

JANAN ALEXANDRA

heritage language

i.

i am beginning to learn
after 30 years of exposure
to words & sounds
sculpted perfectly
in my mother's throat
another kind of history there
language & family bits
sweetness in what is
passed & scattered
like names
slid off a map

studying alone
at home
like sunlight
inside the morning
a tray of coffee & dates nearby
on the starry kitchen counter
powdered sugar
sifted finely
through thin mesh
hardly visible
in quick white dust

ii.

when we came to America
an archive locked
our teeth
fastened
around a silence
our lips made
hanging circles in the air
a shapely absence

my mother kept records
in her jewelry box:
a clutch of hair
wrapped in paper
the small sukuun
little roundness
keyhole, doorway
we peered through