

Bell Ringer Poem – “my heart is home” by Maricia Skinna

I close my eyes.
My heart pulls me home.
Across the wide tundra the breeze freely flows.
My spirit soars above the lakes.
I want to breathe it all in, as long as it takes

“In a Neighborhood in Los Angeles” – Francisco X. Alarcón

I learned Spanish from my grandma	with my grandma I learned to count clouds
<i>mijito</i> don't cry she'd tell me	to recognize mint leaves in flowerpots
on the mornings my parents would leave	my grandma wore moons on her dress
to work at the fish canneries	Mexico's mountains deserts ocean
my grandma would chat with chairs	in her eyes I'd see them in her braids
sing them old songs	I'd touch them in her voice smell them
dance waltzes with them in the kitchen	one day I was told: she went far away
when she'd say <i>niño barrigón</i> she'd laugh	but still I feel her with me
	whispering in my ear: <i>mijito</i>

“My Mother Tells Me About Lolo” by Marianne Chan (footnotes added)

<p>It was a Friday, the temperature tepid¹, a perfect day for a trim, my hair down to my waist. My father—with his penchant² for tinkering, his amateurish³ hair salon posture—snipped eight inches off my head easily like tags on newly bought merchandise. Such cavalier-ness⁴, such lack of precision. I saw my new hairdo and cried hard for my lost locks, my diminished⁵ strength. I, a little-girl Samson. He, my Delilah. I wept for hours, until he patted me on the shoulders, said—It’s okay, <i>Inday</i>, it will grow! It will grow! When my hair came back, he never again approached me with a pair of scissors. He reserved his hair-related experiments for his sons, who also found themselves weeping in front of mirrors after he left them as patchy and lop-sided as the stray dogs who chased the Jeeps in Carbon. Again, he replied—Ah, <i>mga amaw!</i> Don’t cry! It will grow back! And years later, when I lived in Germany, when my husband was deployed, I brought my babies home to the Philippines. The little one got sick, had a fever, lost weight so fast no one knew what to do. My father spit on her neck, told her—<i>Inday</i>, you will grow—and soon, she was healthy again, as if this was some incantation⁶, some heathen magic he knew. He died shortly after we left, still young and handsome as César Ramirez. They gelled his hair, sprinkled a little cologne behind his ears. They torched his body, he shrank into ashes.</p>	<p>Years later, when they amputated my mother’s gangrened⁷ legs, he wasn’t around to say: Don’t worry. They will grow back. And when Death took my mother, my brothers, he wasn’t alive to tell the ones left behind: They will grow, they will all grow, they will all grow back. And he was right to be dead and silent. No one who has died has ever returned, has ever grown back from the loam. We prayed for resurrections, but the dead remain as memories that seemed to shrink in the mind, like an airplane appearing smaller the further it gets from the ground</p>
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Footnotes

1. Tepid (adj) – slightly warm
2. Penchant (n) – a strong habit of doing something
3. Amateurish (adj) – lacking skill
4. Cavalier (adj) – arrogant
5. Diminished (adj) – made smaller or less
6. Incantation (n) – a group of words said as a magic spell
7. Gangrened (v) – to become infected with bacteria, causing your skin to grow numb and turn black.

“Stepping Stones” by Albert Wendt

Our islands are *Tagaloaalagi's* stepping stones across *Le Vasa Loloa*
small and frail but courageous enough to bear his weight and mana

high enough to keep us above the drowning and learning
how to navigate by the stars currents and the ferocity of storms

Point and sail in any direction as long as you know
how to return home

You have to navigate the space between the borders
of your skin and the intelligence of the tongueless horizon

and learn the language of touch of signs and pain
of what isn't and what may be in the circle of the tides

that will stretch until you understand the permanent silence
at the end of your voyage

and our islands are your anchor and launching site
for the universes that repeat and repeat

like the long waves of our ocean like *Tagaloaalagi's*
compulsive scrutiny of what is to come and fear