More than Lost Cargo:

Fragmentation in Craig Santos Perez's *from UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY* series

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Abstract

Contemporary socially engaged poets have been for over a decade challenging the notion that either experimental form is detrimental to a poem's political message or that a transparent agenda forecloses its chances of being considered high art. The work of Chamorro poet Craig Santos Perez rebuts this dated conception of the ties between avantgarde art and social commitment. With his ongoing epic *from UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY*, Santos Perez recovers the land, culture, and language of his native Guam from the hands of the islands' historical colonizers, gathering the fragments he founds in the local oral history, court cases, songs, myths, and more. If Michael Dowdy is right when he claims that "if the political content of a poem is obscured or inaccessible, it will likely fail as a political figure of voice," there must be something in Santos Perez's poems that clarifies and makes that content accessible. Said thing is found in the numerous paratextual elements that feature in the series, most notably in the epigraphs. Furthermore, the fragments collected by Santos Perez can be regarded as the product of Guam's colonial history which the poet repurposes to create a new Chamorro identity.

Keywords

Chamorro Poetry; Craig Santos Perez; Experimental Poetry; Fragmentation; Socially Engaged Poetry.

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"On some maps, Guam doesn't exist" (*[hacha]* 7). With this opening statement, Craig Santos Perez's multi-book poetic project *from* UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY soon introduces the reader to the uncharted philosophical terrains the collection explores. While many scholars have addressed the matter of *where* Guam is, the other question the books in the series unconsciously but tirelessly ask revolves around *what* Guam[1] is. Thus, Santos Perez's oeuvre presents an aesthetic-ontological challenge where the work's main experimental feature, estrangement-producing fragmentation, requires at the same time the existence of some meaningful substance that glues the pieces together in order to effectively transmit its unequivocal political goal. Thus, while exploring the limits of fragmentation in socially engaged poetry, I will first suggest that all paratextual elements in the series are integral parts of the poems whose purpose is to help decipher their meaning. Furthermore, I will show via Homi K. Bhabha's notions of mimicry how Santos Perez's fragmented work helps to create a unique Chamorro identity that organically grows from Guam's multiple hybridizing encounters with its historical colonizers.

With the poems in the *from* UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY series, Santos Perez's goal is to "provide a strategic position for 'Guam' to emerge from imperial 'redúccion(s)' into further uprising of meanings" (*[hacha]* 11). These meanings arise from the fragments of Guam's colonial history, and this scattered nature is reflected in the form and the content of the series.[2] All five books and each poem in them are preceded by the obsessive repetition of the preposition "from," which for Santos Perez "indicates a particular time or place as a starting point; *from* refers to a specific location as the first of two limits; *from* imagines a source, an agent, or an instrument; *from* marks separation, removal, or exclusion; *from* differentiates borders" (*[hacha]* 11). Thus, the sense of incompleteness is balanced by the unending possibility of continuation.[3] The poems in the *from* series not only remain forever open, but some fragments return incessantly, sometimes intact, other times eroded by the sun, sea salt, or toxic spills.[4] Every poem in the series, then, can be seen as a porthole to an immense ocean that keeps moving around the reader, as the reader herself cannot remain still.

The main coordinates to navigate the series are already present in *[hacha]*. Its long preface is preceded by two epigraphs: first, an excerpt from Article IV of the U.S. Constitution stating Congress's control on the national territory, followed by an initially puzzling passage from the New Testament, namely, John, 6: 12-13, where Jesus commands his apostles to gather the leftovers of a communal feast. This passage not only illustrates how ingrained and lasting the influence of Catholicism in the islands is, but it also gives an early clue as to what the main feature of the series will be: a dialectics of unity and fragmentation that represents the status of both the unincorporated

territory of Guam and the poems themselves. As Stefanie Mueller explains, the annexation of Guam and Puerto Rico was played on the notion of "incorporation" as a key metaphor in the *Insular Cases*, a series of lawsuits that set the relationship between the US and the newly acquired territories after the Spanish-American war. In particular, the ruling of *Downes v. Bidwell* in 1901 "introduced a new twilight status to territories in which statehood was no longer a prospect and which effectively condemned the territories to dependence on Federal government" (98). That is, Guam became property of the US, but not part of it. Unlike the rulings that take for granted a notion of wholeness and unity which is based on racist and colonialist grounds, *from* UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY, claims Mueller, challenges the concepts of territory, nation, and the body politic.

The ideas of Epeli Hau'ofa, quoted as an epigraph in *[guma']*, are of great importance in this respect. In "Our Sea of Islands," the Tongan scholar and activist challenges the imperialist conception of the Pacific Islands as small, remote, and resourceless pieces of land that cannot afford to lose their subjugate position. Instead, he points to the unofficial existing relations, "making nonsense of all national and economic boundaries, borders" (154), between the inhabitants of Polynesia and Micronesia. The presence of a fragment of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier*, where the Martinican poet claims that "reason will not prevent him from 'casting' the 'deformed islands' of the Caribbean into coherence, into one common 'form'" (Edwards 43), further helps outline Santos Perez's postcolonial theoretical grounds. The humanist strand of thought that the former professed contrasts with the position held by some postcolonial thinkers who, focusing too much on "the critique of the sovereign subject" and the "deconstruction of Western metaphysics," risk brushing aside an "efficacy of collective political action" (Morton 172) which, for Perez, as for many contemporary scholar-poet-activists, is essential. Producing what Mueller calls an "archipelagic aesthetic" that "combines the forms of network and bounded whole" (109), Santos Perez replaces Charles Olson's idea of the poetic field understood as open *land* for the image of the *ocean* as total openness. In his poetics, Santos Perez describes "the blank page as an excerpt of the ocean," a book as "an island with a unique linguistic geography and ecology, as well as a unique poetic landscape and seascape" (330-31), and a collection of books as an archipelago. The quote by Muriel Rukeyser that appears as an epigraph for the last section of *[saina]*, "There is no *out there*. / All is open. / Open water. Open I." (qtd. in Santos Perez, *[gumà]* 113), confirms a link between the self, the ocean, and the page that will run throughout the whole series.

