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Poetry and the expectation of the border

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This essay explores a set of poetic texts—the Transborder Immigrant Tool (TBT); Amy Sara Carroll's "The Desert Survival Series/La serie de sobrevivencia del desierto"; and Claudia Rankine and John Lucas's video poem "Zidane" and the version of that poem included in Rankine's book *Citizen*—against the backdrop of recent United States Customs and Border Protection investment in autonomous surveillance towers, the development of the "100 mile" expanded border region, and 2022 practices by Republican governors to relocate migrants to the U.S. to Democrat states. I argue for the existence in the poetry of what I term "the expectation of the border": the moment when we name the border not as a graspable and unchangeable line in physical space and legal jurisdiction, but as a conceptual reckoning with definitions of community, including but not limited to citizenship status. Drawing on citizenship theorist Engin Isin's argument that "poetic articulation" especially "captures the essence of the political," this study suggests poetry as a specialized intervention in border politics and definitions of citizenship, including the conditions of the "hostile environment".

KEYWORDS
poetry, refugees and asylum seekers, border, translation, citizenship

1. A family at the border

In 2018, the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) erected four autonomous surveillance towers (ASTs) near San Diego. Providing 360-degree camera angles and being able to detect human motion close to two miles off, the ASTs send alerts to border agents, who track and detain migrants. A 2020 CBP press release announced that 56 towers were being added by July 2022 and proclaimed that the towers "operate off-grid with 100 percent renewable energy and provide autonomous surveillance operations 24 hours per day, 365 days per year" (CBP.gov, 2020). This perpetual, unavoidable monitoring runs on sustainable power, an ironic footnote to the role U.S.-led non-renewable fuels have played in the climate effects that foster the climate injustices that add to the migrations the ASTs resist.

While the initial AST contract was approved by President Trump's administration, *The Guardian* reported that President Biden's (broken) promise "'not another foot' of border wall would be built on his watch" has led to increased autonomous surveillance: "CBP took $21m from Congress in the 2022 omnibus bill for autonomous surveillance towers, and its budget request for 2023 includes another $13.5m, which would be used to consolidate and support more than 700 surveillance towers."

The CBP website explains, while contextualizing three documents published in response to a Freedom of Information Act request, "The AST is considered a family of systems that may be comprised of a combination of surveillance capabilities to address land, maritime, and/or air threats to border security." The adoption of "family" to describe "surveillance towers" and "capabilities" signals how governmental agencies repurpose language through metaphor to conscript their citizens into a particular narrative of the border.

The home page for Anduril, a leading provider of ASTs, adopts identical language: "Anduril's family of systems is powered by Lattice OS, an AI-powered, open operating system that brings autonomy to defense's toughest missions." This sentence imagines the borderlands as a military zone of "missions" in which "family" recalls traditional, conservative rhetoric of 'defending' the 'American' "family's" nuclear unit. Perversely, it simultaneously divorces "family" from human contexts, transferring it to A[rtificial]I[ntelligence]: while "autonomy" purports to act as a synonym for "agency" in this formulation, it references the opposite, the technology's dehumanized operation: autonomous.

In poetic terms, to use "family" or "autonomy" this way constitutes a catachresis, the "application of a term to a thing which it does not properly denote" (OED); poet George Puttenham termed it the "figure of abuse" in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1599). Government agencies and corporations alike adopting such catachreses reveal how the logic of the border as much as the operation of it is being weaponized in the era of the hostile environment. Anduril takes its name from a sword in Tolkien's (1994) *The Lord of the Rings,* Andúril (the company dispenses with the inconvenient non-Anglophone ú):

> Very bright was that sword when it was made whole again; the light of the sun shone redly in it, and the light of the moon shone cold, and its edge was hard and keen. And Aragorn gave it a new name and called it Andúril, Flame of the West. (269)

Tolkien's imaginary West, carved from Icelandic mythologies and Finnish language systems, surfaces in Western civilization's exceptionalism as ASTs enact Jeremy Bentham's imagined panopticon via a fantasy mythology that, regardless of authorial intent, pits light-skinned, glimmering elves and traditional, shire-dwelling hobbits against the darkness of mining orcs. Middle Earth lacks deserts, yet in the southern U.S. desert, the towers are rising.

2. The transborder immigrant tool and the expectation of the border

In the Southern California desert: blue, plastic barrels scattered amid the scrubby green and red cacti, bearing the words AGUA/WATER in spray-painted white capitals—a network of water caches provided by organizations like Border Angels and Water Station Inc. for migrants traversing the desert from Mexico to the United States of America.

