

10-28-2021

Something American

Carolina S. Souto

Florida International University, ninaizme@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Art Education Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Souto, Carolina S., "Something American" (2021). *FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 4871.
<https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd/4871>

This work is brought to you for free and open access by the University Graduate School at FIU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of FIU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dcc@fiu.edu.

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

SOMETHING AMERICAN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

CREATIVE WRITING

by

Carolina Souto

2021

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

This thesis, written by Carolina Souto, and entitled *Something American*, 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.

Campblell McGrath

Vernon Dickson

Julie Marie Wade, Major Professor

Date of Defense: October 28, 2021

The thesis of Carolina Souto is approved.

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

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

Florida International University, 2021

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

SOMETHING AMERICAN

by

Carolina Souto

Florida International University, 2021

Miami, Florida

Professor Julie Marie Wade, Major Professor

SOMETHING AMERICAN is a poetry collection written from the perspective of a first-generation American navigating a growing family, a political crisis, and a global pandemic. Influences on this collection include Robert Hass's *THE ESSENTIAL HAIKU* and *FIELD GUIDE*, which attend to nature and the poet-speaker's immediate surroundings with diligence and precision. Ariel Francisco's place poems and creative titles in *ALL MY HEROES ARE BROKE* provide important touchstones for Souto's commitment to here-and-now writing. And Sylvia Plath's frank and complex writing about motherhood in *ARIEL* grants the poet permission to probe these subjects as well.

In *SOMETHING AMERICAN*, experimental poems sprawl across the page or juxtapose traditional forms with postmodern content, while more traditional poems are grounded in image and narrative and signal their appearance with left margin alignment. Throughout this collection, the poet-speaker confronts and examines the tensions between her personal identity and cultural traditions, resulting in a resonant, zeitgeist mosaic.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POEM	PAGE
The Compulsion to Create and Destroy Come from the Same Place	1
A Poem about You, Missing People, and I am Afraid to Breathe	2
Another Mother.....	3
Directions for How to Swallow This Bird	4
Music in the Medicine	6
Learning to Breathe.....	8
On the Julia Tuttle Causeway	10
August Mourn: Muertero	11
Mixed-Found Poem: Copywriting Writing.....	13
The City of Love.....	19
Model Behavior	20
Mother of Thousands	21
Carambola.....	22
Eye Glue.....	23
Music (cont'd).....	25
A Dream My Mother Had.....	27
Sea Moons.....	28
Music (cont'd).....	30
Dear Morning.....	31
Everything Has a Name	33
Meta MRI.....	35

Thanksgiving Family Recipe	41
Another Knot Poem	42
Laundry	43
how has your deactivation been going	44
Aluminum	45
Some Formalities Having to do with Life.....	46
Found Poem: Delete After Death.....	51
Intertone	52
Music (cont'd).....	53
2020 Quarantine Haiku Series	54
Vote Amidst Psychological Chaos.....	56
On Hold.....	58
I Want to Say War.....	60
Undress the Day	61
The Offer.....	62
Directions to Where Writing Happens.....	63
Beach Rain in October	64
I Want to Say War II.....	65
Sun Means.....	67
the condition of something human.....	68
Music (cont'd).....	69
Found Poem: Findings from [Undisclosed] Medical Center, Dr. [Undisclosed]	71
Summer Rain	73

The Compulsion to Create and Destroy Come from the Same Place

Summon a sneeze:

There's something on the radio:

How smooth our arm's skin:

Hold these words in your tongue's pocket:

Grind over each letter with teeth:

Ex pe ri ence the kiss of e ver y sy lla ble:

the watchfulness around touching:

I write poetry:

Let myself happen:

How love fills:

Or I love you because you make me *feel* full:

Tomorrow I will number pages so each poem ceases to:

I need to tell you that my heart is heavy:

How rhyming seems empty against disaster:

Some things are better kept in the cabinet of ideas:

How being alive is so extreme:

A Poem about You, Missing People, and I am Afraid to Breathe

Rain tricks the ground into thinking it's music.

Why my love for you is round.

Caricatures of moss plants and new art.

When a green flower print dress makes me happy on a Sunday.

Sewing a button back onto a shirt.

All the clothes.

The absurdity of cutting cuticles.

No cars roaming passed, garbage for trucks to pick up.

The birds have fallen quiet, off somewhere, else.

Isn't all art made in war?

Walking the dog, you count cars.

I am couched in your existence.

This constitution.

The black asphalt absorbs the sun's yellow and returns it to me.

Back home, the scent of coffee.

Our breath eddies.

All my worst fears for you.

Another Mother

In a week my only son will turn
one and no one told me I'd be so sad,
this bulb in my throat. I find solace
in old friends, knitted tapestries, woven shirts,
hat logos, therapists. A hug. Scrunchies, other
hair ties, a braid
with an end to it. How knots are contagious.
All the people. All the people. All the people.
I read on an unverified Instagram post
that our teeth are made up of stardust.
I hear my baby crying through the monitor,
tossing on the screen. *Please. Sleep.*

Directions for How to Swallow This Bird

I can't swallow this bird:

each new story a new heart:

each news story:

sorrow is sadness in a bow:

the water is not only shallow by the shore:

I can't swallow this bird:

go deeper into the bellows:

lets go below:

let go:

a report by a farrow:

I can't swallow this bird:

I can't swallow this bird:

all I can say is *ow*:

what happens when we're followed:

can I borrow this:

carry me in a wheelbarrow:

a crow a crow:

where is the arrow:

how is it we are still here:

how just go with the flow:

how so slow:

bow down against the plow:

it's hard to know what's right now:

I'll allow it this time:

let it grow:

show me how to work this vow:

endow:

end now:

I won't swallow this bird.