

## *Altars*

*There are altars all around the house  
Mothers and prayers  
In tongues unfamiliar to me  
Scrambled in rosary beads  
There are drawers of photos and used candles  
Photos of titos, uncles we used to see bi-yearly  
In Cebu City  
Candle wax dripped and dried  
From our Mother Mary rosaries  
Dead echos of aunties reciting the Hail Mary*

*My native tongue should be primary, but it barely  
passes as second  
It sits as an observation from the family gatherings  
during the Saturday Bible studies  
Titas and titos of Visayan descendant, speaking in Bisaya, just a tangent of admiration in my ears  
I can see the chairs and guitar setup for gospel  
Pa greeting our families  
Kamusta na ka brod! Kaon na ka?  
I envision a rosary and a baby Santo Niño  
Mommyla leading the rosary prayer, next to Ma  
Save us from the fires of hell and lead all souls to Heaven, especially in thy mercy.  
Religion and culture, two tongues I grew up thinking I didn't belong*

*Decided on admirations over disappointment for what I couldn't speak  
Admiration for Bisaya and faith  
But forever continuous in storytelling... and maybe some chisme  
The Filipino storytelling is rooted in spirituality  
In mythology, prayer, and community  
Our volumes are unmatched  
Native dialect is a heritage to me*