From Crisis to Cata/Strophe

Prepositional Poetics as Decolonizing Praxis

Jennifer A. Reimer

Abstract

This article shows how Aracelis Girmay's *The Black Maria* (2016) and Raquel Salas Rivera's *while they sleep (under the bed is another country)* (2019) turn the ongoing catastrophe of coloniality into a visual grammar of/for loss. Aracelis Girmay's *The Black Maria* offers a prepositional poetics to visualize the catastrophe of Mediterranean migrant crossings within the spacetime of an oceanic coloniality that joins Mediterranean to Atlantic and Caribbean. Raquel Salas Rivera's poetic response to Hurricane María invokes prepositional relationships to reveal and contest the United States' existing hierarchies of colonial-imperial power. Through form, their poetry visualizes how witness, survival, and mourning become decolonizing tactics of resistance. In the two texts, I identify a prepositional poetics that, by signaling movements through space and time, locates the specific catastrophes of displacement and climate change disaster in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean as part of a continuum of coloniality that stretches from the sixteenth century to the present.

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Prepositional Poetics as Decolonizing Praxis

Jennifer A. Reimer

As this special issue demonstrates, the present attentiveness to vulnerability within American studies (and similar disciplines) is doing urgent work in naming current conditions of social, political, and economic precarity as processes inextricably linked to other processes that define our world today: neoliberalism, imperialism, coloniality, racialization, white supremacy, and all exercises of power that contribute to inequality. As Judith Butler and others have argued, precarious conditions not only shape lived experiences, but they are also shaped by them. Literary-cultural critics have responded by pointing to cultural texts as spaces where processes of precarity and vulnerable subjectivities are embodied through art, giving voice to marginalized identities, histories, and experiences. Such scholarship is important for the ways in which it recognizes and makes visible content previously excluded from academic conversations. An opportunity exists, however, for literary-cultural critics to also examine how vulnerability takes *shape and form* in cultural texts. If culture makers, whose art raises novel or enhanced awareness around vulnerable communities, can be said to be oppositional to domination and operations of power, is it possible that aesthetics, too, contains oppositional content? How do style and form *also* contribute to giving visibility to vulnerable, precarious lives? What potential might form have in decolonizing and dismantling power? These questions, which I and others have discussed elsewhere,[1] motivate this essay's case study in the decolonizing aesthetics of contemporary American poetry and poetics. I draw on current trends of vulnerability in American studies and theories of social precarity to show how Aracelis Girmay's (she/her) *The Black Maria* (2016) and Raquel Salas Rivera's (he/they) *while they sleep (under the bed is another country)* (2019) turn the ongoing catastrophe of coloniality into a visual grammar of/for loss. Through form, their poetry visualizes how witnessing, surviving, and mourning become decolonizing tactics of resistance.

Precarity as Vulnerable Resistance in the Anthropocene

In using precarity as a critical lens for theorizing contemporary American poetry by writers of color, I return to Judith Butler's useful definition of precarity as "a politically induced condition in which certain populations … become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. Such populations are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and of exposure to violence without protection." Such violence includes "arbitrary state violence and … other forms of aggression that are not enacted by states and against which states do not offer adequate protection."[2] My understanding of precarity as a form of vulnerability positions Butlerian precarity within the affective modes experienced by bodies racialized outside of normative whiteness that José E. Muñoz named "feeling brown,"[3] in order to name the specific ways in which forms of difference (such as race) differentiate experiences of vulnerability (essentially, while all bodies experience vulnerability not all bodies experience vulnerability in the same ways). However, I am also influenced by the work on vulnerability collected in the *Vulnerability in Resistance* (2016) anthology edited by Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay, which foregrounds the potential for agency, activism, and solidarity over passivity and wounding.[4] Like the co-editors, I situate vulnerability within queer, feminist, and critical race work to highlight the potential for vulnerability as resistance.

This contribution extends the special issue's call to consider vulnerability's potential for productive change by linking theories of social precarity to decolonial theory and eco-criticism. In showing how climate change is part of an ongoing process of coloniality, which both creates and exacerbates conditions of social, economic, and political precarity for colonized and formerly colonized subjects, this essay's case studies posit vulnerability as a possible node of decolonizing praxis through oppositional poetics. Reading vulnerability through decolonial thinking offers specific language for naming the larger structural forces, including racism, white supremacy, and persistent colonial hierarchies, that create and exacerbate the conditions of catastrophe that both Girmay and Salas Rivera respond to in their books: for Girmay, precarity names the conditions that catalyze migration from the Global South, as well as the dangers of the Mediterranean migrant crossing and failure of the international community to safeguard im/migrant lives; for Salas Rivera, it is the failure of the US government to effectively intervene in Puerto Rico's humanitarian crisis in the days, weeks, and months after Hurricane María.

While Butler's notion of precarity clarifies the role of the state in creating conditions of life that give rise to precarious identities, such as those that Muñoz articulates to social politics, as an existential, philosophical, and phenomenological descriptor, precarity can easily be over-simplified into a state of affairs, a fixed

identity or extreme case of suffering. In "Precarious Writings" (2021), Maribel Casas-Cortés reframes Butler's precarity as "an existential condition of vulnerability," which emphasizes the "precaritization" of existence. In converting adjective to noun, Casas-Cortés highlights precarity as an *ongoing ambivalent process*. Excavating the uses of precarity amongst grassroots social movements in southern Europe, Casas-Cortés argues that shared conditions of vulnerability can be, and have been, mobilized as fluid spaces for political creation. Precarity-as-vulnerability becomes a subversive platform for reform, renewing subjectivities, and rallying collective action: "Precarity brings a profound awareness of shared vulnerability—including experiences of production, reproduction, and mobility. Those experiences are in turn deeply ambivalent, leading to a reinvigorated politicization of precarity itself and a desire to 'think in common' in the midst of fragmentation."[5] Precarity, as a condition of vulnerability filled with political potential, albeit ambivalent potential, is a useful and productive lens for thinking through the precarious poetics of Girmay and Salas Rivera when aligned with current theories of decolonial thinking. In emphasizing the precaritization of existence, Casas-Cortés's precarity-as-vulnerable-process invites comparison to the coloniality of power, the devastating "matrix of power, knowledge, and way of being" that Aníbal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, Ramón Grosfoguel, María Lugones, and others have theorized.[6]

