

Craig Santos Perez

~

'[banom] [banom] [banom]'

~

from aerial roots

thru our hands

flood wind-shadows

taya' tataotao sin anining

~

~

where are we when the map ends?

guihi [there, away from speaker and listener]

~

say we can cross any body

of water if we believe

[guahan nests in the hatchery of western pacific typhoons known as "typhoon alley." an average of 31 tropical storms, with sustained winds averaging 120 – 160 miles per hour and gusts over 180 miles per hour, migrate through this area each year]

in our own breath

from aerial roots

“anchor the canoe
guenao” but i can’t see the breakwater—
i’ve listened to these stories i will tell
hãfa este na sinangan
[words in the skin
shed]

“anchor the proa
guini” but i can’t (t)read the currents—
this all took place it’s said ‘according to story’
these stories must be true
hãfa este na sinangan
[words in the bone
break]

“anchor the galaide
guibi” but the waves are breaking and broken—
i’m telling these stories
because i’m listening to them
hãfa este na sinangan
[words in the words

from aerial roots

gi halom i pachot pot i acho' tasi,
haga'ta

deprived, the body becomes
divisible—*'one second worth of damage*

to a coral can take centuries to repair'
time in straight lines

gi halom i lassas pot
i acho' tasi, sinangan'ta—

time in circles
words site

longer than *'as long as the light*
lasts'—taya' hinagong

sin sinangan—
time autonomous

the whole day in the dark,
till at a certain hour, lights

being brought in,
committed to writing—compass

towards place empty of—
time embedded

let there be no end to
what this can bear

from aerial roots

[who died as a result of the Occupation of Guam: December 8, 1941 – July 21, 1944]

~

history inscribes the lines of our palms

without permission

guenao [there, where the listener is]

~

what does it mean to live in the memory of those who don't see us

we inherit each sign is a wave

it was not the sky's fault the wind trades in things unknown to us

~

taya' mina'lak sin binembum

~

it was not the light's fault it will never be too dark for us to see

~

guini [here, in this place]

from aerial roots

how to cast the cut
tongue from the tongue-
tide how to cast
in the wildness of
the lost how to refuse
to accept the present
as definitive how to cast
our voice against
the unbearable how the past
is never satiable
because it is always
present how to cast the story
to let go