



no, dear

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No, Dear
Issue 21
STATES

[qmlc]

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Westward

My mother's shoes were beautiful:
small and jeweled with pointy toes.
And this Louisiana sky is beautiful:
spare and pale and cloud dusted.
Among the other beauty I have witnessed:
a jar in the sun, yesterday's jeans hung
on the back of a chair, all the blooming.
Once, I drove all night, and when the sun came,
it looked so unfamiliar, I gave it a new name.

Nicole Callihan

My Momma's Trip

She left Trinidad to come to the states. With what? Crumpled native passport pages. Curry eggs left unfertilized. Hands stained from TT Guardian. Tonka bean strings woven into teeth. Carnival rhythms coded into muscle memory; gyrated to Kitchener on a negro.

Sun tanned leather skin traversing through life.

My Indian mother left with a negro. To do what? To turn over in your new bed and call him nigga man. To have a dougla baby whose blood lines divided like Neapolitan ice cream. To do accounting because you say, *I like figures*; a figure that slowly fades into NYC skyline, blends into Brooklyn Bridge's draping cables that cloak your innocence, your prominent eyes, your fractured dream. You learn to order coffee. *What kind of coffee you want?* Anthora's cup provides choice. You raise up that dougla baby on Circle Lines revolving around liberties, Strand dates stacking versions of self, fluffy Lemon Meringue kisses, and Corona soaked lime wedge smiles. On Sundays, you cook callaloo void of dasheen bush, so you boil down tears and trauma; the soup heals.

Why did you do it? So, my story could not be yours. So, my state could not be yours.

Roi

Tidaya Sinutoke

Cry

Picture an airport. Suvarnabhumi airport to be precise.
There were bunches of Thai exchange students at the gate.

I was one of them.

We all wore the same t-shirt, with a large pin on it in case we get lost.
When it was time to depart, everyone was crying, hugging their families and friends.

I hugged my family and friends and said my goodbyes, but I didn't cry.
I was the only one who didn't cry at the airport.
Everyone said I was really brave.

And I thought I was brave...

I held myself together pretty well, didn't shed a tear.
Until I finally arrived at my host family's house in Michigan and finished unpacking.

Then, I called my mom.

And the first thing she said was that she felt so strange, driving home alone and seeing
my bedroom empty.

That's when I cried.

And that's when I realized: *the one left behind is the one surrounded by all the memories
of what used to be...*

At first I thought, I'd be in America for just a year, and then I'll be back home.
Who knew that I would end up going to college there?
Or that I would move to New York City.
Then get a master's degree.

Maybe it was meant to be.

But now?

Picture an airport. JFK to be precise.
There were bunches of people at the gate.

It's June 2016 – the last time that my mother visited me in the city.

I cried like a baby at the JFK.
I cried when I saw my apartment empty without her.

Every time I'm in the airport, saying goodbye to my loved ones, I always cry.

*Like I said, the one who is left behind is the one surrounded by all the memories of what
used to be...*

Carolyn Ferrucci

Plastic Covered Couch

My aunts carried
salt not for protection
but because they took all they
could get.

Oil and bread and fake visas.
Late shadow of tree approaching
thrift shift on real tight
like free health care
locked into plan until
open enrollment
continuum
denim dick.

Upon arriving
what if my aunts
admitted to being
dykes from Camden NJ,
combatted the late Feb
sadness report
by fucking Backwards
in light rain and by
graphing the word volition.

Savannah Hampton

DEAR IMAGE GENDERED

This shows our relation is invisible.
responsibility as pain and call it empathy. You eat what you know your body rejects and I watch.
There is a website which catalogs lesbian residences. See that building,
a butch used to live there. She made things
inside. There's a map. You can walk along and pretend to understand their
interiorities. Or you can say "let's fuck their visibility."

Draw a map on a body
and refuse to photograph it.

Samantha Grenier

A Floridian Map

Coral Gables

Born here.
Will die here with the
Courthouse built of dead
Coral bricks.

Bay Harbor

You'd think you'd see many portraits of Tarpon or Marlin here.
Maybe hanging on the wall trophy style?
No.
Just Denia and her baby, walking so the ground quakes.
Reminder to send her the note that says
"DON'T GO WASTING YOUR EMOTION,
LAY ALL YOUR LOVE ON ME."

The Everglades

The image whose infernal,
Iconic nature I find comparable to that portrait of
Che Guevara and ALSO
The Madonna--
The anaconda who swallowed the gator and exploded.