Recently, decolonial thinkers have also begun to examine the intersection of coloniality and climate change as deeply interconnected processes that are both producing and exacerbating conditions of shared vulnerability. As the consequences of climate change become increasingly visible as material conditions of current life, decolonial scholars point to the damage caused by certain ways of inhabiting the earth that are specific to modernity.[7] In *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (2017), Macarena Gómez-Barris examines the origins and afterlife of an extractive global economy installed by colonial capitalism in the sixteenth century to turn natural resources into global commodities. Her book takes care to emphasize indigenous resistance, "show[ing] how the embodied activities that reject colonialism continue to alter and expand how we see and what we know about Indigenous spaces especially within the extractive zone."[8] Her work invites us to (re)consider indigenous and African-descendant perspectives on the natural world that engage rather than extract. A centering on indigenous modes of survival and resistance is crucial to the work of a decolonial ecocriticism, which continues to highlight "the relationship between climate policies and practices of distorting, marginalizing or disregarding the ways of knowing and experiences of those most affected by climate change."[9] As such, indigenous scholarship has been central in decolonial critiques of Western ways of organizing the human and nonhuman world whose extractive and exploit-

ative practices were directly responsible for indigenous genocide and continue to do active harm to indigenous lives, lands, and ways of being.[10]

But the links between our modern/colonial past and our current state of climate "crisis" are not simply located in humanities scholarship. A widely circulated article by the scientific journal *Nature* in 2021 identified colonial biases at the heart of ecological research and policy and outlined five concrete interventions that incorporate non-Western ways of understanding the natural environment and humans' place within and which promote inclusive and ethical ecological practices.[11] International nongovernmental organizations are also making the connection. In a white paper for *The Conversation*, Harriet Mercer noted how the International Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) April 2022 report included the term "colonialism" in their summary to argue that colonialism has "exacerbated" the effects of climate change.[12] Although the IPCC has been reporting on climate change since 1990, the April 2022 report marks the first time that the organization has explicitly named climate change as part of a global, colonial heritage.

Climate change, as a process linked to coloniality's racial past, present, and future, plays a central, contributing role in the environmental-humanitarian situations that frame Girmay and Salas Rivera's poetry. Girmay's *The Black Maria* traces the current "crisis" of migration from North Africa to the EU, articulating the precarious conditions that drive people from their homeland into vulnerable sea-crossings, back to the history of the Black Atlantic slave trade and her own family history. Yet, part of the urgency in her poetic excavation of transnational circulations (both voluntary and forced) must be contextualized within processes of climate change that have been internationally recognized as significant factors in migration and displacement trends from vulnerable regions. A European Parliament paper from 2022 on "The Future of Climate Migration" cites an increase in the effects of global warming as significant factors driving border crossing and migration.[13] Thus, the vulnerable migrant subjects that her poetry visualizes (and eulogizes) are not coincidental, nor are they solely products of state violence or state failures; their shared vulnerability has been created out of ongoing and overlapping processes of historical and contemporary precarity whose coloniality is deeply imbedded in the current environmental push factors of migration.

In Raquel Salas Rivera's *while they sleep (under the bed is another country)*, the crisis under critique is 2017's Hurricane María, a natural disaster whose magnitude and scale has been linked to climate change. A 2019 article by NPR cited several post-hurricane studies that connected the storm's rain magnitude to warming air oceans.[14] Indeed, scientists found that a storm such as Hurricane María is five times more likely to occur today than it would have in the 1950s, when global warmings effects

were only just emerging.[15] Yet, a strictly environmental lens that implicates climate change as the main factor contributing to the widespread devastation of Hurricane María misses the crucial link between Puerto Rico's colonial past and present and the ways in which centuries of colonial and imperial domination made the island *especially vulnerable* to natural disasters. Scholars such as Nelson Maldonado-Torres draw attention to how the operations of colonial-imperial power on the island created "a perfect storm of catastrophe." In his contribution to *Aftershocks of Disaster* (2019), Maldonado-Torres asserts: "Hurricane María is a catastrophe inseparable from the catastrophe of Puerto Rican colonialism (a colonialism that continues in liberal, conservative, neoliberal, and neo-fascist times) and the catastrophe of modernity/coloniality." Indeed, Hurricane María was not "simply a natural event," and understanding the implications of the storm "require[s] the consideration of ideologies, attitudes, and social, economic, and political systems, among other factors."[16]

As responses to humanitarian crises that are undercut by larger historical processes of exploitation, both *The Black Maria* and *while they sleep* ask readers to follow the thread of coloniality through current conditions of climate change, in order to more fully apprehend the conditions of vulnerability under which (and into) they write. In doing so, Girmay and Salas Rivera's texts also invite us to re-consider the language of crisis.

Cata/Strophe: The Coloniality of Power and Countercatastrophic Response

By calling Hurricane María a "catastrophe" instead of a "crisis" or "disaster," Maldonado-Torres seeks to emphasize Hurricane María as an exceptional event, unique from previous "crises" or "disasters." While the three terms are often used interchangeably to describe forms of devastation and responses to devastation, Maldonado-Torres argues that their differences have important implications for Caribbean thinking and decoloniality. In his theorizing, "crisis," which is etymologically related to the concept of critique and invokes an "array of meanings related to choosing, judging, and deciding," is strongly implicated in Western modern thought (with its emphasis on rationality).[17] On the other hand, disaster's etymological roots point to its association with ill-fortune or fate, which, although these words might capture the sense of despair and lament, can also be reduced to an ahistorical misfortune. "A crisis," according to Maldonado-Torres, "is a moment when decision is needed, while in a disaster it is as if a decision has already been taken and the outcome revealed. It is as if the moment of decision has come and gone unnoticed; disaster seems to be the result of fate, as if something went wrong in the universe."[18] If both crisis and disaster fail to capture the particular nature of Hurricane María as an outcome of a colonial world system,

whose forms of domination and control have contributed to climate change, could "catastrophe" do a better job?

The Greek origins of catastrophe invoke neither decision nor fate but rather a dramatic turn of events, or a reversal. Maldonado-Torres explains that "the root words in Greek are *kata* (down) and *strephein* (turn)," which means that we can understand catastrophe as an unexpected downturn of events. In fact, "unlike disaster, which makes one wonder about fate, . . . like crisis, which calls for a diagnosis, catastrophe calls for thinking; unlike crisis, however, catastrophe challenges all existing cognitive frameworks." Catastrophe is a spatio-temporal disruption—unlike crisis or disaster it carries a hint of "rupture, surprise, and novelty."[19]

If crisis and disaster belong to practices of critique and critical theory, catastrophe, Maldonado-Torres suggests, has much more relevance for decolonial thought, creation, and praxis. The catastrophic nature of Hurricane María is inextricably tied up with other scales of catastrophe, particularly the "downturn" that begins with the Spanish colonization in the sixteenth century and continues through 1898 to the present moment. The birth of the modern world system (we could also name this the birth of the Anthropocene) is deeply connected to the catastrophic loss of indigenous life. It also marks the beginning of a process of normalizing catastrophe, "evident in the form of continued dehumanization, expropriation, slavery (and its aftermaths), and genocide, otherwise known as coloniality . . . What appears as catastrophic in modern colonialism is not only the direct colonial relations that have existed at least since the early moments of the New World's 'discovery,' but also the naturalization of the relationship between colonizer and colonized and the reproduction of this naturalization, not only in cultures, institutions, and psyches of normative subjects, but also in colonized peoples themselves."[20] Thus, catastrophe effectively describes the temporal rupture (turn) created by colonization, names its "ongoingness" as a process of coloniality, and implicates the ecological devastation that has come to define the Anthropocene, thereby aligning past, present, and future. Catastrophe thus is *prepositional* in both space and time.

