Poetic Reconfigurations and Reclamations of the Wasteland in Craig Santos Perez's *Habitat Threshold*

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Wastelanding and the Role of Literature[1]

In his poem "*from* ars pasifika," published in the literary journal *The Poet's Republic* and part of a web of poems bearing the same title, CHamoru writer Craig Santos Perez positions literary wastelands as a crucial site for negotiating both land and reading relations. On the one hand, the poem traces and refuses a process of material and discursive "wastelanding" (Voyles) that turns Pacific Islands into colonial wastelands. On the other hand, and as part of such refusal, "*from* ars pasifika" reclaims Oceania within CHamoru land relations and ecopoetics.[2] Indeed, the poem calls on readers to join this poetic effort of contesting and undoing wastelanding discourses and of reconfiguring Oceania within a participatory reading process. As such, "*from* ars pasifika" introduces relevant thematic and formal concerns that are further developed in Perez's recent poetry collection *Habitat Threshold* (2020), which I focus on in this article, while also offering an important meditation on the ethics and politics of reading literary wastelands.

I therefore begin with a brief close reading of "*from* ars pasifika" before I engage in more detail with *Habitat Threshold.* On a methodological level, this allows me to illustrate my inductive approach as I read poetry and theory not only side by side but I also understand poetry as a form of theorizing wastelands. Focusing on the interplay between form and ecological solidarity, I turn to *Habitat Threshold* and discuss how the collection negotiates literary wastelands by means of different spatial poetic strategies, in particular the use of italics, bold print, erasures and blank space in the mise-en-page. I argue that these spatial strategies are key to a participatory ecopoetics of reconfiguring and reclaiming wastelands in ways that both refuse wastelanding discourses, e.g. of desecration, pollutability and *terra* and *aqua nullius*, and explore anticolonial land and reading relations of "uneasy" ecological solidarity (Tuck and Yang 3).

"*from* ars pasifika" begins with an evocation of the Pacific Islands as wastelands by framing them within a dominant cultural imaginary of damage:

> when they say
> our land is
> no longer sacred

because
it's been damaged
incrementally
for years— (1-7; emphasis original)

The accumulative use of enjambments and the italicization of "incrementally" in these lines perform the desecration and long damage of slow violence (Nixon), which speaks to conditions of ongoing ecological colonialism/imperialism in the Pacific, including plantationism, urbanism, militarism, extractivism and tourism (Perez, *Navigating* 42-43, 71).[3] The poem's first part thus gestures to the power structures that underpin the production of the Pacific Islands as wastelands and thereby refutes the normativity of the wasteland as a naturally given ontological position. In so doing, the poem exposes and intervenes in the workings of what Traci Brynne Voyles calls "wastelanding". Drawing on Valerie Kuletz, Voyles argues that wastelanding names "racial and spatial process[es] of signification" that produce wastelands in discursive and material ways by designating certain places and lives as wasteable and subsequently wasted, allowing them to be laid waste to (11). Wastelanding is therefore a "discourse-made-material" (15) through which US settler colonialism enacts and justifies environmental, meaning ecological and social, violence pertaining to land- and waterscapes (26). As a "racial and spatial signifier," the wasteland itself "renders an environment and the bodies that inhabit it pollutable" in order to uphold a colonial hierarchization of life (9), and as such it is deeply intertwined with forms of material waste and wastelanding.[4] "*from* ars pasifika" disrupts this process of signification, refusing the imposition of colonial meanings and (de-)valuation metrics as much as pillorying their material and ontological violence.

The poem's second part further intervenes in wastelanding processes by reclaiming the wounded wasteland as sacred, calling on the reader to

tell them
our wounded places
are the most
sacred (8-11)

The wounded wasteland, both as a place and speaking position that connects land and body, encapsulates a process of ongoing, unresolved injury and historical trauma as well as the possibility of healing, even if deferred. As such, these lines refuse the coloniality of wastelands – inscribed as damaged, desecrated and disposable – and instead refigure colonial/imperial wastelands as sacred CHamoru wasteLands.[5] As the poem evokes and simultaneously refutes a discourse of desecration and long damage, it critiques how material and discursive wastelanding intersect to "den[y] that [colonialism's] 'wastelands' could be sacred,

could be claimed, could have a history, or could be thought of as home" (Voyles 26). Conversely, the second part of "*from* ars pasifika" speaks to a CHamoru ecopoetics that "reconnects CHamorus to the land and its sacredness, […] protests against further environmental degradation, and insists that land (along with literary representations of land) is a site of healing, belonging, and decolonization" (Perez, *Navigating* 44). As Perez points out further, narrating CHamoru land as sacred forms a "parallel movement" that exists "[a]longside the political and legal activism centered on land reclamation" in Oceania (72). Shifting not only from a discourse of damage to wounds but also between speaking positions, the poem's appeal to "tell them" activates and implicates the reader in affirming both a CHamoru ecopoetics and the sacredness and sovereignty of the Pacific Islands, thereby countering the discursive violence of "fatal impact" and "damage-centered" narratives of the wasteland (Perez, *Navigating* 14; Tuck 409). In situating the literary wasteland as a central site of destruction and dispossession but also of refusal and reclamation, "*from* ars pasifika" illustrates that while literature can be complicit in the discursive production of wastelands, it can also intervene in such wastelanding processes and participate in decolonization (Perez, *Navigating* 158).

Wastelands, and their reproduction through wastelanding logics and processes, thus emerge as an integral part of colonial/imperial violence. Max Liboiron's (Métis) theorizing of pollution *as* colonialism nuances such an understanding further in that it directs attention to colonial land relations within corresponding regimes of knowledge, valuation and relationality. Liboiron argues for pollution to be understood as "the violence of colonial land relations rather than environmental damage, which is a symptom of violence" (*Pollution* 6-7). Wastelanding, as a "fully colonial project" (Voyles 24), enacts violence as it perpetuates colonial land relations by assuming and ultimately granting "access […] to Indigenous lands for settler and colonial goals" (Liboiron, *Pollution* 5), including, among others, pollution, resource extraction and militarization. In other words, the imposition of colonial land relations, meanings and values relies on the reproduction of the wasteland as a racialized spatial construct precisely because the wasteland carries colonial, extractive ways of relating to and knowing the land and its inhabitants as wasteable. In denying other epistemologies and ontologies, wastelanding attempts to forcefully "flatten[ ] […] Land relations into Resource relations" (Liboiron, *Pollution* 63) – a flattening that "*from* ars pasifika" refuses. Reading "*from* ars pasifika" alongside Voyles's and Liboiron's work shows that the violent becoming of the wasteland is a process of wastelanding landscapes and their inhabitants, including Pacific Islanders' ontologies, (hi)stories as well as ways of knowing and being in relation with these places. Yet, as the reader becomes part of the poem's

refiguring and reclaiming of the colonial/imperial wasteland as Pacific wasteLand, "*from* ars pasifika" also suggests that literary wastel/Lands[6] allow for formulating alternative, anticolonial land and reading relations – a premise I will attend to further in my analysis of *Habitat Threshold*'s spatial poetics and politics.

