

**Translating the Dead**

two days after he died my grandfather's letter arrived  
from Manila thin blue aerogramme trifolded  
and sealed by an aunt who kept vigil typing

what words he had left on Dad's Smith Corona  
the lowercase *i* piercing holes through paper  
i remember late nights after school finding him still

awake listening for my backpack's thud  
on the wood floor leading to his bedroom  
slowly he'd rise a smoker's cough clearing

his throat his voice tunneling the half-dark  
*Are you here now, hija?* a direct translation  
from Tagalog *Nariyan ka na, anak?*

meaning *You're here, child?* meaning  
*I've been waiting my dear* holding now  
the crinkled sheet against October's sky

i find another sky bluer pinpricks  
of light shining through  
like DayGlo stars *Yes, Papa. I'm here.*