Fort Lauderdale

Wilton Manors: at Island City Stage
I saw my brother perform
The role of a gay lover. Did it predict me?
The show was "Daniel's Husband"

Pensacola

What's up here?
St. George Island is off
To the left.
It's where I learned how to ask
"Will you come to the water with me?"
And she took me.

Safia Jama

INTIMACY, SKY AND SEA

From out here, the earth is quiet,
placid in that way that makes astronauts weep

My moon rock heart keeps a safe distance from your mountains,
purpling heather, hills greener than Grasmere

Love, I've been long marooned in the outer stratospheres

Hello, Earth
Beautiful soul mate, your belly full of war

Even as I drift closer to you
I fear my rock heart will ignite and fall
burning,
only to hit
some poor soul on the head
(probably me)

Or my moon rock may fall into the sea,
confusing the rock fish
and making a sun
for the sun fish,
before sinking farther
and faster
past the fathomless deeps,
all the little leagues
we once knew

To sink that deep is to travel into the past
To get this close is to step into old shoes

And in that embrace, let's smoke the horses of memory
from their coral gables

Caitlin McDonnell

Miami

Reading a play by a Pakistani playwright I met on the internet, took home to fuck because it's confusing how I can't have children anymore so why not. There's little time and he was surprising; present, decisive. Kept saying I find you attractive and I kept thinking so what who are you and why should I care what you choose. Now I'm deeply curious. Can you choose me even if I have to review history to even begin to understand your play. How we partition nations, bodies, lives? Is it okay that I understand Brangelina better than Karachi in your glossary? My skin is so white here in Miami. Didn't bring sunscreen. It's so calmly crowded. When you pay for things they are yours. It's nearing 5 and I still have not gone in the water. I meant to write about childbirth and death. How I was strapped down in Ireland when I told them I was being born and my father was strapped down 24 years later the same month so that he wouldn't take his breathing tube out and die. When I gave birth, I was not strapped down but squatting and leaning against a man who felt anonymous like a tree and the snow was falling quietly on the river. I didn't scream. He wrote he didn't scream when the bombs went off and they handed him a mask. He says it's okay that we jumped into bed because he trusts his body and always has. My friend said I seemed calm as mine burst open to let my daughter out. Deep breaths. Even cracked jokes. We told them to take my father's tube out. He opened his eyes wide and looked around. A hawk circled the window. In answer to my earlier question, of course it's not okay. None of this is even close to okay.

The Everglades

The large brown national

Some nature I feel comparable to that yearning

(The Garrison and ALX)

The Maldives

The separate who swallowed the green and engulfed

Tahira Khalid

Just Between Us

I learned to swim inside my mother
Who waited for her life
Inside her grandmother
Who crossed the ocean in a ship
from Southern Italy
Hardly steady enough to float

My mother promised me this before I was born
I would be delivered from her
Without intervention

And so I was.

My father gave me my name
My mother chose it
It means Pure
The significance is lost on tongues
Accustomed to a different language

Dad, that is what I call him.
Not abba, not baba
Whispered
La ilaha illallah
Mohammad ur rasulallah
In my little ear
Still soft
With fine dark hairs

I am theirs.
I am of them.
Both

Sometimes I don't know the best way to be myself
But I continue to exist

Rami Karim

Greetings from the Suspended Self

My ambition is clumsy. Only airplanes can fly.
Rural people cannot grasp aeronautics. Deep
inhales when I am anxious, retelling this to my
own. But I've already boarded. The engine mutes
polite exchanges. When I sleep I am landing again.
Cousins appear through oval windows as though
stranded. A decade ago I had my own place, said it
would only be a year. I waved to the plane that
delivered me. Worked to forget the ocean. Slept to
forget the work. I fell in love with amenities and
married someone. We have a dog, and there is a
doctor who treats animals specifically.

Omotara James

When I said I had Obamacare, what I meant was *Medicaid*

Know I should
but can't articulate
that *down and out*
nobody wants to talk about

that *nobody wants you*
nobody needs you Nina thing
she could sing out. I
can't wrap my taffy head around

that Cholera in the over-there water
nobody over here gives a damn about.
That I-don't-want-a-cigarette, but
can ring the smoke in my throat

type of lowdown. That
trouble that flips.
vaults, then lands faith
back into her place, so

she moves up from JV
sorta thing. What
is this aching fiber-
ous breast trying to say?