Habitat Threshold extends "*from* ars pasifika"'s reconfiguration of the wasteland in a number of ways, confronting the "myths of disposability and worthlessness" that work to inscribe the Pacific as a hegemonic space (Davis 9; see also Farbotko 58). Rooted in Hawai'i, Perez's chosen home at the time of writing, *Habitat Threshold* continues Perez's project of critically interrogating the wastelanding legacies of industrial-military violence in Oceania that characterizes his poetic oeuvre, tracing environmental injustices across the Pacific's "migrant routes," "submarine roots" ("Praise Song" 34-35) and "atomic cartographies" ("Nuclear Family" 61). The collection directs attention not only to material waste, such as nuclear and plastic pollution, but also to the discursive violence of oceanic environments and their human and more-than-human inhabitants being positioned and treated *as* waste. In so doing, *Habitat Threshold* contributes to Perez's complex transoceanic ecopoetics and politics of witnessing, resistance and protest (Kim; Nogues; Zhou); of mourning (Zhou); and of multispecies diaspora and kinship (Amin-Hong; Bloomfield; DeLoughrey, "Critical Ocean Studies").

Scholars have extensively discussed the nexus between militarism, environmental injustice and colonial/imperial topography that Perez's poetry resists, focusing both on *Habitat Threshold* and to a greater degree on his expanding multi-volume work *from unincorporated territory*. Their discussions illuminate how Perez's experimental poetics negotiates diverse forms of violence, ranging from geopolitical cartographic and legal mappings of Guåhan as "préterrain" (e.g. Hsu; Kim) and "unincorporated territory" (e.g. Bloomfield; He; Jansen; Lai; Mueller; Schlund-Vials) to the violence of pollution (e.g. Bloomfield; Pinnix; Ronda; Zhou), species extinction and conservationism (e.g. Amin-Hong; Jansen).[7] Building on this scholarship, I pay particular attention to *Habitat Threshold*'s more-than-human encounters and entanglements, both with plastic and in interspecies contexts, and examine how the poems refuse wastelanding processes as they transform the page into a performative space that bears the potential of articulating forms of ecological solidarity by inviting the reader to interact with and respond to the poems.

Form and Solidarity

Habitat Threshold is as much a reckoning with the global necropolitics of disposability that manifest in locally specific ways, as it is a praise song for "the sacrificed" ("Halloween" 3), asking "will we carry / each

other / towards the horizon / of care?" ("Care" 31-34; emphasis original). Its thematic interrogations of forms of care and solidarity are intimately connected with the collection's interest in poetic form and representation. Indeed, the poem "This Changes Everything" suggests that it is via an engagement with form and representation that *Habitat Threshold* critiques dominant models of ecological solidarity and formulates alternative ones. More than halfway into the collection, "This Changes Everything" provides a disillusioned meta-comment on the fraught relationship between form and solidarity, gesturing to how representations of Indigenous peoples in contexts of pollution and climate change are often instrumentalized to center white affect in service of apolitical forms of solidarity. Infused with sharp irony, the poem relates the speaker's experience of seeing a screening of Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein's documentary, which the poem's title references, among an audience of mostly teary-eyed non-Indigenous viewers. In a gesture of strategic generalization, the speaker expresses their dislike of climate change films, "[n]ot because / they feature cliche [sic] polar bears, but because they're all made by [and one might add for] cliche [sic] / white people" ("Changes" 11-13). Apart from commenting on agency in representation – which, tongue-in-cheek, includes the referenced documentary –, the poem challenges the ways in which climate change documentaries, similar to "The Crying Indian" commercial, frequently re-entrench much rehearsed tropes of the "ecological" and "vanishing Indian" and utilize "native tears" to elicit "white tears" ("Changes" 24, 26). "This Changes Everything" critiques such documentaries for, unwittingly or not, re-centering whiteness and deflecting attention from contemporary environmental injustices as rooted in ongoing colonial/imperial histories of the Anthropocene. Indeed, dominant climate crisis and Anthropocene discourses, which posit places such as the Pacific Islands as beyond saving and therefore sacrificial (Whyte, "Against Crisis" 52–56; Farbotko 47-48), feed into a wastelanding logic. Pointing to their affective and political limits, the poem suggests that these documentaries, and the ecocritical discourses they participate in, engender apolitical forms of solidarity-as-empathy as they generate affect for a loss that is not addressed in its political colonial/imperial implications.

By contrast, *Habitat Threshold* exposes not only the coloniality of wastelanding – which it claims many documentaries fail to do – but, in its formulation of ecological solidarity, also refuses re-centering whiteness affectively and being incorporated into a climate justice movement that positions Indigenous people as the "new polar bears […] sport[ing] a vulnerable-yet-charismatic-species-vibe, an / endangered-yet-resilient-chic" ("Changes" 14-15). Indeed, rather than dwell in a space of disillusionment with literary form, *Habitat Threshold*, I argue, proposes a counter-model of "uneasy" (Tuck and

Yang 3), anticolonial solidarity that is rooted in the poems' negotiation of reading relations, implications and an ethics of care. The anticolonial, according to Liboiron and their engagement with Michelle Murphy (Métis), Eve Tuck (Unangax̂), Wayne Yang and Kim TallBear (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate), among others, describes "the diversity of work, positionalities, and obligations that let us 'stand with' one another as we pursue good land [and reading] relations," without "reproduc[ing] settler and colonial entitlement to Land and Indigenous cultures, concepts, knowledges […] and lifeworlds" (*Pollution* 27). As Liboiron emphasizes, "[t]he absence of [a universal] We and the acknowledgement of many we's (including those to which you/I/we do not belong) is imperative for good relations in solidarity against ongoing colonialism and allows cooperation with the incommensurabilities of different worlds, values, and obligations" (24-25). I want to consider the ways in which Perez's poems negotiate such forms of solidarity through their spatial poetics and politics, and specifically how they call the implicated reader into care-taking relations of anticolonial, ecological solidarity as part of refiguring and reclaiming wastel/Lands.[8]