The Transborder Immigrant Tool (TBT), a 2007 humanitarian art project by Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab, sought to increase access to such water sources by answering the urgent question, "What ubiquitous technology would allow us to create an inexpensive tool to support the locating of water caches left in the Southern California desert by NGOs?"

TBT proposed repurposing sub-$20 cellphones as emergency navigation devices to guide migrants to water caches and through the desert. The phones would also contain a series of 24 poems included in both English and Spanish, by Amy Sara Carroll: "The Desert Survival Series/La serie de sobrevivencia del desierto." Carroll termed TBT a "G.P.S. as both a 'global positioning system' and, what, in another context, Laura Borràs Castanyer and Juan B. Gutiérrez have termed a 'global poetic system'" (Carroll, 2014).

In 2010, TBT was investigated by the University of California San Diego and by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Office of Cybercrime (Nadir, 2022). Cleared by both authorities, it was distribution-ready in 2011, but the creators deemed it "too dangerous to use" on account of the Mexico-based Narcos: "someone might get killed because they had a TBT phone on them" (Dominguez, 2022). Despite remaining unimplemented, TBT exists as a variety of open-access resources and articles across activist blogs, art journals, and academic journals that offer cogent analyses of what Stagliano (2018, p. 298) calls TBT's "geopoetic rhetoric" (298). Moya (2018, p. 34) has recognized that TBT promises "an affirmation of the rights (rights of passage, right to sustenance) of migrants crossing into the U.S. on foot by way of the treacherous Sonoran Desert" (34). The project's co-creator, Ricardo Dominguez, notes:

> While TBT did not achieve its imagined goal, the gesture created a series of calls and responses resonating on a global scale, which may yet bloom in the desert of the real.

Where Anduril translates a fantasy of Middle Earth onto the reality of the desert, rendering it unreal, Dominguez's formulation calls attention back to the actual situation of the desert borderlands and calls out the lack of reality in the politics and language of the border.

What role, though, does poetry play in this "gesture creat[ing] a series of calls and responses" that cross distance "on a global scale?" Can poetry witness and document, and so make sensible, border situations—and can it, more extensively, position itself as a means of reconceptualizing border logic?

Carroll's "The Desert Survival Series/La serie de sobrevivencia del desierto" draws on the conventions of the desert survival manual, offering practical advice for traversing unfamiliar, inhospitable terrain:

> Approach rocky trails with caution, especially in the dark or after a thunderstorm. Falls from steep slopes represent the second leading cause of injury and death in the desert (the first being dehydration). (62)

Manifested as an informational text for use in emergencies—"You will not be equipped to deal with [heatstroke] symptoms as they present themselves. Call 9-1-1 or 0-6-6 beforehand" (58)—Carroll's poems also contextualize migrants' desert crossings within historical and cultural scenarios that affirm a global interconnectedness of human experience: "in Italy, many once believed that the only cure for a tarantula's bite or shedding was the dance now known as the tarantella" (55). Carroll's poems orient geographically and metaphorically, and their "global poetic system" is revealed as much in the interplay between "the 1962 Nevada thermonuclear explosion," the hauntings of Hiroshima, and "the international symbol of distress" (69) as in the navigational practicalities by which "the barrel cactus–known otherwise as the compass cactus–stockpiles moisture" and so directs

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desert travelers: "as clear as an arrow or a constellation, it leans south" (45).

Planned as an auditory experience, "The Desert Survival Series/La Serie De Sobrevivencia Del Desierto" exists today as part of a book published by The Office of Net Assessment (2014). In that context, typographical elements play with our understanding of borders and poetic space. A horizontal, irregular gray line suggestive of a border on a map runs across the lower third of the title page, taking a perpendicular turn three-quarters of the way across to run vertically up the page. Most of the Anglophone title is on the upper and left side of this border line but "The" is on the other side; conversely, "La" is on the upper and left side, with the Anglophone title, and "serie de sobrevivencia del desierto" on the right and lower side. Typographically, this page rethinks border binaries—Mexico/United States, English/Spanish—in ways the series will more fully take up.

This rethought border line runs through the book. Initially, it transects horizontally the page's middle: the first poem places Anglophone text on the top half of the page and Hispanophone text on the bottom, while the second poem reverses that order, and so reverses any sense of "primary" and "secondary" languages. As the series progresses, the position of the border line and the relationship between Anglophone and Hispanophone text grows more complicated as readers are implicated in a new relationship with border landscapes, advised to "climb or walk in the morning" (46), asked to (remotely) experience how

> Meanwhile, the desert reflects the sun back like a mirror. You are caught in
> horizonte. Mientras tanto, el desierto refleja el sol como en un espejo. Usted
> that pair's uneven, inconsummate exchange.
> está atrapad@ en el medio de este intercambio desigual e inconsumado(47).

