

They Don't Love You Like I Love You

By: Natalie Diaz

Adapted by Fishtank Staff

- 1 My mother said this to me
long before Beyoncé lifted the lyrics
from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs,

and what my mother meant by
- 5 *Don't stray* was that she knew
all about it—the way it feels to need

someone to love you, someone
not *your kind*, someone white,
some one some many who live
- 10 because so many of mine
have not, and further, live on top of
those of ours who don't.

I'll say, say, say,
I'll say, say, say,
- 15 What is the United States if not a clot

of clouds? If not spilled milk? Or blood?
If not the place we once were
in the millions? *America is Maps—*

Maps are ghosts: white and
- 20 layered with people and places I see through.
My mother has always known best,

knew that I'd been begging for them,
to lay my face against their white
laps, to be held in something more
- 25 than the loud light of their projectors
as they flicker themselves—sepia
or blue—all over my body.

All this time,
I thought my mother said, *Wait*,
30 as in, *Give them a little more time*

to know your worth,
when really, she said, *Weight*,
meaning *heft*, preparing me

for the yoke of myself,
35 the beast of my country's burdens,
which is less worse than

my country's plow. Yes,
when my mother said,
They don't love you like I love you,
40 she meant,
Natalie, that doesn't mean
you aren't good.