Reading these poems from a location of intersecting privileges as a white, middle-class German scholar, I, too, am an implicated reader in multiple ways. This includes Germany's role in global climate and energy politics as, e.g., one of the key carbon emitters in Europe, and in transnational militarism, such as Germany's participation in the international maritime warfare exercise RIMPAC that continues a German colonial and military history of wastelanding in the Pacific, including the occupation of the Mariana islands in the nineteenth century. These implications also encompass my location and participation in the Eurowestern academy as a colonial institution that is built on the extraction of Indigenous knowledges (Kovach 175), among other knowledge forms, and frequently upholds a strategic distance to activism – all of which points to the limits of uneasy solidarity in this academic space. Considering the complex trajectories of postcolonial studies as a field of study that this special issue partakes in, it becomes clear that questions of uneasy solidarity also play out in the lingering "tensions between postcolonial and indigenous studies that derive from Indigenous people's sense of living under ongoing colonial projects – and not just colonial legacies – and from postcolonial studies' over-reliance on models of colonialism in South Asia and Africa" (Byrd and Rothberg 1; see also Kauanui 135; Perez, "No Page" 4).

These implications, among others, inform my reading of Perez's poems. At the same time, I understand Liboiron's and Perez's work to suggest, each in their own ways, that such an acknowledgement of positionality is insufficient. Liboiron proposes a shift towards considerations of responsibility, which they describe as "the obligation

to enact good relations as scientists, scholars, readers, and to account for our relations when they are not good" (*Pollution* 24), pertaining also to reading and citational practices. Such accountabilities and responsibilities emerge, as Murphy argues, from "the recognition of connected, though profoundly uneven and often complicit, imbrications in the systems that distribute violence" (120), including knowledge systems. I read *Habitat Threshold* as positioning such imbrications and concomitant obligations specifically as reading relations. The collection's "web of contents" asks readers to read from within, rather than simply acknowledge, one's specific and entangled, diverse and often incommensurable implications in the wastel/Land and processes of wastelanding. Opening with a quotation from Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble*, the web of contents asks the reader to "learn[ ] to be truly present" not only as "mortal critters" but also, specifically, as readers "entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, and meanings" (Perez 7; quoting Haraway 1). In other words, these configurations also emerge in relations among reader/addressee,[9] (poet-)speaker, texts and contexts. The web of contents thus frames "staying with the trouble" of entanglement as the work of reading relationally, as "standing with" in anticolonial solidarity (TallBear "Standing with"), without attempting to resolve the tension of the reading I's specific responsibilities: to the poems, their subject matters and their human and more-than-human communities of concern; to colleagues, editors and the author; as well as to funding bodies.[10] At the same time, I take my cue from the web of content's citational practice that illustrates how the collection navigates poetic form as relational, engaging in a "kind of kinship building […] a naming of our large diverse genealogies" through the use of quotations, dedications, acknowledgements, and recycled poems (Perez, "Diaspora"). My citational practice and use of footnotes are oriented towards such a relational form.

It is against this background that I read *Habitat Threshold*'s reconfigurations and reclamations of the wasteland within a participatory, implicated and implicating reading process demanding an acute awareness of politics and ethics. George Abraham suggests in conversation with Perez that an interest in form and aesthetics can undercut the political work of both poetry and its analysis, and therefore needs to "confront the politic of the poem simultaneous to a rigorous aesthetic engagement" ("Diaspora"). In the following, I trace *Habitat Threshold*'s ethical and political work as I continue discussing representations of and relations to plastic that raise questions of ethics for ecological solidarity. I then turn to themes and strategies of erasure in the context of species extinction and forcibly disrupted interspecies relations that invite an explicitly participatory reading process. In closing, I return to how Perez's poems complicate participation as

response and responsibility as I consider the performative nature of enacting reading relations of solidarity as a form of "standing with."

Plastic: Waste(ful) Intimacies

Habitat Threshold's opening poem, "Age of Plastic," introduces the reader to the poet-speaker's daughter as well as to plastic as humans' "perfect / creation" (10–11), entwining the girl's birth and life with that of plastic. The poem develops the web of contents' interest in entanglements, asking what it may mean to be bound up with plastic on an intensely personal, and in this sense local, level within colonial and capitalist structures of global plastic pollution. Rather than primarily a study of plastic's materiality as a hyperobject (Morton) influencing all life (Pinnix; Ronda),[11] I read the poem as an inquiry into plastic's participation within a larger web of care-taking relations, thereby complicating entanglements with plastic beyond its dominant "status as a pollutant" (Liboiron, *Pollution* 36). "Age of Plastic," I suggest, prompts its readers to consider the responsibilities that such relations to plastic might ask for and that may form the basis for ecological solidarity.

Such an inquiry poses, as Margaret Ronda puts it, a "powerful disturbance" (117) – a disturbance that the poem performs formally as well. Beginning with an ultrasound check-up, "Age of Plastic" foregrounds plastic's ambivalence as both enabling and interrupting the process of birth and, metonymically, human life at large:

> The doctor presses the **plastic** probe
> against my pregnant wife's belly.
> ***Plastic*** *leaches estrogenic and toxic chemicals*.
> Ultrasound waves pulse between **plastic**,
> tissue, fluid, and bone until the embryo
> echoes. ***Plastic*** *makes this possible*… (1-6; emphasis original)

