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All My Heroes Are Broke

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

ALL MY HEROES ARE BROKE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

CREATIVE WRITING

by

Ariel Francisco Henriquez

2017

To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This thesis, written by Ariel Francisco Henriquez, and entitled All My Heroes Are Broke, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Denise Duhamel

Jason Pearl

Campbell McGrath, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 1, 2017

The thesis of Ariel Francisco Henriquez is approved.

Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences, & Education

Andrès G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
And Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2017

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

ALL MY HEROES ARE BROKE

by

Ariel Francisco Henriquez

Florida International University, 2017

Miami, Florida

Professor Campbell McGrath, Major Professor

ALL MY HEROES ARE BROKE is a poetry collection written from the perspective of a first generation American coming to terms with the implicit struggles and disillusionment of the American Dream. The first section takes place in New York, both implicitly and explicitly, and serves to introduce the speaker and reveal aspects of his family's history. The second section takes place in Florida, and continues to further exemplify the speaker's growing cynicism towards the circumstances of his life, and the peculiar atmosphere of solitude that it creates.

ALL MY HEROES ARE BROKE primarily uses two forms: short, image driven poems inspired by the works of Robert Bly and Po Chu-I; and longer narrative poems that reveal more personal information about the speaker, in the manner of Li-Young Lee and Frank O'Hara, allowing the speaker to project his own life onto his surroundings and the people of those larger communities.

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I

1

A VIEW OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY
FROM THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE

Locks cling to the bridge's facade like piercings,
inscribed with names in marker or lipstick.

Their keys sunken to the bottom of the East River,
combinations lost in the brackish waters of memory.

A man in a black trench coat sells the locks
to passing couples, encourages them to latch
their hearts onto the bridge that's already heavy
with rust. Way out on the jilted water:
the silhouette of a dream-sized woman standing
on a distant corner looks so familiar from this far away—
arm raised to hail a cab that will never come.

BEFORE SNOWFALL

French has no word for home.

—Jack Gilbert

I found Baudelaire on a street corner
near Washington Square Park for two dollars
on a flimsy table littered with orphaned books:

a faded, cracked paperback, lavender
as the lingering winter evening that draped
the skyline like a dust jacket, and small enough

to squeeze into a standard sized envelope,
which I did, after scribbling a little note
on the inside cover to a girl back home.

She never got the book, which was in French,
and we never spoke again in any language,
though I always wondered what happened

to the book, probably lost in the dead letter office,
that mass grave of undelivered letters,
moldy packages, and illegible birthday cards.

Still, when winter arrives every year like a janitor
to sweep the fallen leaves, and I'm reminded
of what is lost, I like to imagine

a homeless man fishing my envelope
out of that dropbox on Broadway
before the mailman gets to it,

digging for Christmas cards from grandma
stuffed with cash for her favorite grandkid,
and instead finding Baudelaire.

He clutches the book with ungloved hands
slumping down against the dropbox
in resignation, and flips it open

to my little note, which simply says
tell me, is the snow coming down
on you too? And I imagine him looking up,

his gaze tracing the skyline until it reaches
the grey horizon, thinking of all the nowheres

to go to lay his head down tonight,

saying out loud:

Not yet my friend. Thank goodness,

not yet.