Edward Soja has commented on the field overlapping between geography and literary studies, claiming that a split exists that divides

one segment which "thrives on spatial metaphors like mapping, location, cartography, and landscape" from another that "tends to sublimate its overtly spatial emphasis, eschews metaphorical flair, and strives for solid materialist exposition of real politics and oppression" (x). Santos Perez's *from* series combines both aspects and has evinced both responses in scholars. Of particular interest is Huan He's exploration of the connection between Hau'ofa's and Santos Perez's ideas in the literary field. He begins his analysis from an anecdote told in the poem titled "ginen (sub)aerial roots [13° 28' 0" N / 144° 46" 59" E]," which appears in the third book of the collection, *[guma']*. There, Helen Perez, Chamorro author and mother of Craig Santos Perez, narrates how as a child she had been unable to locate Guam on a map during a school lesson. Distraught, she eventually asked her teacher to please "help her find Guam on the map" (17). In the anecdote, He sees what may be taken as a failure by the child as a capital moment in the "disintegration of dominant mapping logics" (186); in the *from* series, he finds both an answer to the girl's plea and the creation and development of new literary and solidary cartographies.

To do this, He highlights "how fragmentation is also a relational and networked aesthetic" (187). He draws on Yến Lê Espiritu's notion of "critical juxtaposing," that is, "a productive mode of alternate historiography" (197) that generates unusual relations through formal similarities, to create new literary migration routes. As an example, He proposes Santos Perez's "invocation" of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* as "a decolonial impulse of solidarity" (197). Cha's work is an essential text both in Asian American literature and in experimental poetry. Composed of fragments of letters, course books, translations, pictures, it deals with the invasion of Korea by the Japanese. According to Juliana Spahr, in *Dictee* Cha "decolonizes reading and challenges dominant patterns of thinking" (122). This "refusal of discursive intelligibility," claims He, "becomes the abstract, textual ground in which another text can engage its content and enter into visibility" (199). This act of "relational generosity" is what would permit the fragments in *Dictee* to travel through oceans of space and time into Santos Perez's poems. Indeed, the influence of Cha's work on Santos Perez's is as incalculable as it is overt. Santos Perez himself explained in "Reading Across" that he was inspired by the "creative sophistication of the field [of Asian American Literature]" when he could not find courses on the literature of the Pacific Islands. More specifically, Santos Perez declares he "saw [himself] in Cha's words" ("Reading"), in reference to the verses he would later cite as an epigraph in the first part of *[hacha]*:

> From another epic another history. From the missing narrative.
> From the multitude of narratives. Missing. From the chronicles.

> For another telling another recitation.
> Our destination is fixed on the perpetual motion of search.
> Fixed in its perpetual exile. (qtd. in Santos Perez, *[hacha]* 13)

Thus, the networks He traces between *Dictee* and *from* UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY are based on both "formal and historical resonances" (10). However, the relating fragments can fulfil a more didactic role when conceived as parts of the new poem proper.

While He supports the meaningful materiality of the poem, that is, the fragment's capacity to remap through visual signifiers, he acknowledges that "fragmentary poetics disorient the reader" (190). Following Kandice Chuh, he nonetheless celebrates this estrangement, claiming that "confining a text to what it is 'about' tames aesthetic experimentation by minority writers in order to map it onto an already recognizable history or geography" (192). Furthermore, He claims that "through interpretation, aesthetic complexity is enclosed, bounded, and confined by its regional context" (192). Although this is mostly true when there are markers that steer the words towards a one-way street of meaning, this happens to be the case with Santos Perez's poems. All the books in the collection share a common feature in contemporary socially engaged poetry, i.e., the presence of more or less explicit didactic elements such as glossaries or explanatory notes and introductions, prefaces, endnotes, and informative multimedia material. These elements that secure the message and assist the transmission of meaning in the *from* series are too numerous to be ignored.

Gérard Genette's notion of "paratext" might help to organize the different fragments that compose the collections. Paratextual elements are all those instances beyond the main text, the "more or less long sequence of verbal statements that are more or less endowed with significance" (Genette 1), that work as mediators between it and the readers. These elements exist both within (peritext) and outside (epitext) the text in the form of titles, subtitles, intertitles, dedications, forewords, prefaces, epigraphs, epilogues, notes, and so forth. According to Genette and Marie Maclean, the study of a paratextual element depends on certain features that "describe its spatial, temporal, substantial, pragmatic, and functional characteristics" (263). Put differently, its analysis must respond to the questions of where, when, how, from whom to whom, and what the element is good for.

In Santos Perez's *from* UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY, paratextual elements abound. *[lukao]* features acknowledgements and explanatory notes that can be accessed through a QR code. The last part of "*from* lisiensan ga'lago," found in *[hacha]*, lists three website addresses after the words "please visit" (86). Temporally, the paratexts in the series function in all

directions. For example, *[hacha]* includes an endnote where an anecdote told in "*from* descending plumeria" is updated, permitting the edition of the poem itself by the reader. The second and third books in the collection offer explanatory comment sections at the end of the book that perfectly exemplify the paratextual fluidity found in the series. While in *[saina]* the notes appear in a section titled "acknowledgments," in *[guma']* they are part of one called "*from* sourcings," which is, in fact, a poem featuring in *[saina]*.

