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# Loose Ends

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

LOOSE ENDS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

CREATIVE WRITING

by

Julio Machado

2014

To: Dean Kenneth G. Furton  
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Julio Machado, and entitled Loose Ends, 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.

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Denise Duhamel

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Vernon Dickson

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Campbell McGrath, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 3, 2014

The thesis of Julio Machado is approved.

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Dean Kenneth G. Furton  
College of Arts and Sciences

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Dean Lakshmi N. Reddi  
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2014

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

LOOSE ENDS

by

Julio Machado

Florida International University, 2014

Miami, Florida

Professor Campbell McGrath, Major Professor

Loose Ends is a collection of lyric and narrative poems that explores the multiple terrains of identity—individual, cultural, and historical. The poems embrace the essential incoherence of the self, resisting monolithic identity in favor of a multi-faceted, historically complex, imagistic rendering of the inner life. At its heart, the collection seeks to grapple with the gravitas of living: the continual assault of history and nature on human agency, the staggering context of the universe as a backdrop for communal and individual struggle. While single poems may only touch briefly or incompletely on these themes, the collection as a whole presents an admittedly inchoate picture of contemporary American identity.

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History of a Universe .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

## Ghazal of Hungers

When my father saw his first moon, he surely believed it  
and himself untouchable; now we know nothing is.

All his rooms were vacant and he knew  
loneliness was a kind of providence.

We speak of his death casually; from this distance  
the moonrise also seems like no great event.

All of us still sweating over beef and the right  
sort of attention. The mood in the market is ravenous.

## Sestina to the Last Space Shuttle

The trouble with chickens

Is they never know if they're coming or going, their heads

So full of straw and odd bars of fowlish music;

In the mornings they lean their whole bodies into the wind

Just so: eyes, necks, fatal shoulders bowed,

Listening to Farmer's axe-heavy coming.

If indeed he does come;

They survive most days and nights, the hens.

To sleep, they line their poor bodies, stern to bow,

Each respiring a bit of warmth on the ample tail

Of the lass ahead, while that same insisting wind

On their fippled coats makes a lonesome music.

They wake sometimes to hear that music

Or squawk alarum at the foxes when they come

Like primordial memories to invoke the winding

Ululation of the dying, the wounded hens,

In nights so black sometimes the unseeing eye

Will close to wish away the rustling of the boughs



And the hooting of hunters on those boughs,  
Away the crowing storm out of the night with its own music—  
All in a blackness, beating like unfeathered wings  
On the periphery of what is safely known. And what comes  
Out of those nights is not sow or grouse or faverolle  
But a yawp and killing under cover of wind,

A brume of offal. There are nights when even the wind  
Gives rest—the very worst nights—and the whole barn bows  
Under press of something old and wild. Then *Gallus gallus*  
From its faded lingering gene takes up the awful music  
Of coops and pens: the keen of “Farmer Too Soon Comes”  
Or “The Wire Mesh Is Clutching at my Heart,”

That sort of thing; cacophonous, the hens stomp their bruised feet  
All in a line and raise a yowling, choking barnyard wind  
That quakes the lamps and egg chutes, until morning comes  
Without relief, and the titillating call of the rooster like a bow  
Across a henhouse full of strings draws only a harsh music,  
Before the fury passes from the blushing hens.

And again, again, all the winging days, except one: bowed  
Atop the fence, winded, gripped by a roaring music,

The hens watch, and ascending comes the saint of fowls.

## Loose Ends

1.

You say, “Remember that fish?”

The morphine’s a wind blowing your memories to loose ends, but I know just what you mean, *that goddamn fish*.

I’m eight years old and you’re hardly old enough to be my father. Knee-deep in the San Marco, you and I against the current, two pairs of hands on the same line. And we pull him out: pungent, muscular, eager. The sunlight off his back is staggering, and I store the sight away, so that when I’m confounded by the apocalyptic, perfect sheen of something dying, I’ll say *this is like the light gleaming on a carp’s body*.

You say, “We’ve got a shark for dinner!” But between one thing and another, we don’t quite make it home in time. Another loose end.

Weeks later, on the ocean water below, the single bead of our plane’s shadow like its own kind of remembering. All our bashful, uncertain hope when we arrive. Customs like some grand adventure that we—the collective historical we, but also the more specific we, the four single stitches of us in the patchwork—are nearly bursting to be heroes of.