

# No, Dear



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No, Dear

Issue 22

DIASPORA

[clmp]

No, Dear  
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Ebba Zajmi-Gjergji

H nana's feet are cracked,  
O bulging veins crawl up her labored calves.  
M they are a map of her struggle,  
E the markings of her burdens and joys,  
L  
A the weight of water which quenched many thirsts.  
N  
D look at my feet, cracked as hers are,  
S torn up from the work of loving you,  
mangled from being forced out of you,  
calloused – walking torrid foreign lands,  
  
missing something i never knew.

Katherine Menjivar

[When I go searching for the body]

, it feels ill  
-intentioned. The wigs come at me like a flock. They make homage  
to my ankles and I am back in that dream where the sky feels farther with each  
footstep. I said the sky but I meant the horizon, all the dreams I had  
in a basin with no form. So no basin. Just a whirlwind of broken  
conversations that once felt mine. I truly believe they aren't  
déjà vu or the siguanaba, my she. *You can accomplish anything you set  
your mind to.* Who believes that abreast? But the dog watching over the home  
less whose fortune was set for him, or the man who waits for no more  
good mornings short-changed. I wonder who or what pushes the moon's  
buttons. So I focus on the ice cream melting out of the cone  
into my hand. That tongue is sometimes too much.

Eline Marx

Untitled

I want elegant dresses and silk skirts  
To decorate my twisted body  
My adrift skeleton and unredeemed joints  
A lot of perfume  
On my restless lungs and captive liver  
Spangled polish  
On my voracious jealousy  
I want a rare armor  
For my defeated back

I want high heels  
On my hesitating feet

Your proud gaze  
On my merciless sex

I want many rings  
Made of ancient stones and fine silver  
To dress my swollen fingers  
Many birds who can't fly - in my frightened hands

An ecstatic chorus  
To drape the un-beats of my heart

On my craven stomach  
Ingenuous caress and sincere kisses  
A set of bright jewels  
On my raw anger

On the possible lands, I want borders  
Long running borders and their barbed wire  
Infinite iron blades through wild fields of unnamed flowers

In your slender legs and your lively arms  
Arrows, arrows and arrows

I want powerful chemicals  
Changing the shape of the fruits, the color of taste  
Reeking chimeras with their rotating eyes  
Looking after your sleep, your amorous gestures

Brian L. L. L.

Untitled

I want to give to faith  
Many figurines and paintings  
Vast temples, up until the skies  
Candles, mirrors, carpets and guilt

On humans, I want passports  
I want obstinate States on the free deserts  
I want water to bathe  
And oil to drink for the stranger

I want exquisite wine  
For my broken lips

And gracious fishes  
In the aquarium

Dionissios Kollias

Dirt Coverlets Wrap the Naked Bodies

Hidden from the Orthodox gold, the boys in shorts and tanks.  
The curious July heat, a stranger, my nose peeling from an hour in the sun.

I wore philandering gold  
under the salt of the Ionian,  
beneath the medieval tower,  
surrounded by plastic beach toys  
when I accepted my lonesomeness.

Maybe it was the village wine that made me laugh.

Back in Athens, a spliff and a plastic black onyx ring,  
hardened like the clay earth my grandparents worked for.

A warm beer on the rooftop, a stolen cigarette on a foot-wide apartment,  
I swept the floor,  
the color never changed, Greek semen on my belly.

I was lime wash, the low overhang in the Athenian suburb, something meant to stain.  
Twice.

Brittany Leitner

Liberosis

*The desire to care less about things*

he holds my head in his hands and  
he doesn't call me a mexican. i think, su madre  
would approve; there's a word for brown mothers and  
what they think is best: blanqueamiento. it took a while  
to know the word for it, that brown mothers are similar if  
not the same, and even i, third generation texas america, was  
not excluded from that. i am tall and thin,  
not like a mexican, and he looks to me when trying to think  
of a spanish word; he does not forget.  
would you have let men take photos of you naked so you could  
pass through america and put on your hoop earrings  
and pretend nothing happened to you?  
that's the most american thing in the world: to pretend  
do i love him because my mother said I should, or do  
i love him? mi abuelita tells stories of brown women  
trying to pass to america and pass with a chemical bath  
because americans didn't know what brown would do to them,  
they didn't know if brown would stick, if la tos was different  
if brown was contagious. my grandma was not yet born when she  
came in and there were stories of women being photographed.  
brown nipples eyeing down the polaroid arms up over  
their heads to pass through. some say the photos hung in bars,  
on desk tables, and she doesn't know  
if her mother was one of them.