Doesn't matter, anyway.
Sprain a memory,
drag it through a rhyme
call it poetry

in that thick-lipped,
let me pleasure you, don't
worry about me, self-
less type way.

Sometimes the lines
on this page
appear to me
as waves

Sanjana Nair

December

For Daksha

Your hand on my back, shoves me into my life.

—Marie Carr

There's no ground delivery for this message to you and
no flight can find your address, your state or continent. Loss
is the fog in the valley and I drive the miles alone, through
October Ohio: I'm spooked by the cold and
the landscape's agreement with—

I speed, thinking the sound of the wind will warrant an
answer to—always the unoriginal—
blindly asked—

If a seven day pillbox describes the days, what does it mean
to say I'd never seen your eyes so big, that I'd never seen the true
darkness of those Midwestern November nights? Hope
the tiny white and blue stars of pills, the tiny periods at the end of—
our chapped hands clasped one to the other—
the prayer of a daughter for a mother and won't it mean more,
our four hands clasped as one, the weird animal of parent and child
evident, silent. Some days we swear

we can hear the irises growing, if not for the damn crickets.
Ohio is too loud with crickets of wanting. We're full of desire
for the purple waiting, the week to give us another *Monday*. We preserve the
hairs of your head. *Tuesday*: Too many pills to count so we stop trying. *Wednesday*: Illness
learns a new vocabulary. We spell it leiomyosarcoma. *Thursday*: I think there will be no day
without you, even without you. *Friday*: Forgive. Work to forgive those who want
to die. Dying is unromantic. *Saturday*: Silence. I learn that language is the homeland
for loss. *Sunday*: Some other week is coming and we drop our hands.

We made the cut, we live in its scabless red and it's all over
only to start again. I reach for your hands but you pull away

and I see the look of your eyes, the warning that I have to learn to—
day it seems you might metamorphose into something Greek and mighty,
the smalls of your bird-bone frame might decide in rebellion
to quit all that pain, to allow a naming of things, again. This, life.
You know better. I think of China. You near the muddy Ganges,
and you do not see whether I am a child or grown or gone but
the thing is with you and the thing is, with you
I am always a child. Without you, I cannot be any—

thing but a daughter, in love with her origins. I want you to be
of the transient trunks of the baobab trees. Go with them when they fall.
Prove the stories that they are here, spirit wood and spirit stays and
stay with them and I will make it to Africa and mark the spots.
I will plant bulbs in the rash of the landscape they leave behind, green
the dying ground, watch the irises bloom. What else would it be? I will gather
the living color in my arms, fly it home and keep them as nightlights, bedside.
The living will love you, still. It is you who is free

of the living. Of me. As long as the crickets sing and the green greens,
you mark me. My dark wish for you is freedom so you
can forget me. Be of green tree and warm zephyr and the blue river.
Please, just be. Time is blurring for us and we are in the stars
of December, now. Aries, Eridanis, You: The Perseus of the sky.
You are riding the last light of departure and the river is beside you.
The night you leave, I know the Erie will freeze over
and the light of you will find me before the darkest night follows.

The iris will be sleeping, and when I wake I will think you can
walk Persephone through the snow and woods beside me.
The wind will wipe away my solo tracks, but there are no good
names for the wind in Ohio, though I want to name the sound, to
hear you speak in the nameless, cruel thing. Instead, all is white: Color
extinguished. I want the green and the Sirocco, a desert-wide grouping of the
hands of children to hold me. I don't yet know that I will have many and
that they will abandon this place to join you. And really,

I am too simple. I look for you in every angle of my raised arm
as I stir the pot for the only child I will feed and raise and she
is a glorious zephyr, the shadow of your forehead, located on her brow,
raised regularly, at the age of three, at me. The answer is not
in bird-winged flight, in wheels, in landscape or in air. Not in paper.
Not in words. But in the rhythm, the pattern running through it all,
in my journey to find a new home—you are there—gone—everywhere—

My daughter takes my hands, and surely, our four clasped as one,
the weird animal of parent and child is evident, still. Silent.