Prepositions, of course, are words that name a relation between things—words such as "on," "in," "under," "above," "of," "next to," "from," "alongside," and "between." They name our positions and the positions of things around us, in space and time. For the purposes of this essay, if we understand space as referring to diaspora and the modern world system, and time as process, specifically the nonlinear (but continuous) processes of coloniality and precarity, the poetic invocation of prepositions in Girmay's and Salas Rivera's works locate the poems and their subjects within a vulnerable spacetime of diaspora and coloniality. This precarious, vulnerable spacetime is catastrophic, where *kata* (down) invokes the specter of drowning at sea (Girmay) or

the geographical and geopolitical location of Puerto Rico (Salas Rivera) and the subjugated position of former and current colonies within the modern, colonial world system (both). *Strephein* (turn) names the active and entangled processes of coloniality and vulnerability. If, as Maldonado-Torres claims, "thinking about catastrophe in the Caribbean"—and, I'll add, the Mediterranean—"leads to countercatastrophic responses such as decolonial thinking and decolonial aesthetics and poetics,"[21] what might the prepositional, countercatastrophic poetics of Girmay and Salas Rivera suggest to us about the potential of a decolonial aesthetics?

By asking how colonial spacetime emerges from and shapes oppositional poetry, my question takes up Maldonado-Torres's call, while building on the work of literary scholars such as Brian Russell Roberts who critique American imperialism's spacetime through prepositional readings of literary texts. Although he doesn't name his approach "prepositional," Roberts's *Borderwaters* (2021) introduces the concept of "archipelagic thinking" by referring to the etymological roots of "archipelago" in Greek, which, like catastrophe, name a spatial-temporal positioning: *pelago* signifies "deep, abyss, gulf, pool." Roberts expands the Oxford English Dictionary definition of the archipelago by moving away from a static ontological category and toward "a thought template" altogether messier—"material, metaphorical, translational, terraqueous, archipelagizing, geoformal, and temporally scalar."[22] Indeed, archipelagos are as temporal as they are spatial in his theorizing, naming not only the "deep" time of prehistory (geological time) but also gesturing toward planetary futurities. Archipelagic thinking draws on the prepositional positioning of below/under/depth to enact a type of critical depth-sounding to re-map the United States and the planet, moving between, across, and through surfaces and depths, tumbling with archipelagic materiality, "even as they churn up and churn with US-centric and US-eccentric self-perceptions and cultural forms."[23] Positioned as both material and metaphor—but constantly moving—through prepositional relationships to space and time, "archipelagic thinking" usefully draws the Mediterranean and the Caribbean,[24] the two archipelagic spaces Girmay's and Salas Rivera's poetry plumbs from surface to depth and depth to surface, into an "archipelagic gyre, or a set of island- and ocean-oriented philosophical currents that have neither descended from nor depended on the United States for their genesis and vitality."[25] I am interested in diffracting Roberts's gyre, that "set of island-and ocean-oriented philosophical currents," through a prismatic viewing of prepositional positioning, (re)created by the catastrophe of coloniality, and creating a decolonial, countercatastrophic poetic form.

A prepositional poetic analysis, whose vectors include countercatastrophic decoloniality and archipelagic thinking, situates Girmay's and Salas Rivera's poetry within a growing canon of poetry by writers of color in the United States (and, increasingly, in Great Britain) who turn to oppositional form to name and critique conditions of

vulnerability and precarity and the resulting marginalized, vulnerable subjectivities. These poets operate at the intersection of politics (identity) and innovation (avant-garde traditions) in order to expose expectations around "authentic" voice in poetry by writers of color.[26] In Black and African American literary scholarship, critics such as Erica Hunt, Nathanial Mackey, and Fred Moten position disruptions, breaks, improvisations, and sound-making in Black performances as inextricable from the racial politics of slavery and blackness.[27] Timothy Yu, Barbara Jane Reyes, and Craig Santos Perez have theorized the aesthetics of racial-colonial oppression made visible in Asian American and Pacific Island poetry, variously arguing that poetic form "burrows into," "work[s] out," or "currents" social-political forms of domination and vulnerable subjectivities.[28] In considering contemporary Latinx poetry in the United States, poet J. Michael Martinez calls such work "Ethno-vative" for the ways in which they draw on histories of avant-garde practices to perform "a type of social critique in their formal strategies."[29] "Ethno-vative" poetry, he asserts, dramatizes political *and* formal resistance to aesthetic, economic, and political oppression.

Aracelis Girmay and Raquel Salas Rivera's poetry unequivocally do such "ethno-vative" work in the way their work responds formally and politically to catastrophic vulnerabilities. Both *The Black Maria* and *while they sleep (under the bed is another country)* use a prepositional poetics to signal movements through space and time. These innovative, spatial and temporal shifts implicate the catastrophe of displacement and natural disaster as being specifically located (in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean) while also existing on a continuum of coloniality that stretches from the sixteenth century into the present, enacting pointed critiques of US imperialism.