Precious Okoyomon

Sky song

give your body for abstraction  
bite your tongue and eat it  
this is a corrective therapy

now into one alienated and alienating blahhhhhhhhhhhhh  
now into the meat of the word

don't speak to me in obscurities

Re-creation  
strip down  
carry nothing  
but light only light

no longer  
clutch to guaranteed space but  
Recreate space

temporalize space  
the universe as adapting space  
a love that gives space

a love that is space  
ttactile palatial and self-immolating

become the room  
let the silence undo you  
release into the mourning light

Now in your own loving words

NO TO FRAGILITY OF LANGUAGE

NO TO THE EGO

NO TO COLONIAL CONTEXT OF THOUGHT

NO FAKE TENDERNESS

NO TO LIBERATION WITHOUT DESTRUCTION

NO TO SELF DESTRUCTION

NO TO MASTERS

life rubs up against matter inner core against inner core

try not to be afraid you don't have to be afraid

the light washes the body clean lay throbbing in the sky

to live affixed to the circuitry of the world

the body is pinned to the sky in blue

reborn in this energy caught and released lucid intangible realities of dust

the sky sweeps it all away regulate the unconscious play of the mind

have you ever seen pink moonlight ? it's frightening

Nancy Agabian

Raisin Eyes

When meeting for the first time we tell each other where our grandparents come from.  
On both sides,  
village or city,  
state and nation.

We know what the places were called  
by Armenians  
and what they were called  
by Turks,  
Kurds,  
Georgians,  
and Persians.

We trace back time,  
threading a necklace with beads,  
round and black,  
like a child's eyes,  
chamich achker,  
my mother said to me  
because her mother said it to her,  
because her mother said it to her.

It doesn't matter if you are the granddaughter of a survivor from Sepastia by way of Providence or a jeweler in Jackson Heights with roots in Tiflis going back seven generations.

The jeweler resembles Parajanov. Dark face and hair, black and silver, he fixes my aunt's necklace, restringing the loose black beads and tying knots between. It's just costume jewelry, but she passed away last spring so I want it intact.

The jeweler's brown eyes are iridescent, so dark they reflect the fluorescent light of the store or maybe he is calling up the ghosts of his ancestors as he tells me how much he misses his home seventeen years later.

He says it's much better back there: mother and father provide everything for a very young couple: house, car, furniture, even the dishes, and then when they go to college, the grandparents help to raise their children.

Yeah, I'm not so crazy about that I tell him and laugh, my queerness hidden. Then the parents have too much control, and the children don't learn who they are outside of the family.

Yes, he says, but when I grow old I want my children to care for me.

I live alone so I cede him this point. My family extends, I tell him, with people in endless directions. I lived in Armenia for a year and I miss the sense of togetherness. Here we are all working so hard because no one is helping each other.

There is a saying, the jeweler says: your neighbors are your closest family. Ring their doorbell and ask for a tomato. If you do that here, you are crazy. But there can be a down side too, he swings back: when everyone knows every step you make, every bite you swallow.

He ties the last knot to the clasp, and I notice the small gold cross around his neck. Smiling he hands me my lineage. We are beads scatter-shot across the earth, our grandparents from names of places that change.

As he buzzes me out of the store,  
I hold the repaired necklace in my hand,  
looking down at the rows  
of chamich achker.  
Your eyes are like raisins, my mother said,  
which never made sense to me.  
Yes, they are brown-nearly-black,  
but raisins are wrinkled and dry:  
eyes smooth and glassy.  
But she said it with so much love,  
I couldn't help but hold on.