This poem interweaves its guidance across languages. More than simply repeating the same information twice, it explores how the semantic dimensions of poetic expression interact with sonic ones and how poetic lines and techniques interact across languages. The lines of the poem enact a kind of "mirror" effect, in which "reflects the sun" and "refleja el sol" seem like images of one another while also, like all reflections, revealing themselves to be distortions, disjunctions in experience. The direct address to the reader who is not "caught in" the desert functions differently from the traveler at risk of dehydration.

With the direction of movement along the Mexico/U.S. border predominantly, but not wholly, northwards, and likely to involve predominantly Hispanophone migrants, the existence of the Anglophone poems is itself an unsettlement of the border in that it instructs readers who are statistically less likely to be forced into the peril of a border crossing in the practicalities of border crossing, imaginatively placing them in that space while reminding them of their distance from it. While Carroll's poems are often characterized as bilingual, that term, suggesting a neat translation of words from one language into another language to increase the available audience of readers, does not articulate the more destabilizing purposes for which the co-presence of two languages is being put here, or the wider way that writing across languages is part of the series' interplay of image, typography, sound, voice, and ideas.

If the "family" offered by "autonomous" Anduril Surveillance Towers relies on us not noticing (or, worse, approving of) its catachreses, Carroll's cross-linguistic series suggests that in a poetic formulation we might find something ethical within the esthetic, a space that does not abandon the humanitarian potential of clear and direct communication while also insisting on the imaginative, associative potential of connection-making and the re-purposing of language through figurative techniques: "The flight paths of birds, like pigeons and doves, indicate the proximity of an oasis [...] where they came from may be where you need to go to refill bottles or canteens" (51). Carroll's writing seeks to allow numerous actors—migrants, allies, readers, etc.—to participate in alternative narratives of border crossing and migrant experience. In addition to being semantically "about" migrant experience, Carroll's poem series formally and conceptually renegotiates the ways we might understand and interact with borders, addressing a diverse group of readers with very different stakes in the border as logic and lived experience.

Recoiling in (faux) horror from the Transborder Immigrant Tool, Fox News commentator Beck (2022) fumed about it on air in August 2010, arguing that TBT had the power to "dissolve" the nation with its "explicit poetry." Beck's fear unexpectedly illustrates a point citizenship theorist Engin Isin (2001) makes in *Being Political*, recalling the surprising attention that those who were considered and who considered themselves citizens paid to non-citizens; Isin points out that "being a citizen was always defined against those strangers and outsiders it needed to become political"–that having political agency, "being political," was "the image of citizenship the ancient citizens themselves would have strangers and outsiders believe," rather than something definitive of citizenship. Although citizenship has long sought to create binaries—political/apolitical, included/excluded, citizen/non-citizen—Isin argues that it is fundamentally "fissiparous," a "difference machine" calling into question its own logic of belonging (280). Citizenship, Isin argues, is an "unstable and invented tradition through which certain groups have established their dominance" (283) and which can thus be reinvented. He identifies the "fundamental images of being political" with "a particular interpretation of historical forms of citizenship" (279), images that "come to us from the victors" (2), images that continue to emulate Greek ideals and produce an unquestioned, static, and conservative version of citizenship.

By contrast, poetry and poetics are for Isin synonymous with "becoming political," which he defines as "that moment when the naturalness of the dominant virtues is called into question and their arbitrariness is revealed" (275). Poetics is inextricable from politics; it

> arises at a moment when it becomes possible to conceive of oneself differently, to reorient oneself toward the other, and to reconstitute identity qua alterity. Poetics is both the embodiment and the creator of such moments when spaces open up and allow agents to constitute or reconstitute themselves as political, as legitimate agents of their own formation and their relationships with others. (284)

As with the ways Carroll's poetry works to reorient its readers' spatial experiences, Isin's theory casts citizenship as practically a

poetic act—or, rather, the poetic act is the moment when citizenship is rearticulated against and despite a dominant narrative of who is and is not a citizen. Isin analyzes works by Hesiod, Villon, Rimbaud, Hikmet, and Brecht to reveal that it is "through complex and open solidaristic and agonistic strategies that poetics became political." Plato "expel[ling] the poets from the city" is emblematic of such a dynamic (285). And, in a subsequent article, "Engaging, Being, Political," Isin argues that