Diasporic Diffractions: Aracelis Girmay's *The Black Maria*

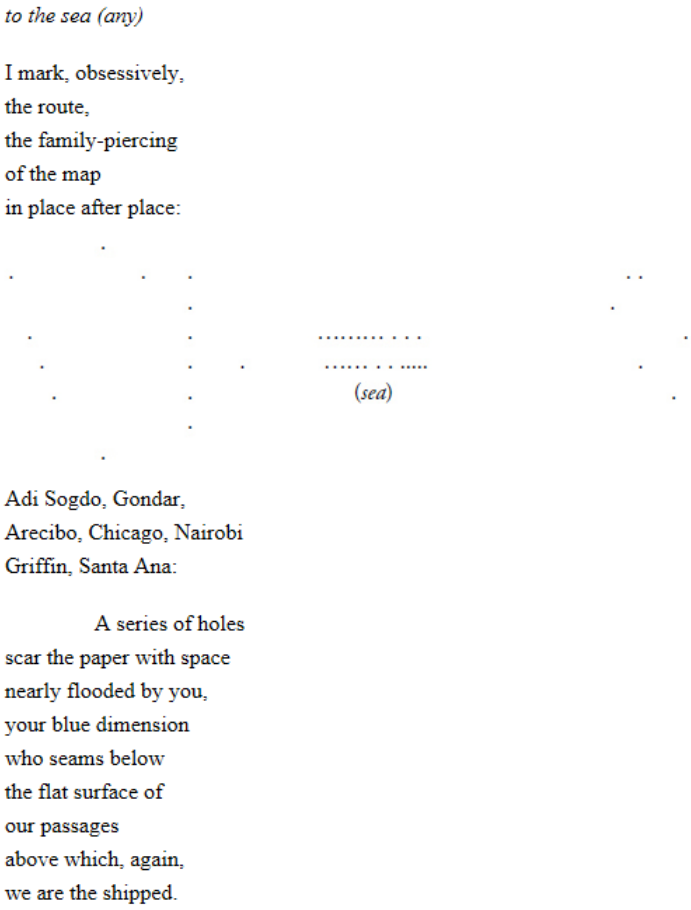
Aracelis Girmay's award-winning 2016 collection, *The Black Maria*, investigates African diasporic histories with a central focus on the lives of Eritrean refugees. The poet herself identifies as Eritrean, Puerto Rican, and African American, identities that are constitutive of how her poetry takes up the consequences of racism in American public life and culture. Thematically, the poems in the collection explore migration, colonialism and imperialism, as well as the intersections of death and diaspora. Both elegy to and eulogy for im/migrant subjects and subjectivities, the book's forms are innovative and hybrid, weaving poetry, prose, and a long poem that also takes the form of a play.

The collection's opening section, "elelegy,"[30] begins by situating the poem-as-play within the context of North African–Mediterranean migration, displacement, and death. An epigraph formed into a tight column of two stacked blocks on the opening left page reads: "It is estimated that over 20,000 people have died at sea making the

journey from North Africa to Europe in the past two decades. On October 3, 2013, it is estimated that 300 people died at sea off the coast of Lampedusa. Those on board the boat that sank were nearly all Eritrean." In the second block, Girmay writes that the following cycle of poems focuses on Eritrean history, on the one hand, "as this is a history I am somewhat familiar with as someone of its diaspora," but also on the shared history and experiences of "people searching for political asylum and opportunity (both)," which is "much larger than Eritrean history alone."[31] In connecting the particular context of Eritrean displacement and migration to a larger, shared history, the opening text, like the situated body of the poet herself, connects the contemporary catastrophe of Black diaspora across (under) the Mediterranean to those other deadly sites of Black diaspora: the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. Girmay thus situates the work in both space and time, where geography and history are simultaneously specific and transnational, located yet continuous, the past-as-present-as-past circulations (turns, *strephein*) of coloniality. Girmay herself acknowledges these transnational connections in the play-as-poem's exposition. In the "where" section, she lists "the Mediterranean Sea // the Red Sea // the Caribbean Sea // the Atlantic Ocean // the Afterworld Sea/Sea of Death / any sea."[32]

In the "elelegy" cycle, I locate Girmay's prepositional poetics within the sub-cycle of poems titled "to the sea," a series whose form and content map the catastrophe of migrant crossings. "To the sea, any" is a visual and textual mapping whose content *and* form enact prepositional migrations and movements (Illustration 1). The placement of dots across the upper third of the page represent the speaker's act of locating their family's route (in the way that we might document travel by placing pushpins in a map of the world) and also imprints the larger dimensions of the sea itself. The two parallel lines of dots represent the sea's "seam." Girmay describes the "blue dimension" of this border-seam both horizontally and vertically, invoking prepositions to describe the act of crossings: "who seams below / the flat surface of / our passages / above which, again / we are the shipped."[33] Here, the poetic language of the stanza as well as the dot mapping describe and visualize a prepositional relationship to the sea border, where the horizontal crossing (over)—the above—represents life, or the potential for a new life, and the vertical crossing (descent, below, down) represents death. Thus, the sea-as-border is not only geopolitical but also metaphorical; the sea's surface becomes the liminal space between the possibility of life and the certainty of death.

Girmay's prepositional play continues in a later poem in "elelegy," "Inside the sea, there is more." Again, the poem's innovative form uses visual techniques and poetic language to describe the catastrophe of migrant crossing prepositionally through space and time (Illustration 2). Here, we are drawn "inside" the sea where the vertical movement is not only the crossing (over) from surface to depth-death but



to the sea (any)

I mark, obsessively,
the route,
the family-piercing
of the map
in place after place:

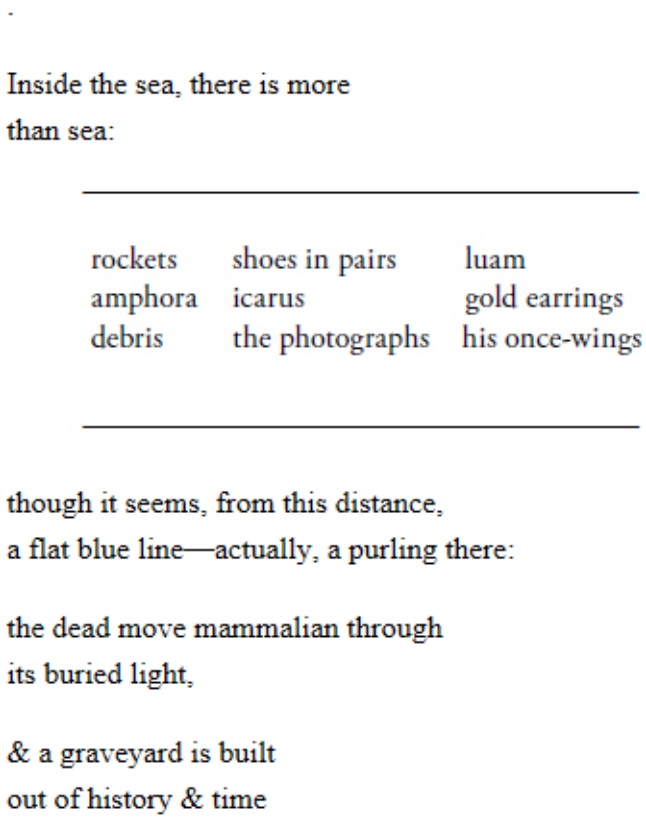
(*sea*)

Adi Sogdo, Gondar,
Arecibo, Chicago, Nairobi
Griffin, Santa Ana:

A series of holes
scar the paper with space
nearly flooded by you,
your blue dimension
who seams below
the flat surface of
our passages
above which, again,
we are the shipped.