While most paratexts "will be themselves of a textual, or at least a verbal, order" (Genette 265), the *from* series is filled with iconic, material, and factual paratextual elements. The cover of all five books published by Omnidawn play with the contrast of traditional Chamorro culture and color pictures of American military battleships. Only *[lukao]* offers a different image: on top, a black and white picture of fishermen catching fish with *talayas*, the fishing net Santos Perez's grandfather teaches the poet how to use in the poem by the same name; below, a toddler, Santos Perez's daughter in an aquarium in Hawai'i, looking at a coral reef.[5] The special relation with maps is not just figurative or metaphorical. In *[hacha]* Santos Perez includes up to eight different ones, from nautical charts of the Spanish galleon trade routes in the Pacific to maps showing the main military bases or one depicting the impact of the brown tree snake, an invasive species I will discuss later. The complete fusion of literature and cartography occurs in what Santos Perez calls poemaps. Found in *[lukao]*, these visual poems denounce the pernicious effects of military bases on marine wildlife, like the existence of multiple toxic waste dumpsites on the island (see Figure 1).

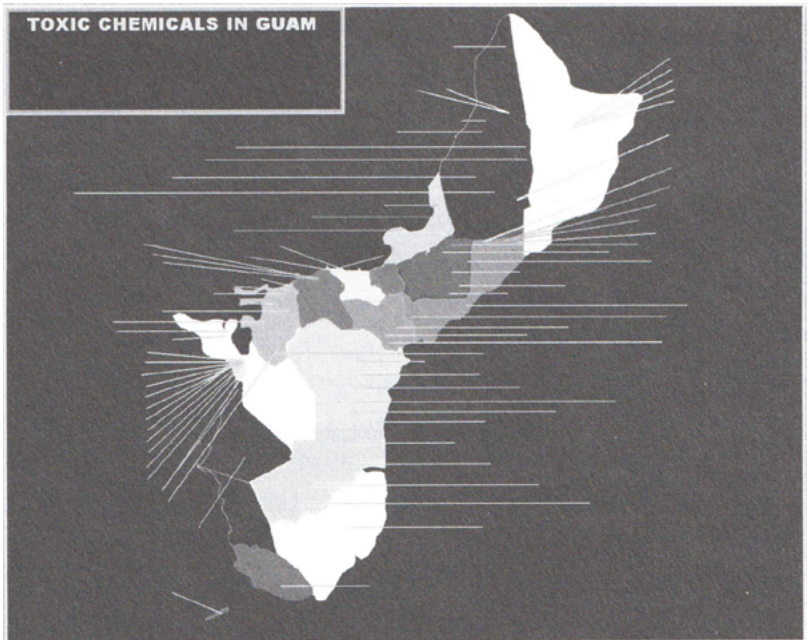


Figure 1: "Poeamap based on 'Toxic chemicals of Guam More than 100 Dumpsites with T. Chemicals, in a 30x8 Mile Islands (Source: US GRAL. Accounting Office; USDoD/FUDs & the US Agency Toxic Substances, Dis.registry), prepared by Luis Szyfres, MD, MPH—University of Guam" (41)

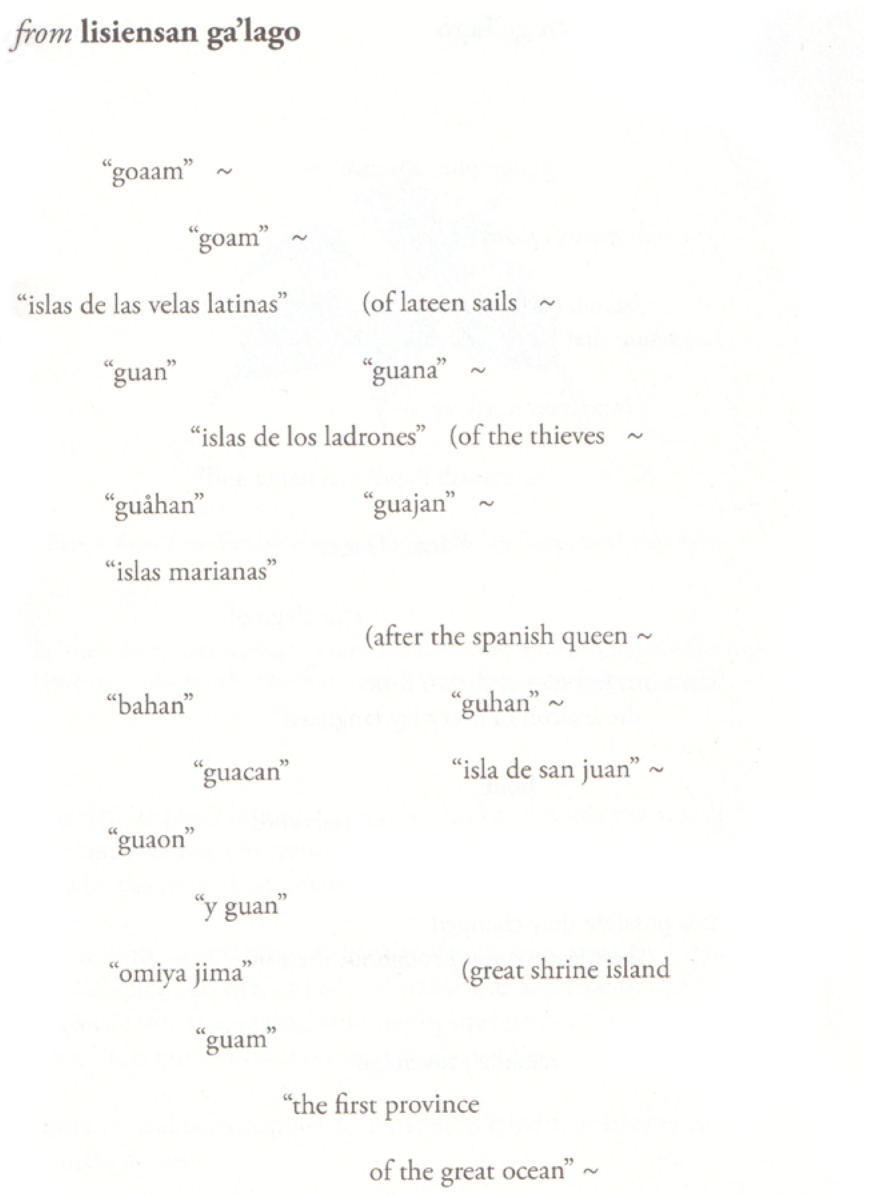
The more interesting elements, however, are those related to the pragmatic and functional status of the fragments. While the addresser of the paratextual message need not be the author, I am here interested mainly in the "authorial" paratext and in its public addressing. Borrowing from the philosophy of language, Genette speaks of the "illocutionary force" of the paratext's message: it can either transmit pure information or it may convey the author's intention, decision, advice, interpretation, and so on. As Genette and Maclean note, the pragmatic aspect of the paratext is intimately related to its function. However, while for him the paratextual element "is a fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, discourse devoted to the service of something else which constitutes its right of existence, namely the text" (269), I claim that authorial paratexts in the *from* series are essential parts of the poems in their own right.