auricle

Everyday my body becomes something more and more unnamable,
 someone i know through softness alone. Morning leans slow
 across the sweep, whispers, whispers.
 One day, i hope i can feel beautiful. What i mean is not holding
 everything so tight, as if it were all rushing away,
 already returning to dirt. i exist, not barely,
 a creature, wild of vision. Paint my lips in midnight, line my eyes chrome,
 do my best with the stubble, lacquer nails turquoise, rose, go outside.
 This is a dangerous poem.
 i'm chewed up and spit. Part cleft, part suture, a secret you might pearl.
 Why do i feel worse for those who've dragged me?
 Simone says, woman is made. By logic, man, too. Hear the bones knock,
 clack, scraped clean, the sinew, snapped. Can you remember anything else?
 Something you already know, how a scar recalls
 both trauma and healing, weaves
 a tangled vision. My body turns unnamable. Emphasis, every syllable.
 If severing my auricle could let me hear you clearly, i would.
 Do you know how long it takes to get anywhere near?
 i don't know anything, except that none of us are
 exactly what

IS LAND MARKED AND TO WHAT END

Spine flushed entrenched to the opening they
 turn their hips in the direction I'm looking.
 When they touch the sensation of the pegged
 shut position of absence as needing to be filled.
 I'm overwhelmed by them. Light on the back
 state lines drawn positions filled we see ourselves
 walk by the crisis like watching villainous
 housewives on bravo. When I asked what are
 you afraid of they said losing myself. In efforts to
 slow this post-flood fall I tie a loop of string to
 my gender and attach it at the center of
 whirlpool where energy concentrates like nerves
 humming in the clit.

Jean Lee

In sequence.

because she is still
beneath the concrete
body dispersed and
cycling back to water

my life is
capsized by
her tenacious
streaming. She
is the world
The rootstock:
hungry hands
to feed the
severed branch
the blade the
pulp between
our eager
Teeth

Cynthia Manick

I want to see a black woman love on television like it's normal

Be camera. Be kaleidoscope. Quicksilver in the front room where everything is worn but you can smell tea tree oil or cinnamon from something bought not baked. She likes the word languish, Crystal Waters, and bass. She decides to add a man or woman to her diet. They argue about trash day and who's turn it is. Something sparkles loose-limbed. See the first smile then the third. Be the lens of her gaze at the stove during winter. She likes buying things on sale; wears matching pajamas that are good for dancing. Or maybe she can't dance at all. She has no rhythm, just sways back and forth like an acolyte to the morning. All of her bills are paid. She has braids the right length to pull yourself in. Life lines in her hands are strong; she knows how to reach for stars she can keep. Enjoys a green smoothie from the vendor on Smith. All of her brothers are alive and free. Fear touches the air around their clothes but they don't let it in. She knows people is what feels like home. At night she likes Ritz crackers dipped in tea cause it's what her father ate. She thinks about getting a turtle or fish named Jon Jon. She's a cougar for men who play an instrument. With sex there's heat in every thunder, an avalanche rising. She doesn't have a sassy white friend who talks too much about the wrong things. There's a run in her stockings but she doesn't care. She's trying to fit all parts of herself - grandfather's wet sea pearls, her mother's windowsill aloe, knowledge that dark-colored feathers are strong and fray less.

Emily Blair

Month to Month

living room full of
yellow light
peeling lacquer table
peony pattern overlaid with
white water rings
Peter Pan record spinning
into Neverland
like a village green
long-legged spiders sitting in
dusty corners
held together with straight pins
as I lie awake wrapped in
Superman sheets
silver shelves sagging with
main characters
turned out of doors in Chapter One
wondering at the sugar-maples
bright red

just enough fever to skip school
goldfinches on the feeder
hung with suction cups
the old orange tree that died and came back
dropping tiny sour fruits
over and over
burlap couch folded out
crowded with stuffed animals
wooden spool chairs
of the corrugated cardboard dollhouse
you toiling over your manual typewriter
carbon paper
and correction tape
second-hand books
heard first in your voice then my own
pretending to be unafraid
behind the picture window
not yet cut down

James Barickman

cacti and desert flora of the great southwest

you make everything into animals
:
the mighty hedge

hog, the ladybug patterning
those unnamed rat plants that

worm the hop sage and lie
unseen by the toadflax

These are shapes with titles
no one bothered

to make or keep stuck
along the useless parts of dirt

(we are lost for our words)

On a good day you could see
suggestions in the horizon

the uncolored corners of mountain
curves give you your size

your shape make you feel it
(a sky that is not a sky)

Beavertail stems short and
flailing form the bottom

plume needles like fish-
hooks over any

kind water *(none of us
are worried)*

You too have your hooks
there, at the sides, you've

little bits of mouth at both ears
:
a fox's jaw bone

sawn, a half each (*they're talking now*
This thing right now) the sort of jewelry

you called dead with a voice
 like some string sections in disco tunes

the parts firming the landscape
 while a song quiets—their bows,

you know, are wound
 from hairs a dry hand finds

at a horse's mane (*but we're not sure*
what to call them)