> throughout centuries and across cultures poetic expressions were much more able to penetrate the essence of the political than other forms of expression. There is something about poetic articulation that captures the essence of the political while other forms of expression get tangled up with politics. I feel we have only glimpsed the deep affinities between poetics, polis and the political. (Isin, 2005, 386-7)

Following Isin's logic, Carroll's poems offer a means of "becoming political" not simply because they are about border experience but also because of the ways "poetic expressions" and "poetic articulation" can get at "the essence of the political." Turning our attention to the border as a vital structure, physical and figurative, in the construction of citizenship, we can observe an analogy in which the status quo of "being political" equates to a familiar, conservative notion of defending the border, and the radical potential of "becoming political" opens up a reimagining of the border through the poetic.

The former narrative of the border relies on the enforcement in language and geography of a binary, one side of which is cast as desirable to reach and the other as populated by those who are undesirable from the perspective of the "desirable." Donald Trump, in no less a forum than his Presidential acceptance speech, articulated this with chilling candor: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best" (Time Magazine, 2015). The logic of the "hostile environment," to use ex-British Home Secretary Theresa May's telling phrase (Griffiths and Yeo, 2021), reaffirms this dichotomy of desirability and seeks to protect the space deemed to be within U.K. borders (regardless of geographies the U.K. border has crossed and from which it has extracted human labor, cultural artifacts, and natural resources). This phenomenon is what I call "the comprehension of the border": an imagined version of the border as something that can be grasped, articulated, and protected under the guise of the dominant culture as tradition. Customs and Border Protection is itself a catachresis: the ostensible claim of the phrase (to protect market capital via duty on imported goods) belies its actual meaning, the policing of cultural behavior via acceptable, protectable "customs" sanctioned inside the border, as explored in Solmaz Sharif's 2022 poetry collection, *Customs*.

Carroll's poems undo this neat demarcation, undermining the comprehension of the border and rendering it harder to find and define. In so doing, they increase our understanding of the border's precarity and the traumas working against the interests of both migrants and citizens. Written in both the major languages of the United States, and in other publication contexts also translated into Arabic, Brazilian Portuguese, Greek, and more, Carroll's poem series offers a kind of radical hospitality, with part of its radicality being that it "hosts," imaginatively, its readers and listeners within the borderlands, offering a vision of the border as a complex shifting space of contested, ambiguous geographies, jurisdictions, and peoples.

Such an intervention articulates what I think of as "the expectation of the border": the moment when we name the border not as a graspable and unchangeable line in physical space and legal jurisdiction, but as a conceptual reckoning with definitions of community, including but not limited to citizenship status. The expectation of the border proliferates our encounters with and our meanings for the border, acting as an ethical challenge, expressed esthetically, that we must, in our relationship to citizenship, account for and be accountable to the border. To speak of the expectation of the border cannot guarantee resistance to the dehumanitarian manifestations of it we see reproduced in Italy, Spain, the U.K., Australia, the United States, etc., but it does implicate us within the construction of such dehumanitarian activity. If we accept that the border is an expectation, and thus contestable rather than merely approachable, we have to accept a role in what is being done in our languages and the name of our citizenships. The expectation of the border recognizes an imagined dimension to the border, not to lessen or sidestep the harshness of the lived experience of the border but to reveal the ways border crossing is so devastating to migrants in part because of the ways the border is imagined. As the Director of the American Friends Service Committee, Pedro Ríos, points out, this "digital wall" is "deadly" because it pushes people to take longer routes to evade detection, contributing to thousands of deaths at the southern border (Beaumont, 2022).

3. The "movable border concept"

That poetry might allow readers the expectation of the border–in which phrase the sense of "re"expectation resonates–draws on an idea of the poem formulated by Roberto Tejada, via Muriel Rukeyser and José Lezama Lima. Thinking through Pierre Mayol's concept of "the neighborhood" as it applies to both colonial fantasies of the Americas and to border narratives, and working toward an ideal "poetics of the Americas," Tejada considers

> poetic forms as cultural propositions, meant to bridge the gap between imaginative ideals and the material means available to dwellers in language against a backdrop of possibility; an art whose arguments are for speaking "the general conflict of our culture" and as a "meeting place" that prepares us for thought.

Tejada positions poetry as something precariously alternative; the language of "propositions" and "possibility" invokes opportunities that "imaginative ideals" and interventions via language might offer. At the same time, it simultaneously records the risk that poems remain only as propositions, only "a backdrop." Tejada, in an echo of Dominguez, talks of this project of reading poetry as one that "fails miserably," that is "betrayed" because "its metaphor is another brutal irony undermining the concrete histories of dispossession" (214).