While for Genette it is not clear whether these elements are always part of the text, they haunt its limits and sometimes expand them, all this in order to "make it present," that is, "to ensure the text's presence in the world" (1). For sure, this is reminiscent of Santos Perez's own words when he claims that his poetry "exists as continuous presence against continuous erasure" ("Poetics"). Hence, while the borrowed verses from Claude McKay, Aimé Césaire, or Cecilia Vicuña may well trace unexpected connections thanks to the "relational generosity" of the fragment, as He suggests, once they are quoted, they are not literary driftwood anymore but a constitutive part of the new poem. As a matter of fact, all epigraphs include the particle "*from*," thus actually binding them to the series on both a textual and an ontological level. Hence, against Santos Perez's own will and following Spahr's contention that we "need to question the poststructuralist assumption that works are constructed by readers, for this may be just another form of imperialism" (127), I claim that the fragments in Santos Perez's work act as special signifying elements that can be in turn scrutinized to help the poems ultimately get their political goal across.[6] These mosaics of fragmented verses together with the integrated paratextual elements that constitute the *from* UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY project transcend aesthetic ambitions. As Paul Lai points out, the "work-in-progress quality of Santos Perez's poetry mirrors the status of Guam as a place still in the midst of transformations and contestations, without a final act towards which a teleological narrative unfolds" (8). Those "transformations and contestations" are part of the decolonizing process of nations or, in this case, territories.

Commenting on the deconstruction of imperialist cartography, Nicholas Dunlop notes "a tendency in postcolonial writing to resist the enclosed, static and hierarchized perspective of the colonial agency and instead look towards the transformational possibilities of hybridity" (28). The notion is still

tied to ideas of difference and dominance, where the colonized are expected to learn the ways of the colonizer and behave like them, forever knowing that this is only a façade, a charade.[7] However, as Ania Loomba acknowledges, this need not necessarily be the case. In fact, oftentimes, anticolonial movements appropriated "ideas and vocabularies to challenge colonial rule and hybridised what they borrowed [...] even using it to assert cultural alterity or insist on an unbridgeable difference between coloniser and colonised" (172). Indeed, confronting centuries of oppression, Santos Perez devises an ironic strategy best captured by Bhabha's notion of mimicry: the result of the colonizer's "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 122). This "not quite" is what Bhabha identifies with the excess that the colonized can repurpose subversively when it turns mimesis into mockery. In a way, by repeating historical wrongs the poet allows for the possibility of their transformation. Thus, in his poems, he unapologetically contaminates the Chamorro language, history and culture with the spoils of Guam's colonizers through history to move towards the territory's next form.

The most immediate and common effect of these subsequent colonizations in the poems can be found in language. *from* UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY is written mostly in English—the language Santos Perez claims "controls" him (*[hacha]* 11)—but is filled with Chamorro words that "remain insular, struggling to emerge" (12). Furthermore, Spanish and Japanese feature as well so as to make felt their role in the colonization of Guam. This soon becomes obvious in the first poem in the series proper, "*from* **lisiensan ga'lago**[8]" (Figure 2), where a list of the many names Guahan has received throughout its colonial history form the outline of the islands that conform the territory in calligram fashion, from Miguel de Legazpi's first transcription of the territory as "Goaam" to the official name given by the American government in 1908, "Guam."[9]



from **lisiensan ga'lago**

"goaam" ~

"goam" ~

"islas de las velas latinas" (of lateen sails ~

"guan" "guana" ~

"islas de los ladrones" (of the thieves ~

"guâhan" "guajan" ~

"islas marianas"