Plastic's ubiquitous presence – visually highlighted by its slightly darker font – infiltrates and disrupts both the ultrasound check-up and the reading flow from the first line onwards. At the same time, Ronda suggests that "Age of Plastic" exemplifies how "[p]oetry, like plastic, bears an intimate capacity to […] bring[ ] the reader inside the workings of the body – breathing, laboring, being ill, giving birth" (118). As the first element in the enumeration of "**plastic**, / tissue, fluid, and bone" ("Age" 4-5), plastic not only functions as a mediator between the fetus and the outside world but becomes itself part of the body and of human life. Though vital, such intimacy is also threatening: plastic's formal proximity to the phrase "my pregnant wife's belly" (2), separated only by a line break, mirrors plastic's physical proximity to the pregnant body that heightens a sense of danger for the mother and the fetus. This spatial poetics of proximity is haunted by plastic moving from an adjective, as in "**plastic** probe" (1),

to a noun and agentic entity that "*leaches estrogenic and toxic chemicals*" (3; emphasis original). Such uncanny intimacy lends itself to sharp irony in the poem's juxtaposition of plastic's convenience for humans and its lethal impacts on marine life. After all, while animals "*confuse **plastic** / for food*," "***[p]lastic** keeps food, water, and medicine fresh*" (13-14, 16; emphasis original). Personified throughout the poem, plastic thus elides easy classification as either inherently good or bad. Challenging plastic's assumed duality, "Age of Plastic" points towards messy entanglements of human and more-than-human life, shaped by plastic as an agent that moves within and across human and oceanic bodies as well as encapsulates multiple meanings (Song 62). As plastic's visual prominence marks the poem as a space of ambiguity defined by plastic's shifting connotations (Pinnix 181), it raises the question, to borrow from Zoe Todd (Métis), of "what […] it mean[s] to approach carbon and fossil beings […] as agential more-than-human beings in their own right" (106).

Indeed, "Age of Plastic" utilizes plastic's figuration as an agential entity to draw attention to its intimate enmeshment not only with local ecologies but also with larger capitalist and colonial/imperial structures underpinning modern pollution. As Caren Irr and Nayoung Kim point out by drawing on Susan Freinkel, "plastic responds to important needs – from a desire for cheap goods to escalating anxieties about health and contamination as well as excitement about the potential of nonorganic forms" (3). "Age of Plastic" shows that this extractive, response- and needs-based resource relation to plastic is inherent to the dominant imaginary of plastic as being created by and laboring for humans only to then be discarded. It exposes and undermines this resource relation to plastic as the poet-speaker muses "how free **plastic** must feel / when it finally arrives to the paradise / of the Pacific gyre" ("Age" 21-23). The poignant irony of framing plastic's freedom as oceanic pollution, and of mobilizing the popular though much-critiqued image of the Pacific Gyre as "paradise" (Alaimo 113; Crane 42; Freinkel 129-31; Perez, "Our Sea of Plastic"), is key to the poem's twofold critique of wastelanding: first, the poem criticizes wastelanding discourses of pollutability, including the trope of the Pacific Gyre as well as threshold theories of pollution that the collection's title evokes, which figure the Pacific as a sink for plastic.[12]

"Age of Plastic" thus extends wastelanding violence explicitly to waterscapes and situates it within a transoceanic understanding of the Pacific as a complex island-ocean continuum (Hau'ofa 151-3; Te Punga Somerville 25-6). Second, the poem posits that wastelanding also includes the violence of conflating plastic with pollution, that is, of framing plastic *as* a pollutant per se. In other words, "Age of Plastic" critiques how "progen[ies] of the fossil fuel economy" are "weaponised through petro-capitalist extraction and production [that] turn them into settler-colonial-industrial-capitalist contaminants and

pollutants," and that turn the ocean into a sink (Todd 104, 107). At the same time, plastic's labor is invisibilized in a complex system of extractive relations. While the poem's formal and visual features subvert plastic's invisibility and invisible labor, the act of repeatedly marking plastic also draws attention to those underlying structures of disposability and discardment through which capitalism and colonialism reproduce themselves, and that in turn rely on extractive relations to plastic and to the ocean.

The powerful potential that this critique bears for rearticulating colonial relations to plastic emerges in conjunction with the poem's negotiation of the child figure. "Age of Plastic" evokes the figure of the child, embodied as the poet-speaker's daughter, and modifies it to include plastic: the poet-speaker emphatically imagines "how empty **plastic** must feel / to be birthed, used, then disposed / by us: degrading creators" (17-19). This framing brings the figure of the child's emotional appeal to bear onto plastic and its transformation into a pollutant.[13] Indeed, in rethinking familial relations to include plastic, and in imagining plastic's life from its birth into structures of exploitation to its freedom as a pollutant in the ocean, "Age of Plastic" poses the following ethical conundrum: if plastic figures as another child in and of the poem, then the violence of disposing of plastic is framed *as if* one were to dispose of a child. In positioning plastic as a child, the poem suggests that there are ethical obligations towards plastic that, in turn, frame colonial relations to plastic based on disposability as a crime. By implication, the poem intertwines caring for plastic and caring for a human child as interrelated forms of care. "Age of Plastic," then, engages not only in "poetically forg[ing] kinships between gestating human bodies and marine victims of plastic ingestion and sound pollution," as Mandy Bloomfield observes about *from unincoproatd territory [lukao]*, but it situates plastic within these "multispecies affinities" and "networks of ecological harm" as a more-than-human entity to be cared for (21). Consequently, the poem's radical potential unfolds in suggesting that an expansive ethics of care (Rutherfurd), which includes plastic, is key to care-taking relations and thus ecological solidarity in the wastel/Land. The poem's positioning of plastic within familial and ecological relations therefore raises important ethical questions not only for articulating relations of ecological solidarity but, in so doing, also for challenging the wasteland and its underlying colonial relations.

The poem's ending, which literalizes an intimate form of cohabitation with plastic, calls on the reader to imagine and enter into anticolonial relations with plastic grounded in such an expansive ethics of care. Shifting between oceanic pollution and plastic's entanglements with human life, the poet-speaker dreams of his daughter's future:

> … *Will **plastic** make*
> *life impossible?* Our daughter falls

asleep in a **plastic** crib, and I dream
that she's composed of **plastic**,
so that she, too, will survive
our wasteful hands. (23-28; emphasis original)