In reading both understandings—poetry as a "cultural proposition, meant to bridge the gap" that also "fails miserably"—

we must also recognize the catachresis of the catachresis used by CBP and Anduril: governmental agencies and government-aligned corporations regularly deploy the "brutal irony" of metaphor ("family of systems") to motivate a regressive narrative of the border and those who cross it. Elsewhere, I've suggested that there is a long tradition of U.S.-based poets casting poetry as a necessary and effective means for both articulating citizenship and resisting normative, bureaucratic attempts to define the citizen (Smith, 2012). Charles Olson's line "Who can say who are/citizens?," with its implicit answer of "poets," offers a particularly direct instance of this, especially given that Olson wrote the line around the time he turned down a political appointment in the Roosevelt administration to pursue poetry, feeling the latter activity was more likely to produce a meaningful "polis." Myung Mi Kim's *Under Flag* (1991) and *Dura* (1998) exist at the fault line of the definition of the citizen as experienced within Korean, Japanese, and American spaces, directly adopting and reworking the form of a naturalization test as part of their interventions into normative citizenship practices. Just as Isin is readily able to turn to a centuries-long tradition of poetic works that aim at becoming, rather than being, political, the late 20th and early 21st century offers a plethora of North American and European Anglophone and diasporic collections of poetry that refuse to cede the definition of the border and the citizen to governmental authority.[1]

Carroll's series exists in this tradition of "poetic forms as cultural propositions": of U.S.-based poetries in which the poetics of poetry are also its politics. Poetry's particular use of techniques like line breaks and juxtaposition offers the means to subvert–to sub-verse–the border in its bureaucratic, Statist binary. The means to create alternative catachreses alongside those enlisted by government and corporations. In the shaping of poetic form, and the forming of the poem for the reader at the moment of its reading, even poems that are not immediately "about" the geographic and political space of the border can become politically entangled with its logic and the means of its reimagining.

The expectation of the border, understood as the power to redefine by invoking the meeting point of its imagined and lived contexts, matters so much because the conservative defense of the border relies not only on the clear, binaristic, supremacist location of the border in space and time but also, almost paradoxically, on the ability to reposition that border at will, a repositioning that escalated especially on 9 September 2022, leading Washington D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser to declare a public emergency in response to the numbers of migrants arriving by bus from Texas and Arizona, having been offered free bus trips to D.C., New York City, and Chicago (Bowser, 2022). Republican Governor of Texas Greg Abbott made clear that these trips manifested a conservative project to relocate the border:

> Joe Biden has refused to come to the border to see the chaos that he has created by his open border policies. So we're going to take the border to him (Abbott, 2022).

Even as Abbott reinforces the notion of the border as a demarcation between open and closed, a definable place that "Joe Biden has refused to come," he positions the border as movable: "we're going to take the border to him." His fellow Republican Governor, Doug Ducey, explained that asylum seekers entering Arizona "have the opportunity to voluntarily be transported to Washington, D.C. The transportation will include meals, and onboard staffing and support" (Ducey, 2022).

There is a temptation to see an unwitting extension of hospitality amid offerings of "meals" and "support," a partial undoing of the hostile environment. Some evidence indicates higher rates of approval for asylum relief petitions in the destination cities of these buses than in Dallas and Houston in Texas, and in that sense, Abbott and Ducey might offer favorable conditions for asylum seekers, contra the disruptive dislocation practiced by national border agencies, including the U.K. Border Force, to prevent asylum seekers establishing community ties and so weakening their case for the right to remain (Goosen et al., 2014).[2]

However, there is a far more sinister side to this "movable" border, one with a long history in U.S. politics. Consider how, on Thursday the 15th of September 2022, Republican Governor of Florida Ronald DeSantis flew around 50 Venezuelan migrants from Texas and Florida to Martha's Vineyard, a North East vacation island where the Obamas have a multimillion-dollar vacation home and which has a reputation for hosting wealthy, Democrat-voting holidaymakers (Ebert, 2020). The passengers had allegedly signed English-language consent forms that were sparing in their details: Reuters reported that migrants were promised that they would be taken to Massachusetts, of which Martha's Vineyard is admittedly a part, but not told they were being taken to an island off the mainland (Allen and Hesson, 2022). Not to be outdone, Governor Abbott that day bused migrants not just to D.C. but to the house of Vice President Kamala Harris, reimagining the private residence of the most senior Black woman in American politics as a border location.