(after the spanish queen ~

"bahan" "guhan" ~

"guacan" "isla de san juan" ~

"guaon"

"y guan"

"omiya jima" (great shrine island

"guam"

"the first province

of the great ocean" ~

Figure 2. "***from*** lisiensan ga 'lago" (***[hacha]*** 15)

Santos Perez is well aware of the power of naming: in "*from* preterrain," it is said that "names are preparatory / name everything" (*[saina]* 18). The poem unfolds as a series of questions and answers, wonderings and doubts about language and identity played out in a dialogue reminiscent of the "tsamorita"—an "extemporaneous poetic song in dialogue form" (Santos Perez, "poetic territories" 262)—which can be found in the italicized verses that are preceded or followed by the verb "to say." What begins as the hopeful search for an origin in the "saina," the ancestors—where "I want to say" is followed by "*belief is almost flesh*" (*[saina]* 36)—soon becomes hesitancy, as the poetic voice later asks "I don't know if I can say *our language / will survive here*" (36). Despite the return of the will—"I want to say *we'll learn how to swim here*" (46)—the realization of the inevitable consequences of hybridization is

acknowledged when the poetic voice ventures that "maybe [we] / will find something else entirely" (ibid), harking back to Bhabha's contention that the "transformational value of the third space lies in the rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One [...] nor the Other [...] but *something else* besides" (41).

At various moments, Santos Perez reminds us that, as of 2010, the official name of the territory has been changed to Guahan, meaning "we have." What may be considered a victory, Santos Perez scornfully questions in "*from* ***the legends of juan malo*** *(a malologue)*," where he deadpan considers what Guahan actually has:

> deep water for the "U.S. [...] to home port 60% of the Pacific fleet [...] a last place ranking in annual per capita medical spending on Chamorro veterans [...] resources for the taking [...] tourism 2020 vision when setting forth a plan for the future [...] to change our name after Mariah Carey appeared on American talk shows with a dog she got in Mexico and named "Guam" ... (27)

In the last line, Santos Perez starkly states what Guam's ultimately possesses: "serious identity issues because our original meaning has been translated as 'lost'" (28).[10] In this quest for a self, however, Guam seems to be better served by a series of sarcastic answers to the implicit question of what it is before the inevitable fact of its numerous invasions.

In "***from/ginen*** all with ocean views," found in *[saina]*, Santos Perez offers a crude and honest report of Guam's introspection. This poem is divided into ten parts, and all follow the same structure: on top of the page, a hybrid of lune—the "american haiku" (*[saina]* 131)—and *carmina figurata*[11] form the shape of an island. The fragment-poem is composed of excerpted sentences extracted from leisurely travel brochures. After a volta[12] of sorts, Santos Perez constructs a second collage, this one in prose, from different articles selected from Guam's main online news hub. The objective is clear, and the result is as simple as it is effective: the juxtaposition of the first part of the poems that describes with hackneyed language the paradisiacal wonders of the island with the "re-mix of language" (131) generates a "discursive dissonance that exposes the pastoral rhetoric of travel magazines as an ideological screen masking Guam's exploitation by the US military and (primarily) East Asian tourists" (Hsu 298). The prose collage is always preceded by "**Guahan is**," thus presenting Guam as numerous illegal dumpsites, the destination of sketchy touristic schemes that bring Korean pregnant women to give birth on the island to receive US citizenship, polluted waters, soils and skies, US air military playground, endangered flora and fauna, among other things. The last line in

"*ginen* all with ocean views," part ten, reads "**"guåhan is**" followed by the open space of the blank page.

This scarred reflection that the mirror offers finds in turn the defiant face of mockery. In the earlier mentioned "*from* the legends of juan malo (a malologue)," Santos Perez adopts the persona of the legendary mischievous Chamorro who gives the poem its title.[13] Trickster-like, Juan Malo typically outwitted the Spanish colonizers and, following his lead, Santos Perez cheekily has the rogue aborigine's birthday coincide with the controversial "Liberation Day," which commemorates the expulsion of the Japanese invaders in 1944, only to be followed by the second America invasion. The Juan Malo poems or "malologues" are weaved with the same type of thread as "*from* all with ocean views" from *[saina]* in that its first part picks up from where the previous one left off. To fill up the blank space left yearning, the poem offers a litany of both concerning and ludicrous predicates: Guam is

> "Where America's Day Begins" … Guam is a US citizen ever since the 1950 Organic Act … Guam is an acronym for "Give Us American Military" … Guam is mini Hawai'i. Guam is strategically invisible … Guam is frequent flyer miles. Guam is endangered … Guam is no longer "Guam." (13)

The final lines of the last part of the poem in *[guma']* offer a perfect example of Bhabha's notion of mimicry. After a diatribe about sausages, the poetic voice sentences: "I am not ashamed because somewhere on the Western coast of the United States, a shirtless Chamorro suffering from severe case of diaspora is kicking back with his Budweiser and a Vienna sausage saying, 'Ah, this tastes just like home!'" (*[gumà]* 67). Once Malo has seen through the cracks of the colonizer's culture, subversion is in order.

