

from unincorporated territory [saina]

Craig Santos Perez



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With the Saina as his figurative vessel—a ship built in modern times as an exact replica of the swift outriggers designed and sailed by the Chamorro people until banned by their oppressors—Craig Santos Perez deftly navigates the complexities in his bracing exploration of the personal, historical, cultural, and natural elements of his native Guam and its people. As the title—from unincorporated territory [saina]—suggests, by understanding where we are from, we can best determine where we are going. Perez collages primary texts and oral histories of the colonial domination and abuse brought by the Spanish, the Japanese, the United States, and the capitalist entertainment/travel industry, with intimate stories of his childhood experiences on Guam, his family's immigration to the US, and the evocatively fragmentary myths of his ancestors. Resonant too in Perez's title, and throughout this work, is this poet's evocation of the unincorporated and unfathomed elements of our natures, as he seeks the means to access an expansiveness that remains inexpressible in any language. Perez is not afraid to press language beyond the territories of 'the known' as he investigates both the anguish and the possibilities that horizon as one attempts to communicate the spoken and unspoken languages of one's native people, while fully appreciating the suffering inherent in every word he will use that is pronounced in, and thus pronounces, the language of their oppressors.



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