While this dream of life's plasticization expresses the poem's underlying anxiety regarding future generations' unlivability in a polluted world – and of heterosexual reproductivity, as Min Hyoung Song notes (60-62) –, the girl's metamorphosis is also a survival strategy. Neither a postplastic utopia nor a nihilist vision of the present and future, the closing line, "our wasteful hands," implicates the girl's parents as well as the reader in creating a livable future that ensures both the girl's and plastic's survival in and beyond the poem. The slipperiness of the possessive pronoun "our" can be read as reproducing an "erroneous truism that plastic pollution is a consumer problem rather than an industrial production problem" (Liboiron, *Pollution* 73), jumping to moral fixes to do with individual choices and thus distorting the scales of plastic pollution. Yet, in tandem with the poem's formal and thematic negotiation of structural and personal relations to plastic, both colonial and otherwise, I read this ending appeal not so much as a general call for a less wasteful way of life than for reconsidering relations to plastic within an expansive ethics of care that may become the basis of ecological solidarity in the wastel/Land. In this sense, the ending line asks all readers to "tend with care" to plastic and work towards "shift[ing] the logics of the petro-economy" that structure the colonial/imperial wasteland (Todd 107). Hence, the strategic generalization of "our wasteful hands" might work against a reading of this ending as an appeal to specific accountabilities and shifts such work toward a participatory reading process. Indeed, as an example of what Song calls the revived (eco-)lyric, "Age of Plastic" offers an active practice of "self-conscious working through" (2), asking the reader to notice, attend and, crucially, respond to being bound up with plastic. As part of eliciting such an engaged response, the poem invites the reader to examine and potentially reorient their relations to plastic in anticolonial ways, to borrow again from Todd (107), in order to imagine and move towards ecological solidarity.

Interspecies Relations: (Countering) Erasure

Perez's spatial (counter-) strategies of erasure further nuance *Habitat Threshold*'s participatory, implicated reading process and prove crucial to its conceptualization of ecological solidarity. The poems "Th S xth M ss Ext nct n" and "We Aren't the Only Species" in particular deploy formal strategies that negotiate the page as a space of poetic interspecies and reading relations, and that subvert wastelanding discourses in the context of species extinction. As its title illustrates, the "Th S xth M ss Ext nct n" utilizes the erasure of vowel sounds as a

technique that performatively embodies the loss of species. Such erasure extends to the quotation at the bottom of the page, taken from Alison Hawthorne Deming's *Zoologies: On Animals and the Human Spirit*, which describes a seemingly universal disruption of human and animal companionship. Through this erasure technique, the poem performs not only the loss of species, their languages and knowledge systems, but also the loss of interspecies relations, which run the risk of becoming illegible. This formal strategy speaks to how, as Perez writes, "[w]hen a species goes extinct, so much is lost […]. Not only from the environment and the ecosystem, but culturally as well. We lose our cultural connection to these important species, and we lose the deep meaning that they added to our lives" (qtd. in Evans). While Perez here echoes Deming in certain ways, "Th S xth M ss Ext nct n" insistently draws attention to its own gaps and the importance of being "attune[d] to the absences [of] extinction" (Amin-Hong 12), including the cultural and historical specificity of such absences. To attend to the gaps thus necessitates a situated reading of interspecies connections, their meanings and the violence of their disruption.

The poem's use of blank space contextualizes such a situated reading within ecological colonialism/imperialism past and present. More than the first half of the page remains blank, followed by Deming's partially erased quotation, thereby drawing attention to absence and disruption in ways that complement the erasure of vowel sounds. This dominant presence of blank space troubles notions of emptiness in that it alludes to and embeds the silence of (near) extinct species within wastelanding discourses of *aqua* and *terra nullius*, which the later poem "Praise Song for Oceania" explicates by connecting the violence of pollution and extraction to colonial/imperial mapping (11-15). Discourses of *terra* and *aqua nullius* were key to the colonization of Oceania; they positioned the Pacific as a "body of absence" and an "empty signifier" (Te Punga Somerville 25, 29) to be inscribed as an "open frontier to be crossed, domesticated, occupied, and settled" (Shigematsu and Camacho xxxii; see also DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots* 22). These wastelanding discourses extend to framings of the Pacific as an empty, militarized "marine borderland" and expendable "wasteland for projects deemed to be too environmentally damaging to perform closer to centers of power" (Davis 10; see also Kim 24).[14] Moreover, such wastelanding is central to climate change discourses that frame Pacific Islands as "sacrifice zones" emerging from a colonial "crisis epistemology" of unprecedentedness and urgency (Whyte, "Against Crisis" 55-56), whereby Pacific Islands are frequently imagined as "disappearing islands" that function as "laboratories" for global climate change (Farbotko 53). The poem's blank space, I suggest, establishes this continuity of material and discursive wastelanding violence from early colonization to contemporary climate change as the latest

"reverberation" of what Heather Davis and Zoe Todd conceptualize as the "seismic shockwave" of colonialism/imperialism (774).

Indeed, as Perez asserts, "no page is every truly blank […] [and] no page is ever terra [or aqua] nullius" (*from incorporated territory [saina]* 65).[15] In this light, "Th S xth M ss Ext nct n" can be read as refusing the discursive erasure of wastelanding by making visible attempts to empty the page, and by subverting discourses of *terra* and *aqua nullius* as well as a colonial crisis epistemology. Further, the poem's erasure technique and use of blank space contextualize the silence of extinct animals as a violent, structural process of literal and discursive silencing within the larger project of wastelanding that bears historically specific local and transnational dimensions. The (near) extinction of animals such as the Micronesian Kingfisher, native to Guåhan, and their forced displacement to zoos in the US, for instance, is linked to colonial voyages, ongoing militarization and habitat destruction as well as settler-environmentalist conservationism (Amin-Hong 3, 8; Kim 158-9, 172-3; Perez, *Navigating* 73-4). The poem's fragmentary spatial poetics can therefore be read in light of Heidi Amin-Hong's argument about "multispecies diaspora[s]" (9) as linking the (near) extinction of animals to the forced displacement and "militarized diaspora" of the CHamoru (Kim 170; see also Jansen 11-15). "Th S xth M ss Ext nct n" further positions such violence in the context of a "massive breach of kinship" (Whyte, "Against Crisis" 59): scholars have argued that colonialism/imperialism constitutes "an ecological form of domination" that deliberately severs relations among Indigenous peoples and more-than-human beings (Whyte, "Settler Colonialism" 137), constituting a "profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence" (Tuck and Yang 5; see also Armstrong; Davis and Todd; Hogan; Kimmerer; TallBear "Failed Settler Kinship"). The poem's form, its gaps and blank space, visualize such a violent disruption of CHamoru ecological relations, culture, language and ways of knowing that emerge in interdependence with more-than-human beings (Chabitnoy).[16]