Although the influence of the Spanish colonization of Guam[14] is still noticeable in the language, the architecture, clothes, habits, and customs of Chamorros, perhaps the most salient aspect is the religious fervor they share with other Pacific colonies like the Philippines. As Santos Perez puts it, "the Spanish brought their god and bible, suppressed the story / of fu'na and puntan, and forbade the procession / to laso fu'a in humatak bay" (*[hacha]* 34). While religion is present throughout the collection—the repetition of sailing chants in *[saina]* or the pervasive *hanom* (water) read like mantras—, the poet's grandmother is the best incarnation of the ambiguous consequences of the Spanish invasion. In "*from* aerial roots," she does not recognize Chamorro words—namely, "hacha." The poem Santos Perez dedicates to her in *[saina]* and *[lukao]*, "*from* organic acts," mixes personal anecdotes with the history of Guam, official documents, and local mythology. In the third book, the poet retells the foundational tale his grandmother had shared with him

many times where a giant fish that stalked the islands was captured by the Virgin Mary with just a hair from her head. In Santos Perez's newer version, it is the Chamorro people who save themselves. This retelling of stories is not just coincidental. The last two parts of "*from* tidelands" that feature in *[saina]* ask the questions of who tells and who listens to them. Santos Perez's suggestion that "by listening to the decolonial voices of Indigenous poets, we can remember that the ultimate destiny of any territorialized space can be rewritten and reimagined" ("Guam," 118) is only valid as long as Bhabha's third space is understood correctly, that is, as constituting "the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity" (Bhabha 55), which permits those rewritings.

The poem that better exemplifies this malleability is "*from* **achiote**," included in *[hacha]*. The piece, which combines the poet's memories of collecting and manipulating the plant that gives title to the poem with his grandmother, stands as the only one where culture clash appears in its more felicitous aspect. However, it is also contrasted with what may be seen as the exchange that transformed the territory forever: the arrival of Father Luís de San Vitores, a Spanish priest greatly responsible for the colonization of Guam, with a group of missionaries on the island in 1551. "*from* **achiote**" is, indeed, consistently mentioned by scholars as an example of transpacific solidarity. What is usually left unsaid, though, is that the plant, which is typically described as having multiple benefits, was brought to the islands at some point by Spanish colonizers and is, in fact, an invasive species.[15] Thus, the insistence and zeal with which Santos Perez's grandmother prays the rosary throughout the series impede, if not the condemnation of the church's atrocities, the denial of the respite that religion offers her. In the poem, the verse "*bula hao* grasia" (full of grace) is constantly repeated. The recipient of the praise is not Virgin Mary but the poet's grandmother, of course. This ambivalence, this doubt, so pertinent when discussing the religious sentiment, can be explained again through one of *[hacha]*'s epigraphs, an excerpt from Federico García Lorca's 1930 essay "Juego y teoría del duende."

In the fragment chosen by Santos Perez, Lorca presents the idea of the bullfighter and the bull as two worlds coming together, which the Chamorro poet understands as a form of "violent transculturation" ("has duende"), suggesting a connection of Lorca's "duende" with Oswald de Andrade's *Anthropophagy Manifesto*. A milestone of Brazilian modernist literature, Andrade's text argues that the image of the cannibal fits the national character as eaters of other cultures. Fragmentary and experimental itself, Santos Perez includes a quote from it in *[hacha]*, too. "Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes," is a translation of Portuguese's "rotear,"

which means not only route, but also a traveler's log. As Leslie Bary suggests, this might point to "a rediscovery of America" (46) which matches Santos Perez's own goal of "re-territorializing Guam by way of the page" (*[hacha]* 12). "*from* achiote," then, plays with the changing meaning of words, objects, and events. From the conception of Padre Vitores as a saint to his revision as the main instigator of the colonization of Guam; from Vitores murderer's name, Mata'pang, originally meaning "brave" to becoming "mischievous" or "uncivil" after the arrival of the Spanish invaders. The fact that Santos Perez cites Lorca, a Spaniard, is significant in itself. In the end, the upshot of there being no essentialities is that the tables, or better the tides, can be turned.

The four-part poem from *[hacha]* titled "*from* ta(la)ya" is a perfect example of this dynamic. The piece is made up from various episodes from the biography of the author's grandfather, interweaved with Santos Perez's personal memories of learning how to prepare and cast fishing nets with him, facts about the colonial history of Guam—from Magellan's cry "'land!'" to the Japanese air raids destroying small villages—and the gradual disappearance of the *sakman*, the traditional Chamorro vessel. Above all, this poem presents one of the difficult decisions the defeated must face when they are commanded the Benjaminian task to retell history: either to reject or to absorb the trace of the oppressor. In the poem, Santos Perez's grandfather recalls that during his schoolboy years, monitors would address students in Chamorro only to punish them if they failed to answer in English. After the Japanese occupation, he spent two years in labor camps, forced to build "machine gun encampments" for the invader. An army man himself, he ended up working for the National Park Service War Memorial. The final lines of the poem, a transcription of Santos Perez's grandfather's speech, poetically express this contradictory situation: "he said 'my job was to preserve things / that I wasn't willing to build'" (85).