DeSantis's explanation for his flight repeats an image of the border familiar from conservative understandings of the identity of the citizen and the nation-state as an exclusive space where those who possess privileged status are secure "inside" and those who do not are "illegal" and need "criminal charges." He identifies migrants as "illegal immigrants" and describes President Biden as having "refused to lift a finger to secure that [southern] border," with the result that

> we've worked on innovative ways to be able to protect the state of Florida from the impact of Biden's border policies. And so, that's involved a number of things. We've had different

1 This article hopes to articulate a framework for a consideration of many of these works, including Anthony Cody's *Borderland Apocroypha* (2020), Marwa Helal's *Invasive Species* (2019), Cathy Park Hong's *Dance Dance Revolution* (2006), Ilya Kaminsky's *Deaf Republic* (2019), Anni Liu's *Border Vista* (2022), and Erin Mouré's *O Cidadán* (2002). That citizenship studies and contemporary poetic criticism are not more closely intertwined is a missed opportunity precisely because of the scores of poetry collections published since the turn of the century which reimagine citizenship and the border.

2 Nawaz (2022), writing for PBS.org, suggests that "Data from Syracuse University shows that, in the last 10 months, judges in Houston approved only 17 percent of asylum seekers, in Dallas, only 33 percent. But in the same time period, New York courts have approved over 80 percent of asylum relief applications."

> operations in the Panhandle where we've stopped human smugglers. There have been criminal charges brought. There have been drugs seized. There have been a whole bunch of things (WCVB.com, 2022).

This rhetoric of "protect[ing]" the border and of casting migration in terms of "human smugglers" leads to what DeSantis calls an "innovative way" to advance the defense of the border: to proliferate its locations within the United States. He continues:

> if you have folks that are inclined to think Florida's a good place, our message to them is we are not a sanctuary state, and it's better to be able to go to a sanctuary jurisdiction. And yes, we will help facilitate that transport for you to be able to go to greener pastures.

Diminishing Florida's reputation as a "good place" by making it hypothetical is particularly insidious given that it is addressed to a deliberately specific audience of "folks that are inclined" to think of Florida as offering hospitality to anyone in need of sanctuary: to an audience DeSantis conceives of as economically disadvantaged and in need of support services. Florida, home to Mar-a-Lago, the pseudo-White House for ex-President Trump, currently enjoys an influx of wealthy Americans at four times the rate of any other state (Berger, 2022; DMVFlorida.org, 2023) sunnily reports:

> Nearly 1,000 people move to Florida each and every day. The migration comes from all over the United States from the north east, mid west, and the west coast. Many new Floridians are retirees and many are young working age families. The good news is that there is plenty of room in Florida. Housing is plentiful in many areas, jobs are plentiful, and the government of Florida including the DMV, are working hard to make it easy for new Florida residents to easily get settled.

Note here that "migration" is presented as an internal phenomenon within the United States, and "the government of Florida" is "working hard" to ensure "settled" status for migrants to Florida. By contrast, border crossers are engaged in "illegal immigration" and thus the government will "help facilitate that transport for you to be able to go to greener pastures" (DeSantis). Slighting the role of undocumented agricultural workers in Florida's key fruit and growing industries, DeSantis swipes at liberal states like New York and D.C. as being economically "greener." If the logic of opposing favorable migration *within* the U.S. to unfavorable immigration *into* the U.S. is a commonplace of conservative versions of the border, the act of moving migrants en masse to "sanctuary jurisdiction[s]" radically repositions that border.

DeSantis's approach is not, however, innovative; it can be traced to a 76-year-old statute, Act of 7 August 1946, ch. 768, 60 Stat. 865, later forming a key part of the 1970 Immigration and Nationality Act § 287(a), 8 U.S.C.§ 1357(a). The 1946 Statute is the source of the "reasonable distance" concept: then-Attorney General Francis Biddle wrote, "in the enforcement of the immigration laws it is at times desirable to stop and search vehicles within a reasonable distance from the boundaries of the United States and the legal right to do so should be conferred by law." Neither Biddle nor the Statute defined "reasonable distance"; in this vacuum of precision, the Customs and Border Protection agency started to use "100 air miles from any external boundary of the U.S." as its measure, a figure arrived at without requiring legal approval. The American Civil Liberties Union notes that

> Two-thirds of the U.S. population, or about 200 million people, reside within this expanded border region, according to the 2010 census. Most of the 10 largest cities in the U.S., such as New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago, fall in this region. Some states, like Florida, lie entirely within this border band so their entire populations are impacted.