Diaspore

Is this my whittled skin? This pale flap with now-  
here to go, slid off from its  
dermal brethren, translucent in its nothingness, disappearing  
into a cosmic mouth?

Am I mushroom of contested etymology?  
Moss Goddess as avatar, Doll Goddess as daughter,  
mouth or mother,  
names as evanescent meant to say I wouldn't take a doubled  
letter in the form of googly eyes...

*I am Ovid Void. I am caught in Tomis. I beg TriUmphant Augustus,  
Let me live. See, I begin each line with capitals, saluting the power of  
Your August body. My insomnia keeps my mind focused on Your  
Violent presence. You are Worm in my poem, I starve in Your  
Honor. I want to suck Diaspora dry, return to Rome from frightened Tomis  
Where I am hated. I shall return from one Cage to another.  
Look: my writing is nowhere here. Look: I begin to love Death. What good  
Is my inseparable body? Of flesh and work, of family and love of  
Native land. Native land that dries and scatters, nativity inhering in  
each knowing cell.*

*It is darkling here. The food is alien to me. I live under diverse and unknown  
Stars. There is a comet in the sky. Augustus, it is Yours. Look: I preserve You,  
Here, in my Poem. Let me return to You. I will be Your slave.*

\*//my body disappears in my fury from me, you are taken  
from me, i have always been taken, i am your void, i am gone from you,  
i am gone from history, my wife, my children, taken in the cage of rome,  
look, i//\* of Auschwitz, the future anterior: I know you.

I left, I fled, I absconded, I abandoned you, I gave out, I expired, I'm past my sell-by  
date, I left the lot vacant, I voided the seer's eyes with cinders, I vandalized the  
candelabras, I lampooned the sage, I emptied myself out, I instigated a vacuum  
that devoured the entire earth, how did I do this? Disloyalty? Error? I fall down a  
tube into a geothermal void at the center, but it becomes a gateway to the periphery,  
where I flail, unable to navigate, balance, orient myself to the seven directions, or  
otherwise preserve dignity. A grape vine grows out of my mouth, covered with  
parasites. My tears carry my eyes right out of their sockets, down the riverine trails  
of my cheek-furrows, then down my chest to get trapped in the cleavage. What a  
transformation.

*I'm hated there, such as my wife knows. It is an inconceivable void; distance breaks the  
heart. I am at an age where memory plays tricks - not with forgetfulness, but its  
opposite - too much clarity, too many things, even the quality of daylight on cobblestones  
where I once was common. I can no longer serve; I am no longer of service. Diaspora is  
dissemination most often coupled with loss; we rely on our ephemera, favorite blankets,  
and here, the meandering of house-centipedes which provide uncanny solace. There is a  
quality to a place, a resonance of sound which gives meaning to the imminent chorus of  
language. I knew my neighbors and I knew around the corners of their dwellings, as if  
we were nomads always surrounded by the murmuring of history we knew all too well.*

\*//The difficulty is this, the permanency of loss, the splatter of skeins of meaning  
and rumor holding us together as we suffer unto the final permanency of death. And  
what has Rome now given us but an Amerikkka sullied by triple k's reflecting on  
the dark world ahead that eats us alive. And if not us, who? And if not now, when?  
No father's ethics will save us; if elections even matter any more, the dusk of global  
warming and intensive pollutions and extinctions will get us in the end.//\*

*I, Ovid Void, have this to say from my Tristia, "My wounds also, if I have committed no  
crime, may their maker, I pray, desire to heal, and now at length satisfied with a portion of  
my suffering, may he draw off a little of the water from a brimming sea." And this: That  
I am Diaspore myself, my body and mind scattered across this presumed globe we live upon;  
that I am dust spattered out from history, tiny coagulations on the verge of disappearing.  
My hands hold only my hands; my eyes see only my sight; I hear myself until echo disappears  
into the incontrovertible loss of being. And all of us now are on the verge, the cliff, the edge,  
of this catastrophe. And I, Ovid Void, have already crossed over. I am sadnesses aplenty, I am  
singleton unheroic, I am blitherer and blatherer; I humiliate myself in my self-dissemination.  
Invert I am, infolded into fetalility, arms around my updrawn knees, mummified in isolation,  
face pressed into my thighs, wanting a death more certain than beauty and a terror more  
deathly than certain. Draw the curtain*

*Of the Diaspore, I am you. Of the Diaspore, I am of you now.*

SOFRITO

On Saturday morning when the house was clean  
my tía began the long chore of making her famous sofrito.