Significantly, "*ginen* ta(la)ya"—the continuation of the poem in *[gumà]*—is preceded by a long fragment by Ezra Pound where the poet, at his most provocateur, suggests surrendering the territories of Guam to the Japanese in exchange for "one set of color and sound films of the 300 best Noh dramas" (qtd. in *[gumà]* 21). Needless to say, Santos Perez cites this in reprobation. After all, as Michael Lujan Bevacqua has mentioned, the fragment is indeed "bewildering and insulting" (85). Yet if we are to judge by the rest of the derogatory or unpleasant facts about Guam that the poet sarcastically absorbs, there is in the reproduction of them and of Pound's comment the empowerment of someone who does not wish away the dirty parts of the self. Francisco Delgado is of a similar opinion when he claims that the inhabitants of Santos Perez's Guam do not grieve but take in "elements of colonial rule into their own sense of individual and collective agencies" (9). Examples of

this acceptance of and complicity with the (neo)colonial agents are numerous in Santos Perez's poetry. In the third part of the Juan Malo poems found in *[lukao]*, the poet describes how Liberation Day is one of the most popular attractions for tourists who, ironically, are mostly Japanese. In the fourth part of "*from* sourcings," found in *[saina]*, there is a chronology that covers Pan-am's construction of a hotel in 1936 to a government report announcing the arrival of over 1.1 million visitors in 2008, something Santos Perez somewhere else calls the "pimping" of Guam. Grinning Malo's grin, the poet's own honest proposal is to accept Japanese visitors' money as compensation.

The most important influence in the territory today, the USA's interest in Guam was unremarkable until after WWII. "*from* ta(la)ya" narrates the minimum effort put in safeguarding a territory of which Rear Admiral Richard Kelly said was not "really defendable no matter how many troops and fortifications you put there" (qtd. in *[hacha]*, 75). On December 8th, 1941, when the Japanese army reached the islands, Guam's defense counted fewer than 600 army personnel and insufficient weapons. After stating that in 1944 "the US military *invaded* Guahan" (*[lukao]* 34; my emphasis), Santos Perez lists all the leisurely activities like parades and carnival games that Chamorros engage in "to express [our] loyalty and gratitude to the US" (34). "They say," Juan Malo reappears to conclude in "*ginen* ta(la)ya" "that [we] enlist in the military at such high rates to pay the debt of liberation" (34). Incidentally, *tålåya* is the Chamorro word for "net"; but *taya* alone means "nothing." Lai has suggested that *ta* can also be seen as the adjective "our," and *la* as a particle of *lå'lå'*, which means "vivacious" or "full of life."[16] The result of this is ta(la)ya, which can be read as 'our nets that catch nothing lively.' The cruel obverse is that Guam, in fact, represents the (unincorporated) territory of the US where the military has most profitably cast its recruitment nets since the Korea war and until today.

A direct answer to Robert Tenorio Torres, who wrote that there are no "known migration legends in Chamorro lore" (qtd. in *[gumà]* 17), throughout the four-part poem titled "*ginen* (sub)aerial roots," Santos Perez mixes the description of the '*latte*'–the traditional Chamorro house—with personal anecdotes and information about military-related migration patterns in Guam. The nefarious consequences of the presence of the army on the islands are further explored in "*from* the micronesian kingfisher *[i sihek]*" and "*ginen* island of no bird song," whose first part is preceded by an epigraph referencing Rachel Carson's classic *Silent Spring*. There, the poet builds an analogy between the *sihek*, one of the few autochthonous birds that managed to survive the invasion of the brown tree snake,[17] although paradoxically owing to the shelter offered by different zoos in continental USA, and the Chamorro people. Santos Perez cleverly intersperses the pieces dedicated to

the army's recruiting schemes with fragments from the *sihek* poems related to the making of cages, inciting "the reader to consider how a cage might take the form of labor, [or] citizenship" (Jansen 14), thus underscoring how the Chamorro find themselves in a similar situation to that of the *sihek*, having to choose between staying and facing extinction or leaving under the occupants' rules.

For those staying, Collier Nogues fleshes out the consequences of the invasive infrastructure of the military buildup of 2008,[18] "ranging from temporary construction housing and support facilities to more permanent expansion of ports, airstrips, service-member and family housing, schools and exchange and commissary buildings" (22). Among the many disruptions, the scholar lists the building of a firing range and a wharf for "nuclear-powered aircraft carriers" in Apra Harbor. Indeed, the ecological consequences of the presence of the army on the islands are manifold. In the poem entitled "*from* understory," Santos Perez mixes parenting scenes with the disastrous consequences of human spoilage of the Pacific Ocean. His daughter's first contact with water, a capital moment in an islander's life, coincides with the 2014 RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific Exercise). Warning about the "relationship between global climate change and the US military" (21), Elizabeth Deloughrey explains how war games destroy the coral reefs, disorient sea animals, and pollute the waters. Mentioning how in the mid-50s "rain clouds baptize guam / in strontium-90 fallout" (*[lukao]* 61), referencing the atomic testing in the Pacific that "has caused intergenerational harm [...] where the lasting effects of radiation beyond cancer extend to further generations" (Park 6), the poet has anguishing thoughts about "what downwind toxins" and "what wars of light" his child will breathe and see. In the face of ruin, the poet wishes his "daughter was derived / from oil so that she will survive / our wasteful hands" (*[lukao]* 13). However, his anxious worries might find some solace.

In 2008, Santos Perez took part in a group of Chamorros who traveled to New York to appeal to the decolonization committee. The first part in the second section of the poem, titled "***from*** tidelands," found in *[saina]*, revolves around this experience and the idea of never being heard. Each section's title has a footnote where Santos Perez graphically represents Spivak's conclusion that the subaltern cannot speak: his speech before the UN appears transcribed and crossed out. And still, while the buildup was not stopped, one of the environmental intrusions, the setup of the firing range in Ritidian, has been halted thanks to Chamorro activism. That very same year, a reconstructed *sakman* sailed the seas. In 2012, the Traditions Affirming Seafaring Ancestry (TASA) built a canoe house to facilitate newer *sakman* routes. In 2016, Barack Obama made the "Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act" a law, and compensations for victims began in 2019. All these achievements confirm