This law's significance stems not only from the vast number of U.S. residents and citizens it affects but from the sweeping powers it grants, including warrantless entry of private property; it has been held to supersede the Fourth Amendment, which otherwise "protects against arbitrary searches and seizures of people and their property, even in this expanded border area" (ACLU.org).

Florida's inclusion here is particularly relevant given DeSantis's refusal of its identity as a "sanctuary jurisdiction": he is positioning a state wholly subject to sweeping border-related search powers as *not* a border, seeking instead to make the border coterminous with Democrat-voting cities and sites which are in some cases not covered by the "reasonable distance" concept. DeSantis and his fellow GOP Governors are engaged in what, back in 1992, the District Court of Maine critically termed "pushing the border in" (United States of America v. Joshua D. Gabriel, 2004).

The expansion of the border, however, is not all that is at stake, because the border is not being used only as a physical demarcation point but as a subjective perception of who has a chance of becoming "settled" within United States space—a chilling logic that encourages acceptance only of certain wealth brackets and voting patterns rather than respects even governmental designations like citizenship, driver's licenses, and so on.

This act of demarcating and simultaneously resituating the border was explicitly named in a 1972 case, United States vs. Bowen, which upheld a marijuana possession conviction stemming from a fixed-checkpoint search "49 highway miles north of the Mexican border." In a footnote, Judge Hufstedler defends the "reasonable distance" rule and points out that "congressional attention never focused on the constitutional difficulties engendered by the movable border concept that was included in section 1357." Introducing the term "movable border concept," Judge Hufstedler writes a dissenting opinion, not from the decision to uphold Bowen's conviction, which he supports, but from the court's decision against retroactively applying to prior cases a "movable" approach to the border. Hufstedler argues that "automobile searches conducted by personnel of the Service at fixed checkpoints that were not functional equivalents of international boundaries should be treated as if they were such "border searches," thus eliminating the Fourth Amendment's requirements of a warrant and probable cause." Hufstedler's relatively unknown opinion is essential for understanding the way the border functions in American imaginary today: he argues that "comprehensive, critical analysis of the differences between searches at international boundaries and those conducted some distance from the border" is not an issue. Rather, what is crucial before the law is that "within a reasonable distance of the border [...] probable cause was still

required to validate a warrantless search of the vehicle, at least if the search went beyond that reasonably related to the discovery of aliens." In other words, a warrant is only required once the primary task of the stop and search leaves behind the "probable" belief that those detained have "illegally" crossed a border.

The "movable border concept" supplants both place and time: the border is no longer an international demarcation line but the subjective concept of the border search and of whomever an agent of the government deems should be subjected to that border search based on "probable" logic. Hufstedler's "movable border concept" effectively calls into being a condition of always having to live subject to perceptions of a relationship to the border, to the possibility of being stopped, without a warrant, if there is "probable cause" that "the discovery of aliens" might result. In light of this, we can see how DeSantis, Abbott, Ducey, and others make "illegal immigrants" hyper-visible under the guise of offering to "facilitate" their movement, and how the border moves with those who are "moved on," further distancing them from, in Engin Isin's terms, "becoming political"—never mind becoming the kinds of (desired) citizens for whom there is, in Florida, "plenty of room." Beyond the disguise of "reasonable distance," the busing and flying of migrants by southern Republican Governors make clear that the whole of the United States is a potential border zone, a border which is not at the border: "we will help facilitate that transport for you to be able to go" barely conceals its racist and xenophobic rhetoric of "go back to where you came from." That sentiment is repeatedly and directly stated: merchandise is widely available for a fictional DeSantis Airlines, whose slogan is "Bringing the Border to You" (Luscombe, 2023).

4. *Citizen* and the reorientation of the lyric as the border

The border following the citizen and the migrant, rather than existing as a line which, once crossed, has been superseded, is a contemporary situation explored by Rankine and Lucas's (2010) video poem "Zidane" and the section of Rankine's book *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014) titled "October 10, 2006/World Cup: Script for Situation Video Created in Collaboration with John Lucas." These connected poetic texts narrate ostensibly European events, taking place well away from a national border; the kinds of border testimony they offer have to be uncovered via a recreation of a personal and cultural archive, the project of Rankine's narration across both pieces, which offer us a diptych to Carroll's. Both writers concern themselves with the poetics of border crossing, and both seek to activate an awareness of how mutable and mobile the border is, connecting a reader "safely" away from the border with the traumatic lived experience of crossing it. However, whereas Carroll does so firmly in relation to an identifiable political border, Rankine and Lucas instead sees the border reappearing at a time when the person subject to the border is geographically and temporally away from it. Both texts offer a poetic resistance to the "movable border concept" by documenting and recontextualizing how the expectation of the border functions given that we find the border well beyond a fixed time and place.