No one in the family made it the way she did.  
In fact, mami would just buy the premade Goya sofrito from the nearby Key Food and then  
repurpose the container as free tupperware.

Tía would cringe when she would see mami buy that porquería.  
*Eso no sabe igual chica*

tía would tell mami with her lips pursed  
as if she had swallowed more lemon than intended.

*Ay pero who has time for all that,*  
my mother would respond  
in her half American half foreign stance.

Tía made time. She would go to the market to buy all her ingredients. Holding each  
vegetable up to the sun and smelling for something that inspired home.

The garlic/ culantro/ red bell peppers/ green bell peppers/ cilantro/ ajices dulces/  
Spanish onions/ ripe plum tomatoes were all reminders.

I would watch her count the tomatoes and onions, wash the cilantro and ajicitos. She  
would yell over her loud green 1978 blender,

*This is the flavor we are known for!*  
*You can't buy this at a supermarket mija.*

We would laugh and cry at all the spiciness that had kidnapped our eyes and begged for a  
river of ransom. This is what home tastes like. This is what we bring with us. This is what  
they will remember us for.

All this sazón. All this flavor.

My Jewishness

What it's like to be a member  
Of a book club that you never attend  
And you don't read the books

I've never been to synagogue  
Never had a Seder  
I have always loved  
Amar'e Stoudemire  
Since before the Suns  
Since before forever

Chris once told me don't hold a cigarette  
Like I'm holding a joint  
It makes you look like a poseur  
Like a wannabe smoker

A woman once told me  
My Jewishness  
Is a house on a hill  
It belongs to me  
I care for the plants  
Pluck the dying leaves

An upperclassman took my skateboard  
And drove away with it in his Cadillac  
And gave it back at school the next day

After I snitched  
He called me a fucking Jew  
He could tell by looking  
He raised up the ire of the ancients

It is a house  
I lost the keys  
Sometimes I crack the window  
With a rusty crowbar  
I poke my head in  
I smell the dust  
And lie at the light

All Jewish people  
Are more detailed to me

My fandom  
Of Amar'e Stoudemire  
Is the most Jewish  
I ever feel  
When Amar'e shows a glimpse  
Of his former self  
His orbital power  
His shifting intelligence

How one reads the space  
Between bodies  
Like a singer  
And the gaps in a rhythm

Jewishness  
Is about words  
I tell my students

Abraham bargaining with G-d  
Humiliating his father's clients  
Down at the idol shop

You see we  
Jews have always jewed  
I say and smile lovingly  
When the lady at work apologizes  
For accusing her accountant  
Of jewing her  
Out of a grand

And the time a little sixth grader  
Who didn't know how to read  
Whispered at me under his great  
Breath

You fucking Jew

I whisper yelled at him to step outside  
I hissed with the ire of the ancients  
He curled into in a ball and cried  
On the just waxed linoleum floor

The next day his classmate  
Punched him so hard  
He fractured his face  
Into 7000 years of shame

If I believe in G-d  
If I ever did  
He or she certainly  
Rocked you

Chris thought it was would be funny  
To spray paint a Star of David  
On my parent's garage door  
He said it was retro-racism  
I said it was too Kristallnacht

He did it anyways  
In dripping red Rustoleum  
The BMXers in my neighborhood  
Thought it was a pentagram

Genji Amino

flag flag white flag stripe flag  
there star there there red there  
white wife white in white white  
every live every are every every  
blue blue white blue blue red

Raffi Joe Wartanian

THE MESSAGE OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
PRIME MINISTER RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN ON THE EVENTS OF 1915

