

Craig Santos Perez

Age of Plastic

The doctor presses the plastic probe
against my pregnant wife's belly.

Plastic leaches estrogenic and toxic chemicals.

Ultrasound waves pulse between plastic,
tissue, fluid, and bone until the embryo
echoes. *Plastic makes this possible.* My wife
labors at home in an inflatable plastic tub.

Plastic disrupts hormonal and endocrine systems.

After delivery, she stores her placenta
in a plastic freezer bag. *Plastic is the perfect
creation because it never dies.* Our daughter
sucks on a plastic pacifier. *Whales,
plankton, shrimp, and birds confuse plastic
for food.* The plastic pump whirrs;
breastmilk drips into a plastic bottle.

Plastic keeps food, water, and medicine fresh—
yet how empty plastic must feel
to be birthed, used, then disposed
by us: degrading creators. *In the oceans,
one ton of plastic exists for every three tons
of fish—*how free plastic must feel

ECOPOETIKON

www.ecopoetikon.org

"Plastic is
wholly
swallowed up
in the fact
of being
used:
ultimately,
objects
will be invented
for the sole
pleasure
of using them.
The hierarchy
of substances
is abolished:
a single one
replaces
them all:
the whole world
can be
plasticized,
and even
life itself..."

—Roland
Barthes,
Mythologies
(1957)

when it finally arrives to the paradise
of the Pacific gyre. *Will plastic make
life impossible?* Our daughter falls
asleep in a plastic crib, and I dream
that she's composed of plastic,
so that she, too, will survive
our wasteful hands.

From *Habitat Threshold*, Craig Santos Perez, Omnidawn Publishing, 2020