

**Tabi apo**

*by Denver Ejem Torres*

He used his belt, pure leather,  
with a gold buckle, to exorcise  
his engkanto enemy  
out of his little boy's body.

My father was certain  
an engkanto was living inside my body.  
The very same engkanto, who,  
somewhere in Bulua, he upset once.  
He confessed that he took a shit  
on the doorsteps  
of the engkanto's golden mansion  
— a big sprawling balete  
to those denied of the special eye.  
He was certain it was not  
what he ate from the fiesta table  
that upset his stomach.  
It was the malditong engkanto  
who would not budge  
even after reciting  
tabi apo, tabi apo, tabi apo.  
All his life, this was what he believed in  
and I was caught in between their battle.  
This upsetting truth was why our house  
was filled with lotsa yelling.