Illustration 1: Textual and visual mapping in *The Black Maria*.
From Aracelis Girmay, *The Black Maria* (BOA Editions, 2016). Used by permission from the publisher.

another nested series of spacetime within the sea itself. Indeed, Girmay cautions us against falling into the deception of surface-level reading. In a homophonic recall to the previous "seam," she tells us that "though it seems, from this distance, / a flat blue line—actually, a purling there: / the dead move mammalian through / its buried light."[34] She pulls (purls) us below the surface to witness movement through space and time, represented by a catalogue of detritus. The horizontal lines that frame the 3x3 catalogue of nouns recreate the sea's above/below borders. Below the surface yet above or on the seafloor are the detritus of im/migrant lives: "debris," "shoes in pairs," "photographs," "gold earrings." Also, there are the remnants of history and mythology: "amphora," "icarus," "luam,"[35] "his once-wings." It is a "graveyard" "built / out of history & time."[36]



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Inside the sea, there is more
than sea:

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rockets	shoes in pairs	luam
amphora	icarus	gold earrings
debris	the photographs	his once-wings

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though it seems, from this distance,
a flat blue line—actually, a purling there:

the dead move mammalian through
its buried light,

& a graveyard is built
out of history & time

Illustration 2: Visual and verbal poetics combine to create different spacetimes in *The Black Maria*.
From Aracelis Girmay, *The Black Maria* (BOA Editions, 2016). Used by permission from the publisher.

The submersion-immersion perspective on im/migrant life and death that the poem visualizes speaks to the kind of "tidalectic diffractions" theorized by Elizabeth DeLoughery and Tatiana Flores. Building on Kamu Brathwaite, they define tidalectics "as a kind of submarine immersion and ocean intimacy that is constituted by an entangled ontology of diffraction." Diffraction, in the scientific sense, refers to the "bending of a line of sight, the way an object in the water, when viewed from above or below, is distorted."[37] The ocean's movement, and our perception of it through light, are determined by waves of diffraction.[38] A literal and metaphorical turning (*strephein*) from a straight line, a diffraction, captures a range of prepositional perspectives, not only the colonial *aerial-above* but also the messier *below*, *within*, *across*, and *from* perspectives, which up-end linearity and cohesion. Tidalectic diffraction, according to DeLoughery and Flores, "demands a kind of metaphorical immersion

on the part of the viewer, to submerge in order to have an ontological engagement with the history of representing the Caribbean."[39] Girmay's prepositional poetics in "Inside the sea, there is more" enact this very dynamic in a transnational Mediterranean context. By drawing us below the surface, we are forced to immerse ourselves in a confrontation with the catastrophe of history made visible in the submerged, fragmented object-archive of im/migrant lives.

Fragmented Hierarchies: Raquel Salas Rivera's *while they sleep (under the bed is another country)*

If Aracelis Girmay's *The Black Maria* offers a prepositional poetics to visualize the catastrophe of Mediterranean migrant crossings within the spacetime of an oceanic coloniality that joins Mediterranean to Atlantic and Caribbean, Raquel Salas Rivera's 2019 poetic response to Hurricane María invokes prepositional relationships to reveal and contest the United States' existing hierarchies of colonial-imperial power. *while they sleep (under the bed is another country)* puts form at the center of the book's construction. The bulk of the collection is arranged in dialogic fragments; a fragment of text in English appears at the top of the page, accompanied by a footnote that directs readers to a fragment in Spanish at the bottom of the page. The Spanish text is not a translation of the English, nor is there always an obvious (linear, cohesive) correspondence between what is above and what is below. Both the English and Spanish texts are fragments of discursive responses to Hurricane María, from media or overheard conversations, sometimes taken out of context and juxtaposed against the blank white space, which occupies most of the page's field.

The specific ecological context of Hurricane María's devastation, coupled with Puerto Rico's colonial past and present, drive Salas Rivera's formal choices in their book. The full impact of the September 2017 hurricane cannot be understood without considering Puerto Rico's imperial relationship with the United States as a colony, as well as the pre-existing catastrophe of Puerto Rican debt. Puerto Rico became a "territory" of the United States in 1898, as a condition of the Treaty of Paris that ended the war between the United States and Spain. Puerto Ricans became US citizens in 1917, under the Jones Act,[40] and, in 1953, the status of Puerto Rico was changed from territory to commonwealth. As a commonwealth of the United States, Puerto Ricans and US mainlanders share "common citizenship, common defense, common currency, and a common market. However, Puerto Ricans do not pay federal taxes, and are denied voting representation in the U. S. Congress."[41] Commonwealth status legislates the uneven relationship between the US and Puerto Rico to this day.

Puerto Rico's centuries-long status as first a Spanish colony and then, essentially, a US colony, has contributed, in a general sense, to the island's current economic

precarity,[42] although most economists locate one origin of Puerto Rico's debt crisis in the mid-1990s, when the Puerto Rican government borrowed heavily to fight a recession.[43] By 2017, when Hurricane María hit, the island's debt had surpassed its GDP and Puerto Rico had filed for bankruptcy—the largest municipal bankruptcy in US history. Currently, Puerto Rico holds around $74 billion in bond debt and $49 billion in unfunded pension obligations.

Puerto Rico's precarious economic condition does not exist outside the uneven operations of the coloniality of power. In *Colonial Debts* (2021), Rocío Zambrana puts it bluntly: "debt functions as a form of coloniality." Debt, she argues,

> actualizes, adapts, reinscribes race/gender/class posited by the history of colonial violence that produced the modern capitalist world. Debt does so responding to altered material and historical conditions, building on rather than annihilating difference, incommensurability, heterogeneity in the very reproduction of life—in labor, authority, subjectivity. Debt, then, is key to the rearticulation/reinstallation of colonial life in the current economic-political juncture. In the case of Puerto Rico, the afterlife of the colonial world posits the colonial condition, the territorial status, anew. It does so by actualizing the work of race/gender/class evident in the unequal distribution of precariousness, dispossession, and violence in the territory.[44]