As a companion poem, "We Aren't the Only Species" resists the fragmenting violence of such disrupted relations that is part of wastelanding by means of a different, complementary spatial strategy: the poem fills up the first half of the page with interspecies relations. It takes the form of one long, unfinished sentence, containing a catalog of ellipses that continues the title phrase "We Aren't the Only Species" with "who age who change who language who pain who play who pray who" in the following line (1). This list contains nouns and adjectives modified as verbs, such as "who language" and "who lonely," that highlight shared characteristics, abilities and activities among human and more-than-human beings. The poem emphatically positions more-than-human beings as sentient and agentic, and in so doing deconstructs an anthropocentric hierarchy of species relations

that is key to colonialism/imperialism as well as decenters humans, who are referenced only in the title's evocation of "we." Not only does this list emphasize interspecies coexistence but it performatively engages in forging interspecies relations, enacting a CHamoru poetics of "multispecies kinship" and sovereignty (Amin-Hong 2). As a relational form, this catalog also appeals to readers, "we," as having a shared responsibility for interspecies relations and for thinking through ecological entanglements. The poem ends with a blank half-page that spatially extends the openness of the catalog's final line, "who house on this our only" ("Only Species" 15). This gap is for the reader to fill, for instance with the term planet as gesturing to a planetary scale of interspecies relations, and thus to reflect on their own implications in both interspecies and reading relations.

In drawing attention to reading as a participatory and implicated as well as implicating process of meaning-making, the formal and relational affordances of both poems claim the reader as an allied witness to and participant in the destruction as well as creation of relations, both complicit in and called on to resist wastelanding processes. Indeed, as both poems reclaim blank space through complementary spatial strategies (performative erasure and the use of a catalog), they counter wastelanding discourses and also refuse extractive reading relations. As Liboiron points out, reading extractively is "a consumptive mode that uses texts like a resource rather than collaborating with them or being otherwise accountable to the ideas, the authors, the publishers, other readers" ("Exchanging" 95). Understood in relational terms, "reading in a Resource relation" fails to approach texts as "bodies of work, events, gifts, teachers, letters" (*Pollution* 35). Liboiron therefore proposes a "social experiment in reciprocal reading" ("Exchanging" 96) that "us[es] exchange as a method" in order to intervene in unidirectional knowledge transmission and shift towards ways in which reading "can produce other kinds of practices, other kinds of value, and other kinds of relationships" within alternative reading economies and regimes of value (92, 96). If "[w]riting and reading are relations" (*Pollution* 35) rooted in different worldviews as well as specific, often incommensurable, positionalities and accountabilities (31), then the text, poetic or otherwise, may function as a "platform for exchange" based on anticolonial, non-extractive reading practices and relations ("Exchanging" 92).

Perez's poems are "set up as [such] exchanges, rather than extractions" (Liboiron, "Exchanging" 105), and they demand of their readers to work, to "stay with the trouble" as Haraway would have it, and to find ways of reading relationally. In slowing down the reading process, both the erasure of vowel sounds and the catalog form invite the reader into such a participatory and potentially non-extractive reading process in which they interact with the gaps and blank space.

In “Th S xth M ss Ext nct n,” the erasure of vowel sounds resists and disrupts the reading process and asks of the reader to perform the work of filling in the gaps to create meaning. At the same time, this very process draws attention to fragmentation – both formal fragmentation and the fragmenting violence of ecological colonialism/imperialism and specifically wastelanding – that casts any attempt at creating coherence as dubious. Instead, filling in the gaps is an effort to “gather” these fragments under conditions of erasure and silencing, to borrow from Hsuan L. Hsu (294) and Amin-Hong (2), and to mourn those present absences signified by the missing vowels. As Abigail Chabitnoy (Koniag descendant) points out, while the reader is “not given the rules of deletions” (the erasure technique is inconsistent and not all vowels are erased), they are still “able to recall what has been lost” (n. pag.). In retaining a certain degree of legibility, the “Th S xth M ss Ext nct” is an exercise of remembering and mourning that attempts to balance the overwhelming sense of powerlessness in the face of such fragmenting violence with the agency it elicits in the reader filling in the blanks, even if such filling in remains necessarily incomplete.[17]

In “We Aren’t the Only Species” it is the presence, rather than the absence of language, and the catalog form that slow down the reading process and open up a potential space of reflection through such pacing. The lack of punctation also draws attention to breath, particularly when read aloud: the midway repetition of “who breathe who breathe who breathe” not only creates a pause in the poem’s list and thus a point of orientation (“Only Species” 7), but it anchors the poem in the act of reading that depends on breath. As such, the poem becomes an “exercise of shared breath” among readers and also, by extension, among species, functioning as “a poignant reminder of the breath, the air, we share with all species” (Swift qtd. in Wycoff). As Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi) highlights, breathing as an interdependent practice among species encapsulates Anishinaabe’s concepts of interrelatedness and reciprocity, of breathing and being breathed (344-345). Rooted in the Rarámuri concept of iwígara, Enrique Salmón (Rarámuri) also writes about the importance of breath as shared among human and more-than-human beings in their conceptualizing of a “kincentric ecology” (1328–1331). Through its focus on breath, “We Aren’t the Only Species” draws attention to reading as an embodied process of relating and creating meaning. In a self-reflective manner, the poem thereby situates the relational work of reading as a collaborative effort of entering into relation with the text and its multiple contexts. Correspondingly, the poem foregrounds the labor of making sense, building, repairing and upholding “good [reading] relations” (Liboiron*, Pollution* 7) as key to solidarity in and beyond Anthropocene wastelands.

In refusing legibility and unmediated accessibility by means of

different spatial strategies, and thereby also refusing extractive reading, the poems ask how one can, after all, read blank space, its silences and silencings. In both poems, it is the labor of staying with the fragments of meaning as well as the insecurity of blank space and its constitutive absences that speaks to the work of reading relationally in non-extractive ways. The two poems conceptualize reading the blanks as a participatory and implicating process, both in the sense of sitting with blank space that refuses intelligibility and of filling the gaps on the poems' own terms. In so doing, they formulate a situated reading practice that actively engages with and affirms Indigenous peoples' knowledge production, their sovereignty and their experiences of structural injustice. Perez's poems thus offer opportunities to reframe relations between the text and different as well as differently implicated readers, while meditating not only on the politics and ethics of reading relationally from and about wastel/Lands, but also on their own position as poems both complicit in and resisting wastelanding discourses.

