

# Epiphanies in my life: letters to mother

After Hala Alyan

An oak's shadow leaves a kaleidoscope. It is always noon in

Rio de Janeiro

and my aunt's porcelain  
Madonna sat by front window:  
where you left her. Below, waves  
smiled snaggletooth foam from

Leblon beach where grandmother  
used to sit and count passersbys  
before she died. I never met her  
but remember your stories. The

gold locket you gave me rested  
on my heart, the intertwines V  
for Valentina and A for Arlindo:  
now belongs to my daughter.

I will never forget running  
on the beaches of Ipanema  
to Copacabana, where you  
first met my father in the forties;

Seattle

Where rain spattered Calder's metal,  
eagle towered over my sunglasses,  
in the mists of a Sculpture Garden,  
Aaron pointed to the open doorway

of an oyster bar, where a firepit warmed  
the center of a room. Audrey pulled  
and we sat to glints of ocean  
glasses of Sauvignon Blanc fresh—

oysters on the half shell,  
salad with bay shrimp sustained  
us before we wandered to Pikes  
Market to immerse ourselves in

bouquets and cherries before  
returning to Freemont,  
that giant crushing California,  
VW bug near Aaron's apartment,

Denver

as the usually spacious park,  
near City Hall crowded

with protestors underneath  
glare illuminated signs

speaking out against policies  
of the Trump Administration:

Thirty-four thousand strong connected  
to hear Bernie Sanders

angrily defying Musk's chainsaw.

Policies against the people of  
America, while dandelions grew

decorated grass, while butterfly  
helicopters flew overhead

any city where you must listen to know it. Everyone hides

whales

that choruses ocean songs  
where my children trilled  
in my lap as babies,  
before they grew to

veils

of royal purple that covered  
my head at weekly mass,  
as a girl created illusions  
of glamour of mystery out

contrails

a city of Helenite near  
an active volcano,  
in lands of multiplicity—  
nesting in Russian dolls,

earn a place in their own  
boats in their own seas,  
by their own houses after,  
lives of ancestors became

stories we tell under Tanzanite  
skies, listening to guitar in  
a backyard house of  
a new country. And if you,

notice when bluebirds call  
watch Blue Jays from the East—  
mate with Steller's jays  
as you eat a meal al fresco

if you crack the egg open,

of hymns. Candles, choirs  
of my young life's supplication,  
where a rose did not fit,  
my dark hair like

Spanish señoritas of lavender,  
a doll from Olivera Street

with a dove in hand  
to reveal the duality of her—

the Anima and Animus.  
that once concealed your girl  
from her own identity script,  
that the fortune cookie conceals:

if you pull the wrapper away,

in reflections of clouds  
ideas, entities, and archetypes,  
pulling like a rubber gumby,  
a plastic egg at Easter

dancing like tops spinning  
on uneven asphalt.

as anchors catch, unhook,  
unrealized pathways—

Choices I never made  
from blueprints you once gave me:  
restricted like a glass of gumballs  
I longed for but could not possess

if you chew that chartreuse gum.

within, you will find a magnifier.