Puerto Rico's economic downturn (*kata*/*strephein*) is both produced by, and actively (re)produces, colonial structures of domination and control made visible through hierarchies that circumscribe the everyday lives and subjectivities of Puerto Ricans. The catastrophe of colonial debt thus amplified the island's vulnerability to natural disaster. Weakened infrastructure and a broken governmental apparatus existed well before September 17, 2017. These underlying weaknesses, caused by decades of neglect and financial precarity, directly contributed to the loss of life. For example, "uncleared roads that did not allow ambulances to arrive, lack of water distribution that led residents to contaminated water sources, lack of generators in hospitals, and more than half a year without electricity to power medical equipment, refrigerate lifesaving medications such as insulin, and provide public lighting and traffic lights to prevent deadly accidents. Lives were not lost to the wind and the rain, or even to Trump's disrespect; instead, residents drowned in bureaucracy and institutional neglect."[45]

In addition, Puerto Rico's second-class colonial status almost guaranteed an insufficient response by the United States. President Trump's breezy, performative mismanagement was, of course, widely ridiculed, but behind the image of POTUS throwing rolls of paper towels lurk more substantive, troubling truths. At least one study has shown that the US federal response was faster and more generous regarding measures of money and staffing to Hurricanes Harvey and Irma in Texas and Flor-

ida compared with Hurricane María in Puerto Rico.[46] Meanwhile, other scholars have highlighted how the subsequent humanitarian crisis revealed a long history of US colonial neglect and human rights violations in public health.[47] For these reasons, Maldonado Torres insists on the language of catastrophe (over crisis or disaster), in order to name Hurricane María's entanglements with other catastrophes of the modern Caribbean: "the story of Puerto Rico cannot be told without reference to Western modern catastrophe and coloniality. Hurricane María was a catastrophic event that, among other things, exposed the vulgarity of Puerto Rico's colonial relationship with the United States."[48]

The aftermath of the hurricane has, by now, been widely documented and discussed. Most experts agree that the total number of fatalities approximate 4,645—as opposed to August 2018's official death count of 64, which was later raised to 1,427 and then to 2,975.[49] The humanitarian organization Mercy Corps estimates that the hurricane caused as much as $94.4 billion in damages, wiping out 80% of the island's crops—an $780 million loss in agricultural yields. Against the backdrop of catastrophic loss and imperial blundering and mismanagement, Salas Rivera's poetry invites readers to visualize the varying responses to trauma through a bilingual engagement that reveals and challenges persistent hierarchies of power.

From the title of the book itself, Salas Rivera asks us to consider geography as a hierarchy named through the use of prepositions. The title's dependent clause, "under the bed is another country," refers, of course, to Puerto Rico's geographical location in relation to the United States—literally, beneath or below the mainland, a subordinate position reinforced in the material differences between the two and circulated metaphorically and figuratively through cultural texts and discourse that diminish, other, and subjugate Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans. "They" refers to the United States, whose citizens occupy the unnamed "above" position. In referring to what lies beneath, under the bed, the title plays on the common childhood fear of monsters who lie in wait under the bed. It also echoes the English idiomatic expression, "you've made your bed, now lie in it." However, in Salas Rivera's re-telling, the monster beneath the bed is, in fact, the United States—or, at least, a monster created by the United States—and the culpability he demands from the US is not simply the passive act of laying down in the mess it has created. Instead, what Salas Rivera's work calls for is a more radical upending of hierarchy—a decolonial act of resistance.

The geographical relationships named through preposition are reinforced linguistically and textually on the page. The English text is positioned on the top of the page while the Spanish text is relegated to the bottom, via the footnote convention (Illustration 3). The page's visual grammar is meant to underscore disparities—in power, status, material conditions, and even in language itself. The fragmented texts, in gen-

a whole ocean[23]

[23]*la playa está totalmente destruída*

Illustration 3: Geographical relationships and disparaties are mapped onto the page in *while they sleep (under the bed is another country)*.
From Raquel Salas Rivera, *while they sleep (under the bed is another country)* (Birds LLC, 2019). Used by permission from the publisher.

eral, diffract another set of prepositional relationships—insider vs. outsider. The texts in English are taken from media sources and echo the language of government and bureaucracy, as well as the tourist gaze and perspectives of those witnessing the catastrophe from the US mainland. Examples include: "he threw paper towels into the crowds as a humanitarian gesture;" "there have been nine reported suicides since the hurricane;" "the airlines won't fly out food / there is no profit;" "fema box contains: / one can of beans / one packet of cookies / one oatmeal bar / a small ricebox;" "I can't even begin to imagine / what you are going through;" "loan as in / debt relief;"

"relief / as debt;" "public schools are not ready to open / we must first make sure they are up / to pre-hurricane standards;" "a drain on our economy;" "they wear their army uniforms with pride // and always swipe right;" "in puerto rico for four weeks / looking for a good time."[50] Although not always, the majority of these English-language fragments evoke bureaucratic callousness, phatic speech acts lacking real substance, and the general disembodied distance of reportage.

Against these discursive and tonal registers, Salas Rivera juxtaposes Spanish language fragments that bear witness to the perspectives of insiders. These fragments are colloquial and informal, but also speak to acts of witnessing and trauma. Examples include: "se me está partiendo el corazón" (my heart is breaking); "no paro de llorar" (I don't stop crying); "esto es como the walking dead" (this is like the walking dead); "las filas son interminables" (the lines are endless); "no existe un mundo posh-uracán" (a post-hurricane world doesn't exist); "finalmente tengo señal" (finally I have service); "acá no tenemos tiempo para el dolor—estamos ocupados sobrerviviendo" (we don't have time for pain here / we are busy surviving); "¿de qué vale tener seguro medico si no tiene luz el hospital?" (what's the point of health insurance if the hospital doesn't have lights?); "cesaron los ayudantías" (they've stopped the aid); "me dio el ptsd" (it gave me PTSD)."[51] The Spanish fragments betray a palatable intimacy and grief in their quiet observations and reactions to the material conditions unfolding around them. Against the dehumanizing and othering mainland gaze, these island fragments assert a shared—if maimed—humanity in the face of catastrophe.

Fragment and fragmentation characterize the book's larger structure and offer an additional prepositional poetics. The book is essentially a collection of fragments that have been collaged together. Alongside pieces of different discourse and fragments of two languages, we find drawings interspersed and longer prose pieces that disrupt the collection's central note/footnote motif. By playing with the idea of pieces and fragments, Salas Rivera works through ideas of ruin and detritus, both as material aftermath of the hurricane and also as stylistic motif. Ruins, fragments, and detritus are all pieces of a whole; they are defined in relation to another thing typically through the prepositions of/from (fragments of clothing, detritus from the wreck, etc.). In figurative language, we identify a part substituted for a whole through the literary device of synecdoche. The book's synecdochical poetics ask readers to consider the relationship of the island or territory (piece) to mainland (whole) as ruined fragment, on the one hand, and as a potential site for a reconstituted wholeness, on the other. Yet, ultimately, the future Puerto Rico that the poem demands is not just a recuperated piece of mainland USA, it is more metonymic than synecdochical—Salas Rivera's decolonizing urgency envisions "another country": sovereign, whole, and free.