Response and Responsibility

In closing, I return to notions of response and responsibility in reading relationally and the performativity thereof. Perez's poem "Chanting the Waters" explicitly negotiates the "uneasiness" of performing ecological solidarity in the (literary) wastel/Land and directs attention to the ethics and politics of such a performance by deploying yet another important spatial strategy: the use of gaps in a dialogic call-and-response structure. The opening line, "Say: Water is _____!", is repeated throughout the poem, activating and implicating the reader who is urged to respond. While the act of filling this gap remains relatively open to the reader's choice, the poem's dedication to the "*Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and water protectors around the world*" (emphasis original) suggests completing the phrase as "water is life," evoking the "Lakotayapi assertion 'Mni Wiconi': water is life or, more accurately, water is alive" (Estes and Dhillon 2-3). As "ocean-sky-rain-lake-river returns / to the Pacific and connects us / to our cousins at Standing Rock" ("Chanting" 87-90), water encapsulates trans-Indigenous solidarities in the global "war over gods and water and oil" (20). Furthermore, water has the capacity to bring allied readers into solidarity with the poem and Indigenous communities. As a tribute to Indigenous and allied fights for water justice that highlights Indigenous peoples' leadership, "Chanting the Waters" locates itself as a political space of sovereignty, protest, ceremony and solidarity in both a contemporary moment and a long, ongoing history of resistance to colonial/imperial violence. In so doing, the chant-poem also situates participatory reading as a political and ethical responsibility to respond: it positions the implicated reader as accountable to the

reading process and, thereby, as accountable to Indigenous nations, the #NoDAPL movement and larger anticolonial struggles for water justice.

As "Chanting the Waters" grounds itself in Indigenous sovereign relations to water, epistemologies and ontologies, it emphasizes that forms of relating to and reading water outside of the extractive frameworks of colonialism/imperialism and capitalism are necessary in order for the poem to function as a space of allied resistance and solidarity. At the same time, the poem remains acutely aware of such performative solidarity as "an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict" (Tuck and Yang 3). The poem negotiates this uneasiness, for instance, by employing the unfinished phrase "Water is _____!", rather than Mni Wiconi. It thereby refuses to open Mni Wiconi, and the particular ways of relating to water that it holds, up to appropriation. Such nuance is crucial to the poem's conceptualization of implicated reading as a form of respectful care-taking that rejects wastelanding discourses of water as a pollutable, ownable resource, and that affirms the sovereignty of both water and Indigenous peoples in anticolonial solidarity. Indeed, each repetition of the complex affirmative phrase "Water is _____!" offers the reader a space for reflecting on their specific positionalities, relations and implications in the poem and beyond. The poem thus enacts an understanding of Mni Wiconi as "catapulting us into a moment of critical, radical reflection about the colonial wounds and wounding in the spaces between calls to save planet Earth and the everyday sociopolitical realities facing Indigenous peoples" (Estes and Dhillon 3). By inviting such reflection, "Chanting the Waters" points to one possible way in which different readers may join in reclaiming and reconfiguring the wasteland as implicated participants and respondents, being called into anticolonial relations with water and Indigenous peoples.

Another key dimension of how "Chanting the Waters" negotiates the uneasiness of such ecological solidarity is through continually re-positioning the reader, complicating perpetrator and victim roles, as Michael Rothberg would have it. The poem employs a structure of juxtaposition that alternates between "them" and "us," formally embodying the frontlines of environmental injustice as well as strategically blurring the contours of these subject positions:

Say: "Water is ____!"
because they bring their bulldozers and drills and drones—
because we bring our feathers and lei and sage and shells
and canoes and hashtags and totems—
because they call us savage and primitive and riot—
because we bring our treaties
and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—
……

because we say stop! keep the oil in the ground— (ll. 49-60; emphasis original)

While this juxtaposition of conflicting narratives and subject positions performs the very violence perpetrated against the land and Indigenous peoples without resolving it, the poem also urges all readers to become part of the performative resistance of "we say stop! keep the oil in the ground" ("Chanting" 60), bracketed by the poem's dialogic call-and-response structure. "Chanting the Waters" further negotiates the space between "us" and "them" formally, captured by the dashes and the blank space of indentation, where subject positions might come to together, if uneasily so – both separated and connected by the dashes. In this sense, the poem functions as a "gathering space" that "invites readers to share the work of defining and inhabiting […] a space of political community based […] in participatory willingness to be counted as a stakeholder" (Nogues 28, 26). Rooted in shifting, fluid notions of "us" and "them," the poem suggests that dialogue and allied resistance, based on the incommensurabilities and responsibilities of uneasy solidarity, are not only vital but already take place, both on the grounds and performatively in the first-person poet-speaker's and the addressee's/reader's interaction.

As Anne Mai Yee Jansen comments, "[w]ith intellectual affinity comes the burden of compassion, the necessity of engagement" that moves from appreciation to action (22). She argues that Perez's formally experimental aesthetic engages and challenges readers intellectually and emotionally, and that his work "becomes an investment of sorts, forging an intellectual and empathetic bond between the dedicated reader and the drive for Chamorro sovereignty" (Jansen 4). Operating on these two levels, the poems from *Habitat Threshold* together conceptualize anticolonial forms of ecological solidarity in terms of a participatory, implicated and implicating reading process that is committed to caring for the literary wastel/Land. In addressing the reader as a participant and, crucially, respondent on the poems' own terms, the poems offer ways into allied, uneasy solidarity while centering Indigenous sovereignty and a CHamoru ecopoetics "grounded in an environmental vision of mutual care, co-belonging, and healing" (Perez, *Navigating* 42). Indeed, as collaborative productions of meaning between (poet-)speaker, reader/addressee, texts and contexts, all poems discussed here make certain demands on the reader to enter into non-extractive, care-taking reading relations by means of different spatial strategies, and hence pursue the project of reclaiming and refiguring the literary wastel/Land through reading as a process of "standing with" (TallBear "Standing with"). As the poems refuse extractive reading, they conceptualize reading as both resisting colonial relations to land, plastic, among species and with Indigenous peoples, and as entering into anticolonial relations that affirm Indigenous sovereign land relations in uneasy solidarity. In so

doing, the poems locate reading as a practice of solidarity closely connected to others and the performance thereof as one, but by no means the only, possible way into alternative relations. Indeed, if the poems' spatial strategies, in their performativity, are understood as inviting the reader into participatory, implicating reading relations, then their ethical and political significance lies precisely in the possibility of these ways of relating to travel beyond the page. As Perez emphasizes, poetry can "bring readers into not only solidarity, but action. It can be another form of activism" ("Diaspora").