(Hyper)cycling

It first occurred to him
 between Sandusky and Toledo
 (black jersey, black asphalt),
 after he slept by Lake Erie

(and wrote

change the crankshaft
buy new brake pads
oil the chain)

when the traffic in his brain drove
 into his neurons, then into the muscles
 in his fingers that wrote
 and wrote so much (nothing)

(what then

Henry Hotel
electroshock treatments
whoremonger)

still miles to the Pacific,
 (and a wretched lifetime yet)
 before wife, then child,
 then child

(occurred to him

biking at night
w/o lights
suicide?)

Valerie Hsiung

MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE

By her own admission it was blue outside
By her own admission Mt Rainier
By her own admission she wore a sundress
By her own admission she did not leave
By her own admission she made no attempt to leave
By her own admission that was her signature
By her own admission that was her name
By her own admission her memory remained intact
By her own admission her faculties remained intact
By her own admission she would sit in the walk-in freezer sit and ponder for a very long time
By her own admission that was her name on the tab
By her own admission that was her name carved on the side of the tub
By her own admission it was Thursday
By her own admission like it'd never be Thursday again
By her own admission something about how
By her own admission there was no gun pointed at her at any point
By her own admission and no one asking if she felt better
By her own admission she could read the clues
By her own admission they the clues were right in front of her
By her own admission he did say he was sorry

Julia Johanne Tolo

you can see America from here

another [redacted] this morning in the town of [redacted]

things are most real
right after they happen
as you watch them on youtube

things are most real
when there's been a gun in the room
when all you see are parents with frozen faces
looking for their broken children

when there's been a gun in the room
all you see are broken things
looking for their token children
mutant children looking for the camera

this is the noise of the scene noise of a sob noise of a gun noise
of a television crew then a car passing in the afternoon a crowd of people
gathering a commercial for the town emphasizing this is still a safe place a
national hotline for victims of the crime victims of the images sliding by on their
screens victims of a country a space where the loudest voice is saying *now is not*
the time to talk policies

all you see are broken things
right after they happen
constant children looking for the camera
as you watch them on youtube

Lynne DeSilva-Johnson

FATAL RUN_TIME ERROR

C: \ users > unknown source position

The program has caused a 'General Protection' fault at 08x0011m16y

RUN : _____ [of] 'emergency'

\$S [if _____ :: <then>= 'state']

_____ your name for the record

_____ your case

_____ your purpose

ANYTHING YOU SAY CAN BE USED
AGAINST YOU IN A COURT OF LAW
SWEAR TO TELL THE WHOLE TRUTH
AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

the candidate's campaign manager
says he reckons only christians
should be in office, see,
on account of swearing in on a bay-bul

He doesn't know you can use
the book of your choosing
My barista required more demonstrated
experience and job skills to
make minimum wage
than some of our highest offices

But I want to know:

Wherefore atheists?

Do they perform, ignore, and use
the nearest sacred text?

Can you swear in on

Socratic dialogues, or

Timothy Morton's *Hyperobjects*?

Just hypothetically;

We know no one in office can be out
as a faithless heathen

[PROGRAM REMOVAL FAILURE: the application failed to initialize\
\$TJ 1.1.1802 "Separation of Church and _____"]

RUN : a sorry _____ \ [of] 'the union'

\$S\o [if _____ :: <then>= 'state of']

We are sorry

For the current

Affairs

All of us bald

And fearful

Here

In this

Undress

Grasping for

Ledges

The copywriter

Generously

Calls this viral

Systemic negligence

New York

Health

Its byzantine

Phonetrees and

Dead ends

Death by

Choking in wait

How to even know your

Mind, your

Being

Except by the constant

Flux, the low hum

Of an ever present

Confusion

System.out ("Do you want to go back to main menu? [y/Y] or [n/N]");

RUN: [PRAY] = @override\stack

To the gods

You have left

Or the void

You are your

Own doctor

Your own flag

And a

Grace

Will be

Your best

Option

{end program}

Nicole Callihan

Cemetery

In Missouri,

Eva swears she sees

the angel in the graveyard

crying, and I tell her about

rainwater, until, of course,

I too see it, and Ella comes

and sees it too, and Cody.

We kneel in the broken grass,

grey sky, warm smoky breath.

Someone else will be dead

by year's end.

There's no telling who.

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