In the space between power and powerlessness, English and Spanish, mainland

and territory, fragment and whole, Sala Rivera's white space invites us to ask what can and cannot be crossed. Is this white space the space of diaspora for the estimated 200,000 Puerto Ricans who have left the island since the hurricane? In this supposed "empty" space, perhaps we are meant to encounter the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean. Thinking back to Aracelis Girmay's poetics of crossing and submersion, what submerged bodies, subjectivities, histories, and forms might we locate through the diffraction?

Conclusion: Toward a Countercatastrophic Poetics

By making visible the links between coloniality and crisis, Aracelis Girmay and Salas Rivera's catastrophic, prepositional poetics enacts what Maldonado Torres calls "countercatastrophic" thought and praxis: "Countercatastrophic thought and creative work seek to reveal the various layers of catastrophe and show their entanglement . . . Decolonial thinking requires countercatastrophic explorations of time and the formations of space, within, against, and outside the modern/colonial world. It also entails the investigation of the various forms of subjectivity, subjection, and liberation that have taken place under the catastrophe of modernity/coloniality."[52] This is precisely the oppositional and decolonial opportunities these poetic texts offer, through their content and their form. Through form, Girmay's and Salas Rivera's poetry draw readers into multiple levels of engagement (textual, visual, metaphorical), exposing and re-organizing the structures of power that give rise to conditions of vulnerability. In an interview, Girmay has commented on the link between innovative form and dismantling of power: "I wonder what new explorations of form might have to do with documenting the new and old ways of thinking about power … Perhaps the so-called hybrid poems are about dislocating or splintering the central lens."[53] In "dislocating or splintering" coloniality's "central lens," *The Black Maria* and *while they sleep* model the kind of decolonial thinking Maldonado Torres calls countercatastrophic. And by turning vulnerability into an active site of resistance through poetic form and the act of poetic engagement, Girmay and Salas Rivera model decolonial, countercatastrophic praxis. If, as Casa-Cortés asserts, "precarity brings a profound awareness of shared vulnerability …, those experiences are, in turn, deeply ambivalent, leading to a reinvigorated politicization of precarity itself and a desire to 'think in common' in the midst of fragmentation,"[54] then the potential to find solidarity in the midst of fragmentation is a truly radical act of resistance. By exposing a shared vulnerability inextricably linked to the origins of the modern/colonial world and heightened by the devastating legacies of the system of power that play out in our current environmental and geopolitical catastrophes, poetry offers a visual grammar of resistance— language with which we can simultaneously grieve and hope.

Notes

1 See Jennifer A. Reimer, "Precarity & the Practice of Chicano/a Poetry: Javier Huerta's *American Copia*," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 45, no. 1 (2020), DOI: 10.1525/azt.2020.45.1.109; Jennifer A. Reimer, "Tarfia Faizullah's Poetics of Testimony and Transnational Feminist Praxis," *AmLit: American Literatures* 1, no. 1 (2021), DOI: 10.25364/27.1:2021.1.3; Stefan Maneval and Jennifer A. Reimer, ed., *Forms of Migration: Global Perspectives on Im/migrant Art & Literature* (Berlin: Falschrum, 2022); Silvia Schultermandl, Katharina Gerund, and Anja Mrak, "The Affective Aesthetics of Transnational Feminism," *WiN: The EAAS Women's Network Journal*, no. 1 (2018).

2 Judith Butler, "Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics," *AIBR: Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana* 4, no. 3 (2009): ii, DOI: 10.11156/aibr.040303e.

3 Muñoz describes these affective modes as historically specific modes of racial performativity that include depression positions, anxiety, fear, paranoia, and impermanence. José Esteban Muñoz, "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 31, no. 3 (2006): 687, DOI: 10.1086/499080.

4 Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay, ed., *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

5 Maribel Casas-Cortés, "Precarious Writings: Reckoning the Absences and Reclaiming the Legacies in the Current Poetics/Politics of Precarity," *Current Anthropology* 62, no. 5 (2021): 519, 522, DOI: 10.1086/716721.

6 Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Afterword: Critique and Decoloniality in the Face of Crisis, Disaster, and Catastrophe," in *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm*, ed. Yarimar Bonilla and Marison LeBrón (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2019), 393.

7 See Malcolm Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022); Ilka Kressner, Ana María Mutis, and Elizabeth Pettinaroli, ed., *Ecofictions, Ecorealities, and Slow Violence in Latin America and the Latinx World* (London: Routledge, 2019); Maria Lugones, "The Coloniality of Gender," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender and Development: Critical Engagements in Feminist Theory and Practice*, ed. Wendy Harcourt (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

8 Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), xvii.

9 Jan Wilkins and Alvine R. C. Datchoua-Trivaudey, "Researching Climate Justice: A Decolonial Approach to Global Climate Governance," *International Affairs* 98, no. 1 (2022): 126, DOI: 10.1093/ia/iiab209.

10 See Philip J. Deloria, K. Tsianina Lomawaima, Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, Mark Neil Trahant, Lorent Frank Ghiglione, Douglas L. Medin, and Ned Blackhawk, ed., "Unfolding Futures: Indigenous Ways of Knowing for the Twenty-First Century," spec. issue of *Dædalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences* 147, no. 2 (2018); Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2020); Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice from Colonization to*

Standing Rock (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019).

11 Christopher H. Trisos, Jess Auerbach, and Madhusudan Katti, "Decoloniality and Anti-Oppressive Practices for a More Ethical Ecology," *Nature Ecology Evolution*, no. 5 (2021), DOI: 10.1038/s41559-021-01460-w.

12 "Colonialism . . . has exacerbated the effects of climate change. In particular, historic and ongoing forms of colonialism have helped to increase the vulnerability of specific people and places to the effects of climate change." Harriet Mercer, "Colonialism: Why Leading Climate Scientists Have Finally Acknowledged Its Link with Climate Change," *The Conversation*, April 22, 2022, https://theconversation.com/colonialism-why-leading-climate-scientists-have-finally-acknowledged-its-link-with-climate-change-181642.

13 "An emerging trend is that more of those displaced for climate reasons are crossing borders. It is also apparent that local conditions, geographical context, and institutional incentives will affect the impact of climate change; and that climate change may act as a threat multiplier in relation to poverty, failures of governance, and lack of human security." Eamonn Noonan and Ana Rusu, "The Future of Climate Migration," Strategic Foresight & Capabilities Unit, European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/729334/EPRS_ATA(2022)25729334_EN.pdf.

