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LAVENDER
DISSERTATION

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
in the Department of English
The University of Mississippi

by

HELENE ACHANZAR

May 2020

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ABSTRACT

A collection of poems.

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Happy as can be to ching chong
my way out of this interaction.

Immigrant Narrative

At singing I am medium good.
Gather all my aunties near the Magic Mic.

We pass Peking duck around a lazy Susan. My people
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I buy eleven iterations of a gray crewneck
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The aesthetic of Catholicism resembles
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I retain my citizenship in case of cancer
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My ponytail is low and practical. I raise a fist
and yell *makibaka*. My mother asks what struggle.

Tokyo to Davao City

I learn the hard way that I don't fit into a Japanese extra-large. I squint my eyes and give the peace sign, both as ridicule. Your grandmother touches my hair, says it's dark but in translation. She gives us doilies for America. Everyone speaks English in the jazz club. You didn't prepare me for indoor smoking and perverts. My loneliness would not eat this raw horse, but our suburban friend orders it with beer. Your aunt hang dries my clean underwear in her living room. I bow in earnest. There's a sports drink named Pocari Sweat. A man on his knees scrubs denim on the sidewalk. Indigo stains his hands. My Levi's were made in China and have endured many spin cycles. Why do your people seem rich? Because your people don't have children.

You wake as a result of the curry from a luxury resort in the Philippines. I sprint through the dark in flip flops but the village has no doctor. The nature park has armed guards. Ziplines are not for the proletariat. The children knocking on the car windows upset you. My suitcase is full of batik and baby cologne. One bar emulates the American South. The cover band plays Journey. The singer's mouth makes all the right sounds. A distant relative calls me fat. You love KFC no matter where. My aunt's maids wash the blood stain from the crotch of my jeans and hang dry them outside. You and I go to the mall. Bowling is the same, and Girbaud is still relevant. Why don't my people have culture? Because of your people.

Good Life

Nine women at brunch all order eggs
benedict. I laugh at how boring my fury.

This ambition to feel myself closer to an art:
what distinguishes me from the people

who order their ribeyes well done.
I want to tell the rich girls I once had a good life.

I spoke French and wore my skin tight.
My Range Rover was green and men touched it.

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