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*Dearest, I'm Writing from Inside This Place to You
Who Is in a Totally Different Place*

I'm far away. Our bargain—settle on the lowest common denominator. Geography after all is a modernist romance, a language for how we diverged from one another. Writing is the fragment of a relationship in conversation made possible by archival preservation and the aura of words. You and I are here to unsettle. Technologies of settling are colonial. A 1903 language primer gives me my subjective experience of place. My presumed sphere is the pastoral tropics in which play is innocent, folktales are toothless—a mommy, a daddy, and a twin are a whimsical lyrical chore factory in the object-thing of my Malayan heritage.

Translated into English. To teach English, the primer directs us to attune to immediate surroundings. We are made to recognize and name ordinary objects around us,

including our own bodies. We draw a series of maps.

The roads connecting our homes to the neighborhood school,

our town, our province, this archipelago, and, finally, nearby countries.

Objects beyond our field of vision are other houses, towns, and other children on mountains.

Invisible and abstracted are bodies of water, other countries and capitals,

China and then the United States—our forever allies!

Our particularly childish nature of place is the manipulation of scale, size, and distance.

Each faraway place is intimate while far enough to expand our reasoning and the kinds of felt and flexible relationships within the U.S.-led world.

Now adopting the X, acknowledging the pluralized genders among us moving in this very moment: global caregivers, servants, maids, houseboys, sex workers, eldercare nurses, cooks, dishwashers, call center operators, luxury liner crewmembers. The Global Pilipinx helps to fulfill basic human needs.

The X prosthetic for interdependency. It is perverse to claim normativity once normativity is imposed upon you so that you claim something both assumed of you and denied to you.

Did you create the good life? Did you displace anyone?

Craig Santos Perez writes new poetic maps of the Pacific to make Guam visible.
The Philippines shows up in maps more often than the Marianas do.
But still there is a sense that no one notices when a U.S. warship runs aground
of a coral reef.
And that once it does so, it goes into battle position against Philippine park
rangers.
That this incident is accidental and yet somehow normal.
Like more flexible jobs in a global chain of military bases.
There has never been one central place in the circuits—the homeland as
sentimentalized
as the feelings between employer and employee.
The lowest common denominator between us is to be unsettled and
unsettling.
Place activates our necropastoral humanism.
We once faced legacies of exclusion associating us with societal disease.
Yet our families settled. I ask mid-century organizational records,
why so quietly baroque in your pursuit to become legible, legal, and
legitimate?
Why so many constitutions and by-laws for so many micro-interest
organizations?
I ask a millennial public history and documentary project,
why so full of pathos, drama, and claims?
The problem with the claim that one goes to the archive to find oneself
is the delusion
we can repossess lost property. A place is an archive of its own ruins.
A place is the archive of trauma as fact. It happened here.
The ships came by to pick up people, their cargo and the people hauling
cargo.
The Pacific is our trauma and our desire.
The rim is everywhere there has been a war to get caught up in.
Always carrying the officer's status in the body.
Always involved in the closed-door domesticity of empire.
Your daily commute through a place, your tourist visit to it,
your wrong turn leading to it, or your binding obligation to stay in it
may be
a document of the place's ruin. You sense the bodies that passed
through.
Flown above. Eaten tunnels. Exposed brick and oil spills.
Paid out. Locked down. The body knows more than the curatorial eye of
the drone
or the tight porn shot. Or the preservationist's weak references.

Or the developers' biopolitical commitments to life.
Ruins and remains are a place of present presence, neither passed nor
futurist.
Technologies of settling are colonial. You and I are here to unsettle.
Love, Me.