14 Rebecca Hersher, "Climate Change Was The Engine That Powered Hurricane Maria's Devastating Rains," *NPR*, April 17, 2019, https://www.npr.org/2019/04/17/714098828/climate-change-was-the-engine-that-powered-hurricane-marias-devastating-rains.

15 Hersher, "Climate Change."

16 Maldonado-Torres, "Critique and Decoloniality," 394, 386.

17 Maldonado-Torres, "Critique and Decoloniality," 387.

18 Maldonado-Torres, "Critique and Decoloniality," 388.

19 Maldonado-Torres, "Critique and Decoloniality," 389–90.

20 Maldonado-Torres, "Critique and Decoloniality," 392.

21 Maldonado-Torres, "Critique and Decoloniality," 395.

22 Brian Russell Roberts, *Borderwaters: Amid the Archipelagic States of America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), loc. 458, loc. 629.

23 Roberts, *Borderwaters*, loc. 997.

24 Archipelago was, according to Roberts, first used to name the island-studded Aegean Sea and subsequently invoked metaphorically to describe other island chains and island-filled seas.

25 Roberts, *Borderwaters*, loc. 1104.

26 I have summarized this debate at length elsewhere, most recently in Reimer, "Precarity & the Practice of Chicano/a Poetry."

27 This is, of course, an oversimplification of a cohort and canon of diverse and complex scholarship. The point here is not necessarily to reproduce in this limited article space the distinct but complimentary arguments made by Hunt, Moten, Mackey, and others but rather to signal the larger theoretical conversations and communities this works positions itself.

28 See Barbara Jane Reyes, "Interview with Barbara Jane Reyes," interview by Craig Santos

Perez, *Jacket* 2, May 10, 2011, https://jacket2.org/commentary/talking-barbara-jane-reyes; Timothy Yu, "Asian American Poetry in the First Decade of the 2000s," *Contemporary Literature* 52, no. 4 (2011), DOI: 10.1353/cli.2011.0040; Craig Santos Perez, *Navigating Chamoru Poetry: Indigeneity, Aesthetics, and Decolonization* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2022).

29 J. Michael Martinez, interview by Craig Santos Perez, *Jacket* 2, June 14, 2011, https://jacket2.org/commentary/talking-j-michael-martinez-about-his-new-book-%E2%80%98heredities%E280%99.

30 In the Notes section of the book, Girmay explains that the title for this series takes part of its inspiration from the sound "elelelele," "ululatory sounds" people in Eritrea (and elsewhere) make. "Elelegy," she says, "means to place itself in both the English elegiac tradition and the ululatory traditions of grieving and joy in cultures of North and East Africa." Aracelis Girmay, *The Black Maria* (Rochester: BOA Editions, 2016), 108. The yoking of North African and Western forms comprises another layer of the work's transnational layering.

31 Girmay, *The Black Maria*, 10.

32 Girmay, *The Black Maria*, 13.

33 Girmay, *The Black Maria*, 40.

34 Girmay, *The Black Maria*, 40.

35 In the text, "Luam" is a composite figure drawn from several different female characters, historical and contemporary, quasi-factual and purely fictional, who share backgrounds of displacement and migration. It also names a fish and, in Tigrinya, means "peaceful" and "restful." Girmay, *The Black Maria*, 11.

36 Girmay, *The Black Maria*, 40.

37 Elizabeth DeLoughery and Tatiana Flores, "Submerged Bodies: The Tidalectics of Representability and the Sea in Caribbean Art," *Environmental Humanities* 12, no. 1 (2020): 138, DOI: 10.1215/22011919-8142242.

38 DeLoughery and Flores, "Submerged Bodies," 142.

39 DeLoughery and Flores, "Submerged Bodies," 141.

40 A condition of this same act also requires goods shipped between points in the United States to be carried by vessels built, owned, and operated by Americans. This restriction initially contributed to the hold-up in getting relief and aid to Puerto Rico in the wake of the hurricane, although it was later temporarily suspended by President Trump in order to facilitate the arrival of necessary aid. Niraj Chokshi, "Trump Waives Jones Act for Puerto Rico, Easing Hurricane Aid Shipments," *New York Times*, September 28, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/28/us/jones-act-waived.html.

41 Rose Christoforo-Mitchell, "The Heritage and Culture of Puerto Ricans," Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, February 6, 1991, https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/curriculum/units/1991/2/91.02.06.x.html.

42 For a thorough accounting of neoliberal coloniality in a Puerto Rican context, see Rocío Zambrana, *Colonial Debts: The Case of Puerto Rico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021). Zambrana's introduction begins with an epigraph from Salas Rivera's *lo tercerio / the tertiary* (2018).

43 The entire extent of the Puerto Rican debt crisis is longer and more complex. For a

breakdown, see Laura Sullivan, "How Puerto Rico's Debt Created a Perfect Storm Before the Storm," *NPR*, May 2, 2018, https://www.npr.org/2018/05/02/607032585/how-puerto-ricos-debt-created-a-perfect-storm-before-the-storm.

44 Zambrana, *Colonial Debts*, 10–11.

45 Yarimar Bonilla and Marison LeBrón, "Introduction: Aftershocks of Disaster," in *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2019), 16–17.

46 Charley E. Willison, Phillip M. Singer, Melissa S. Creary, and Scott L. Greer, "Quantifying Inequities in US Federal Response to Hurricane Disaster in Texas and Florida Compared with Puerto Rico," *BMJ Global Health* 4, no. 1 (2019), DOI: 10.1136/bmjgh-2018-001191.

47 Samantha Rivera Joseph, Caroline Voyles, Kimberly D. Williams, Erica Smith, and Mariana Chilton, "Colonial Neglect and the Right to Health in Puerto Rico After Hurricane Maria," *American Journal of Public Health* 110, no. 10 (2020), DOI: 10.2105/ajph.2020.305814.

48 Maldonado-Torres, "Critique and Decoloniality," 392.

49 Zambrana, *Colonial Debts*, 7.

50 Raquel Salas Rivera, *while they sleep (under the bed is another country)* (Minneapolis: Birds LLC, 2019). Salas Rivera's text does not have page numbers.

51 Salas Rivera, *while they sleep*. Salas Rivera does not offer translations in the text. All translations from Spanish by Jennifer A. Reimer.

52 Maldonado Torres, "Critique and Decoloniality," 395.

53 "Interview with Aracelis Girmay," *The Poetry Foundation*, accessed October 10, 2022, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/aracelis-girmay.

54 Casas-Cortés, "Precarious Writings," 522.

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