structure
desert pathways encircling foreclosed
canyon mansions, tentacled branch
brushing off hiding coyote
adolescent yucca's flustered
blossoming, trauma
quavering through faulty
reception, the medium
is never more than the extension
of the message, the message
is clear, who wore it better
spot the knockoff
they're just like us
they have homes and gardens
xeriscaping is the green
way to go, xeriscape in lieu
of lawns, xeriscape to theme
southwestern prickles
delphiniums, mediterranean
lavender, dogwood
xeriscape sweet xeriscape

xeriscape isn't murder or
exorcising demons, xeri-
scaping isn't offing drafts
via defenestration, no
brainchild infanticidal tendency
no domicile, no demonym