Jansen's contention that, in Guam, "the connections between environmental and colonial damage are evolving from a narrative of loss toward one of resilience and resurrection" (14), pointing to a glimpse of hope for both Guam and the Chamorro people.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the first book in the from series opens with a Biblical passage, namely: "When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.'" The excess of the successive empires that colonized the islands can be identified now as the breadcrumbs in the parable. In this paper, I have shown how the use of estranging formal resources like fragmentation, erasure, collage, pastiche, plurilingualism, and so on, is compensated with the inclusion of paratextual elements such as epigraphs, endnotes, glossaries, cover art, among others, which become part of the poems proper and secure the transmission of the socially engaged message. In addition, I have suggested that through fragmentation, Santos Perez reflects the current ontological situation of the Chamorro and their land, and by appropriating the pieces left behind by different colonizers, he builds a new and empowered Chamorro identity. In other words, while paratextual elements allow the reader to decipher the poet's social commitment, his gathering of the flotsam and jetsam of personal anecdotes, national histories, and Pacific Islander folklore has served to put Guam literally "on the map," and continues to do so. In the final two pieces of "from preterrain," Santos Perez invites the Chamorro people to "cling to every subtraction" (116), that is, the language, the lore, the sea, as the materials to build a new identity and new relationships with other insular communities. They are, indeed, their "only [...] possessions" (126). After all, these spoils of the empires may be, as the poem goes, "more than lost cargo" (126).

Notes

[1] Although since 2010 the official name of the territory is Guahan, Santos Perez consistently uses the denomination Guam. Consequently, so will I throughout the chapter.

[2] The five books that make up the collection so far are an attempt to rewrite that history, but also the lore, politics, and even the flora and fauna of the islands. Each of them bears a word in Chamorro, Guam's hybrid language, as a subtitle: *hacha* (2008), or "one;" *saina* (2010), Chamorro for "ancestor;" *guma'* (2014), meaning "house;" *lukao* (2017), "procession;" and *åmot*, (2023), or "medicine."

Notes

[3] Regarding form, that lack of punctuation throughout the series also helps to conceive it holistically. Furthermore, Santos Perez programmatically eschews both grammatical and "typographic conventions that diacritically divide up textual and semantic space, refusing such textual practices as indexical of a grammar of power" (Bloomfield 10).

[4] Some poems in *[hacha]*, namely "*from* tidelands" and "*from* aerial roots," reappear in *[saina]* and in *[guma']*; "*from* ta(la)ya," a poem about the poet's grandfather's experience as a POW during the Japanese occupation, originally found in *[hacha]*, comes back in *[guma']*, retold and mixed with shrapnel from other pieces.

[5] The scene is taken from a reenactment of a traditional *lukao*, or procession. That it has been doctored to look older than it is further proves my point of the meaningfulness of the paratext.

[6] Otto Heim seems to be of similar opinion when he says that Perez proceeds by "[s]ignposting ways to link and engage the diverse voices" and "offers us instructions on how to navigate his poems and actively participate" (193).

[7] From a purely political aspect, Mary Knighton rightly observes that in the case of Guam this is even stated in the 1901 Organic Act, which implies "in effect, that Chamorros could never become Americans and Guam as a colonial territory could never attain statehood" (340).

[8] According to Robert F. Rogers, the title of the poem is Chamorro for "dog tag" and it references the pass imposed on the native population of Guam during the Japanese occupation of the islands during WWII.

[9] This poem features for the first time the use of tildes, this wavy typographical mark (as in *ñ*), which Perez employs to transmit visually the tides that, according to him, guide his poetry. Furthermore, imitating the way tildes effect changes in pronunciation, whenever they appear in a poem, they signal a change in tone, register, or content.

[10] The recurrent theme of loss—"*voice doesn't measure what we've lost*" (28), "*whatever we lose it's always ourselves we find*" (57), "*we belong to what we lose*" (126)—points to Young's suggestion that "the third space is above all a site of production, the production of anxiety, an untimely place of loss, of fading, of appearance and disappearance" (82).

[11] Both the traditional haiku and the most popular version of the lune—Robert Kelly's—are divided into three lines. The difference is found in the number of syllables per line: 5/7/5 and 3/5/3, respectively. A *carmina figurata* is similar to a calligraph.

[12] Jansen suggests similarly, comparing the segment "Guahan is" with the "kireji," which, placed traditionally "in the middle of the haiku, [...] signals a shift from one thought to another, thereby inviting the reader to connect two otherwise potentially disparate thoughts" (16).

[13] This character is present throughout colonized countries. The mestizo version of the Spanish *pícaro*, it takes many names and personalities, always keeping some of that subversive character of the model.

[14] One of the names the Spaniards gave Guam was "Isla de los ladrones," or Thieves Island, after the ships of the first invaders to reach shore were looted.

[15] Lai is an exception here.

Notes

[16] Lai actually claims that "la" is a particle of "la'la," stating that the latter means "water" (9). However, the Chamorro word for "water" is "hånom." Lai's confusion might be due to a misinterpretation of Santos Perez's use of "la'la" in *[hacha]*, where he writes " [...] on the agility / to draw water / [la'la] skin friction and wave drag" (31). There, it is more likely that Santos Perez was actually repeating the particle "la" which means "a little bit more," or even the word "la'la'," that is, "dead skin."

[17] The brown tree snake is a foreign species that arrived as stowaways in boxes during WWII and colonized the island in less than a decade.

[18] A bilateral agreement between the USA and Japan to relocate more than 8,000 soldiers from Okinawa to Guam.

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Biography

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