The 24th of April carries a particular  
opportunity

it is the last  
Armenian citizen

any conscientious, fair and humanistic approach to the issues requires  
suffering as ethnicity

hierarchies  
experienced  
a Turkish proverb,  
duty to  
the Ottoman Empire

in Turkey, 1915 is the requirement  
of democracy and modernity

perceive this climate of  
allegations  
understand historical issues  
it is natural with empathy  
from all sides

The Republic of will continue to every idea with in line with the

1915 as a matter is inadmissible

our pain  
is a humane responsibility

millions of people lost the world  
compassion during

in today's world,  
antagonisms are a common future

## Examination After the Panic Attack: Mosaic

Jason says resilience is more or less  
 genetic for us, I more or less, I settle  
 the tie by cracking myself into seeds of a lesser body. I moor  
 myself to the garden's bed, I shake that more into a puddle of sweat. There it is,  
 a reflection of my god is that enough water for any person to get drunk on  
 and call itself a Moor, and now I am a lost parade in El Barrio with its blood  
 balloons draining into the sky. What a trick I am. I want  
 to bring all of this to the party. I call the Latina therapist Jason recommends she asks  
 if I've ever been to therapy before, I say no, she chuckles.  
 Well, it's necessary. I laugh the way my mother laughs in front of white people.  
 I caress my throat, pet until it is a begging, my Adam's apple  
 at its first willow, my hands cocoon it's worrisome indents, the places  
 where it has forgotten to quench itself. I have 6,000 fingers,  
 they are brown and indigenous, but never enough.  
 They do not cover my face in public; my students say I am not  
 a real person of color, I want this Latina therapist to tell them  
 they are wrong. They are made of glass, they are slowly erecting  
 a cathedral on my back, it is St. Brendan's church, where I was  
 raised. The stained glass is a mestizo of light how they play tricks  
 on the eyes call themselves many colors but you see only  
 one.

with the establishment of a scholarly manner  
 to be carried out by Turkish historians  
 the events of 1915  
 are at the service of historians

to Turkey.  
 The people regardless of  
 common values  
 create a  
 belief  
 about the past  
 with belief that the Armenians  
 rest in peace

we pay tribute  
 under conditions.

Christina Gayton

When I invite white boy to the table

When I invite white boy to the table  
he serves himself standards:  
Selects cheap dim sum,  
white rice bowl,  
and pats himself on the back  
for feeling cultured.

Yet his plate-  
so plain.  
Left side soaked orange chicken sauce  
Right side piled high crab rangoon  
Sushi is staple; pig intestine goes too far  
Too asian

He thinks I'm the right asian for him  
Mutt breed mongrel  
Still white enough to be his cute lap dog  
Tail wagging  
I'm only half ounce of soy sauce  
Spice watered down with white rice  
Americanized chinese food  
He extends his hands onto me  
like I'm Sunday lai wong bao off the cart

Despite greedy, grubby  
hands grabbing,  
I sit obedient  
Beg for bones  
Cause when my lips meet his  
they validate my belonging.  
Not too mixed to be desired  
Not too many ingredients  
ruining the seasoning  
I think  
whatever sauce  
seasoning  
side dish  
or spice  
it takes to make me palatable,  
dress this dog up  
for consumption

Quoting *Japanese* words,  
he looks at me for praise perhaps,  
pays no mind I'm *Chinese*.  
He thinks  
"Arigatou gozaimasu" means 'thank you, master!'  
My lips stay sealed.  
I wonder if he thinks  
I'll call him master  
when he slaps me  
yanks my dark hair strands  
like a leash to choke my neck  
He chokes my neck  
Cause we don't just eat dog,  
We are bitches.

My mom a Shiba Inu  
and my pa a pale Chihuahua  
Once I shake off this muzzle,  
rip the chopsticks out of his hand,  
I bark, but don't bite.  
Growl, "Don't claim my body  
like it's cuisine you can ever know.  
You will never taste my identity inside a lo mein bowl  
and always waiting for me to cool down  
you deprive your tongue of my fresh hot tang."