Notes

1. I would like to thank Jennifer Leetsch, Rita Maricocchi, Katja Sarkowsky, Peri Sipahi and Nicole Waller for their invaluable feedback on early drafts as well as the reviewers for their productive input. Many thanks go to Craig Santos Perez for his generous readings and discussions during online events organized by the Universities of Augsburg, Muenster and Potsdam (RTG *minor cosmopolitanisms*).

2. I use both terms, Pacific and Oceania, with the latter gesturing to Epeli Hau'ofa's (Tongan and Fijian) suggested shift from framing the Pacific as "islands in a far sea" towards Oceania as a "sea of islands" (152).

3. As Perez points out, "[t]oday the territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are among the most militarized and contaminated places in the world" ("Chamorro" 13). He describes the tourist economy and militarism as "the two hands of settler colonialism in the Pacific that choke us" ("No Page" 4). In this sense, "the U.S. possession of Guåhan after 1898 was a *continuation* of colonialism and not a movement toward a postcolonial status" (*Navigating* 26; emphasis original). I therefore follow Jens Temmen and Nicole Waller in their notation of "colonialism/imperialism," which "acknowledges the different historical phases of US expansion and territorial management, but also insists on their connectedness" (30). See also Jodi Kim's conceptualization of "US militarist settler imperialism" (1-38, 158).

4. While Voyles discusses the history of environmental injustice pertaining to uranium mining on Navajo land, which centers settler-colonial representations of deserts as wastelands (ix, 8), her theoretical work offers important implications for analyzing context-specific forms of wastelanding violence in Oceania, which Aimee Bahng, for instance, details in terms of nuclearism. As site-specific "convergence[s] of discourse and space" (Voyles 10), including land

and water, wastelands are, after all, "only *incidentally* about deserts" and demand attention for the specific ways in which they are constituted (15, emphasis original).

5. I take this distinction marked by a lower case and capital 'l' from Max Liboiron (Métis) (*Pollution* 6-7).

6. The notation "wastel/Lands" attempts to hold the simultaneity of both colonial wastelands and Indigenous wasteLands, pointing to land relations overlapping in complex, often conflicting ways.

7. See Anne Mai Yee Jansen and Mandy Bloomfield for an overview of different poetic strategies in *from unincorporated territory*, including the use of intertexts, hypertexts, maps and citational references; multiple languages; and visual elements pertaining to layout, typography and alphanumerical symbols. Scholars have discussed Perez's experimental poetics not only as one of fragmentation but also of multiscalar interconnectivity, enmeshment and solidarity (Bloomfield), of "affinity" (Jansen), transpacific networks (He) and assembly (Amin-Hong; Pinnix).

8. My use of the term "implicated" is informed by Michael Rothberg's figure of the "implicated subject" in the context of Thom van Dooren's engagement with the "diverse ways in which humans – as individuals, as communities, and as a species – are implicated in the lives of disappearing others" and with how stories of extinction "implicate us all – to varying extents and in a range of ways – in this incredible period of loss" (5, 146). I am also influenced also by the "implicated reader" in Joseph Slaughter's work and Stuart Hall's notion of the implicated viewer.

9. While the addressee and reader are not synonymous, I understand them to be blurred and interconnected positions in Perez's poems. My usage of each term therefore implies the other, highlighted at certain points by the notation of reader/addressee.

10. I take inspiration from Kylie Crane pointing to these complexities in "Birds of the Plastic Pacific."

11. I follow the poem's use of plastic in the singular but want to note that this poses a problematic conflation of plastic's specific and diverse materialities. While "Age of Plastic" engages a sense of material aliveness and agency that positions plastic as deeply implicated in wider socio-political relations (speaking to the work of scholars such as Jane Bennett), others emphasize the importance of engaging with plastic's material specificities, given that different kinds

of plastic "influence bodies differently," "cause harm differently" and "cause different types of harm" (Liboiron, "Redefining" 5). Quoting Bruce Braun and Sarah Whatmore (xxix-xxx), Liboiron calls for nuanced attention both to "the *specificity* of matter […] as opposed to a generic analogy to 'life'" (5; emphasis original) and to the "cultural aspects of pollution as matter out of place" (Liboiron, "Redefining" 17). Clearly, the "struggle to represent the different agencies of different kinds of plastics" plays out in natural sciences as much as in poetry (5).

12. See Liboiron who argues that such theories are "bad relations" that strategically "allow[ ] some amount of pollution to occur" and claim "entitlement to Land to assimilate that pollution" (*Pollution* 5).

13. The poem's framing of plastic as a child also problematizes the figure of the child as the symbolic bearer of the future's hopes and burdens in Anthropocene discourses, positioning it as complexly entangled with waste and pollution. Whereas "[i]n most eco-literature, / children represent the vulnerable, hopeful future," the speaker of "New Year's Eve and Day in the Chthulucene" contends that "children in real life / represent the tantrum of the present. I think about thousands of her dirty / diapers that will take 450 years to decompose – outliving us all" (13-16).

14. Indeed, Elizabeth DeLoughrey "suggest[s] that the amnesia in postcolonial studies about the extent of U.S. imperialism is precisely because the Rim configures the Pacific as *aqua nullius* and its islands synonymous with isolation" (*Routes and Roots* 105-6; emphasis original).

15. This excerpt is part of the section "/ tulu / tres / sans / three," and part of the poem "*from* sourcings" that reoccurs in every section of the collection, which is why I give the page number here.

16. Hence, I read the poem's spatial poetics as implicitly criticizing a particular ecocritical discourse represented by the reference to Deming. In contrast to other poems in *Habitat Threshold* that position quotations side by side and thus formally in conversation with, rather than below the poems, "Th S xth M ss Ext nct n"'s mise-en-page does not frame the partially erased quotation from Deming's *Zoologies* as another such companion piece.

17. Thank you to the students in Linda Heß's 2022 "Waste/Land Fiction" class at the University of Augsburg, who in our discussion of Perez's poems pointed out the discomfort and exhaustion but also the agency of committing to this reading practice.

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