Here is a story

Sometime way back in time, on an island
Some woman got knocked-up, through no fault of her own,
no fault of the stars or season, with no reason,
but for some stray passion laid
like a strap mistaken for love,
that kind of dance where one and one
discover they fit like a glove.

It was that shove that bore me,
that dove me, drove me down on and out,
screaming into the heat of streets shimmering with dust lusting
the air like pale windows, glass quivering— you could
see right through to Cebu,
which in case you don’t know,
is a "province of the Philippines located in the Central Visayas region,
and consists of a main island and legion of 167 islands and islets."
and in some past age, during her golden season,
she was dubbed "the Queen of the South",
the oldest city and first capital of the country, which was
a beacon, as the Boxer Codex claims, of trade, and of gold,
a thousand nations folded and woven through
an archipelago of the South Pacific,
glossy with silk, jade, and prolific
with culture— Yes, those Filipinos flossed.

We wore among our lingling-os, robes gilded,
embroidered, heavy with gold chains, oh yes!
Our grills were black.
And ladies, women ran the show
could have a husband or two or three
or four to sack.
Now, this was a kingdom!
Or rather many,
Manila, Taytay, Namayan, Tondo,
Pangasinan, Mindano, Lanao,
Tagalog, Butuan, and Sulu,
and among these raqhahnates, hundreds of
tribal datus.

And Cebu, C-E-B-U
that in our ancient Austronesian language
was short for "place of trading"
or in Old Cebuano "Sugbu"
which means "scorched earth"?

Scorched earth?
That old war tactic to torch, burn, and incinerate
all for the purpose of obliterating "anything useful to the enemy."
But the enemy is…
Who?

Here is a story. And it is true.
When you give humans power
they will do, what they do.
Something dark comes through.
There were always wars among my people.
Ununited, tribes went after tribes, Hindus after the Moro.
And when Spain came a conquering,
they perverted our tomorrows.
They murdered our baybayin, our writing, our religions,
as though bringing sorrow in the name of the Lord was all they could do.

At least we killed Ferdinand Magellan too.

Our hearts were built to fight.
Sometime during this dark night of our past,
Jose Rizal wrote that we Filipinos should own our right
to freedom and independence.
And so, we set our sights toward a future,
And a revolution that we won!

And then came the United States of America.

There isn’t enough time to talk about this.
The trauma of becoming of a colony is a drama
far too wretched and confusing, stranger than fiction.
How do you express 333 years of living with contradictions?
Of the self and identity. Though our history is rich, bold,
and full of plenty, why do I wake up at night feeling so empty?
I am American!

I live here too!

With my back swole with all this past
I was brought over by parents who fought and fought each other
and the new world until at last all dreams deferred
they recast themselves in the image of this country,
this bountiful nation, where if you were poor and worked hard
you could jettison your station and become anything.

Is this story true?

I've found
so much of living here,
is about heartbreak,
and what you are told
to do.
And to be.
And the system has been made to
to assure that you will never see higher than
what a white man can see.
And so we split ourselves in little pieces to survive the wounds,
to protect that small thing inside us that
we call "me."

But here is The Story. And it is true.

I am
Deep love pulled from the core of all the colors of myself.
I am wind, vice, thrice the number of universes
spit out from some black hole event horizon
culling systems, solar, galactic, fantastic.
I came through. Like you, came through.

Birth is not about your build or guild,
or how the bang-bang of conception brought you about.
It is love—broad, wide, deep, alive,
shivering with the starlight straining each of your atoms.
All energy, all life, universes in a grain of sand,
asking, again, and again, and again
the same questions.

Who am I?
What is here?
How do I make sense of the bedrock of my body
while sensing all the senses coming through
from the stew of the world, stirring far more than a few
billion others, including, but not limited to

We are more than what we can know
more than what we can conceive,
more than the small view that we get
when we’re born.

And if we just believe and believe and believe.
we will outdo all ourselves.

All stories must be shared.
So, we got work to do.