Recoiled at my ferocity,  
his disappointed hands  
search for a leash  
but only find fangs.  
Cause my mutt breed blood  
Boils when white boy pats my head  
Stings when white boy loves sweet and sour  
but wants to skip wasabi  
Or holds me for a hot sec  
like I'm a cheat day dessert  
and he's on a diet

When I invite white boy to the table

Now when my loneliness  
invites white boy to the table  
I leave a place mat for just one  
Howl, "You can never savor my skin  
like my mom does, my yeye, my lola.  
You can never relish my flavor  
the way it's meant to be served  
I was not meant to be served for you."

2018 is year of the dog  
and I am canine  
Mad mutt  
Low growl  
Tough teeth  
Sharp claws  
Wolf pack  
Better fear my face  
as my paws thud pounding

## On the Shoreness of Dominica

Five years old trying to pry open my mouth to the shore  
between living and remembering; I am where my father calls home  
but to me it is only a place we arrived We have vacated what I believe to be home  
to come to an island of some secretive bird who cries from the top of mountains  
an Imperial Amazon cloaked royal purple green blue blushing maroon  
Her body stamped a red wax seal on a field of green  
the ground is a closed letter of all the endangered tongues washed up here  
she holds together a cross of natives black land clarity of water  
the green stars circle her a sign those from the ends of the world so close  
they appear like another color at its center We were pulled here to the center  
of the world She has called him out to sea He swims out as far  
as he can go waving back at my mother and me

My mother and I are not from here But I want to be that parrot, too  
Speaks words crafty devices of memory speak of all the words  
that came before us were scattered here: the Amazon's name  
was Sisserou a Sensay's ruffled feathers a Dada who midwifes  
us to this ground shows how we are all strung together a Bém  
who says this is my home You my kindred are my home, too  
Before a land could be named after the day of the sun or the lord's home  
it was Wai'tu Kubuli: a body of tall mountains a body of black volcanic sand  
a place where the Water Broke and it returns by breaking us  
and resurrecting us over and over again There is only so much security  
the shore can bring my mother and I have not learned to swim yet We are collectors  
feet buried in sand gathering pebbles pearls shells seeds these skeletal remains of  
sounds we are hermits looking for words for memories  
to salvage to keep dry like our hair in these shower-caps we wear  
like unruffled plumage of birds we plummet to this illusion of safe ground  
gathering vestiges of ourselves testimonies to hold all of us to tell us  
that some place beyond us could still be home in us, too

Julia Knobloch

from *The Plagues of Buenos Aires*

1. INUNDACIÓN / FLOOD

The early afternoon is quiet until treetops bulge in sudden gusts of wind. Dry leaves swirl around the park bench, scratch sandy ground. Branches break. The sky turns black. Beware the Maldonado! Brown water rises, swashes up the avenues, covers soughing side streets, ankles, knees, hips; hides open sewage holes, gaping pot holes, twists power cables, trash bags, dog shit, white, blue havaianas. Through blurry lights and clattering fumes, one woman strays toward the lightning behind the concrete bridge, hair in her face, a green blouse transparent at her chest, feet dirty, hands bare. Water everywhere, in all the blocks up until the horizon that the purple evening sky conceals.

2. ÓDIO / HATRED

While the bus hurtles toward him a film unfolds in rapid speed, a film about everything he always hated about his country: The slaughterhouses smack in the city center, where his grandfather killed for a living in a blood-smeared apron, the thud when he stunned the cows unconscious, before his knife slit their throats, warm blood splashing on white tiles. The paint for the president's mansion is made of limestone and blood. His father's breath of vermouth, petty jokes, long shifts in docks and brothels, then his own constant fear, every day the fear someone will kill him in his house, fear the police will shoot dead his children, fear that lunatics rape his daughter, fear of a senseless road accident, fear that they devalue all his savings, enduring fear of an obscene dictatorship that pushed people from helicopters into the river, that tortured and murdered pregnant women, always blood, blood, blood, fanatic frenetic clamor demanding laurels and freedom, praising prosperity and a glorious death, but he, he will die ingloriously right now and here on this steaming, bursting blacktop in the old neighborhood he never left.

Sonja Hristina Bjelic

from *After Celan*

Just now,  
having touched its perpendicular. Is  
a yellow longness, likely song



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