Rankine and Lucas's video poem "Zidane" replays, in slow-motion (38 frames a minute, by my count), an incident from the 2006 men's football World Cup final between Italy and France, a match that took place in Berlin, Germany. Rankine's voice-over narrates and counterpoints, via a compilation of quotations, an entanglement between two players. As the video starts, a player wearing all white—the French captain, Zinedine Zidane—starts walking toward the left of our screen, to the edge of the penalty area. Everyone else on screen is wearing blue: the other team, Italy, likewise moving left, heading off screen at speed. A lone player in blue, Marco Materazzi, is right next to and just behind Zidane, who we see turn back in response to something Materazzi has said, and in response to being touched at the waist.

"Every day I think about where I came from," Rankine narrates, "and I am still proud to be who I am." This language exists as both Zidane's interior monolog and Rankine's lyric self-expression narrating a moment where Zidane crosses out of the penalty area, in a back-and-forth with Materazzi. We watch the exchange seem to end, with Zidane starting to jog away, putting half the screen between them. And then, even in slow motion, there is an urgency to Zidane pulling up, turning back again, away from where he is headed, just after Rankine narrates, quoting Zidane himself, speaking in the aftermath: "do you think, two minutes from the end of the World Cup Final, I wanted to do that?"

It takes the best part of a minute, at this frame rate, for Zidane to complete the turn, to face his opponent, who keeps walking toward him. Four minutes and eight seconds into Rankine and Lucas's video, 10 min from the end of the game, deep inside extra time, Zidane plunges his head into Materazzi's chest—his chest, not his head—and Materazzi crumples to the turf. Zidane is dismissed—sent off, in the parlance of football—and Italy goes on to win the World Cup in a penalty shootout in which Materazzi scores. The world football governing body, FIFA, calls the incident a "moment of madness" on its website, 16 years later, suggesting "a rush of blood to the head changed the path of history" (FIFA.com, 2022).

Lucas's video, narrated by Rankine, partly places us inside Zidane's head, with several of the words Rankine narrates being racist slurs Zidane repeats as having been used against him during his life: "Big Algerian shit. Dirty terrorist. Nigger." These slurs Rankine repeats as if looped within Zidane's mind. Yet what Rankine offers is not exactly an internal monolog. Rankine interweaves Zidane's words with phrases taken from the French philosopher Maurice Blanchot, James Baldwin, Frantz Fanon, William Shakespeare, lip readers' suggestions of what Materazzi and Zidane were saying, and others. In *Citizen*, the right-hand pages attribute these sayings, but on the video, they are not demarcated by speaker, creating a composite Zidane, one whose identity is further complicated as we listen to Rankine, a Black woman and an American poet, speaking "his" words, the words of a French-Algerian man who is repeating words others have said to him, of him. Rankine and Zidane coming together in narration is also a disjunction: even as the narration provides context for what precedes Zidane's headbutt, it requires us to think of Rankine's own experiences as a woman of African descent living in America, having or choosing to repeat and repeat and repeat the n-word, a racial slur directed also at her.

When she narrates Zidane's "Every day I think about where I came from," the resonance of her own ancestry and her own life experiences are alongside Zidane's. That sentence voices over the moment in Lucas's slowed video where Materazzi and Zidane

first entangle, Zidane looking down at Materazzi's hand around his waist. The two "I"s of that sentence might almost be different selves, the act of locating the self having involved journeys that dislocate identity, the present "I" wrestling with the past where the self was a different "I." While a sentence from Maurice Blanchot sets up Zidane's reflection on a note of optimism—"What is there is the absolute calm of what has found its place"—that optimism is undercut by the tension we see emerging between Zidane and Materazzi, two men who are metonyms for the French and Italian national soccer teams that are themselves metonyms for European nation states and colonial powers.

What is at stake here is a dismantling of the assumptions of the nation-state, as is evident from the poem's repeated use of quotations from Frantz Fanon, noting how "Algerian men" are "a target of criticism for their European comrades." What, we should wonder, is Materazzi saying to Zidane, "Europe" to "Algeria," as Rankine recites this? Similarly, Rankine quotes James Baldwin's famous meditation on Black anger and its sources in white supremacy: there is "no (Black) who has not felt [...] simple, naked, and unanswerable hatred" and thus "not wanted to smash any white face" and thus "no black who has not had to make his own precarious adjustment" in the face of this. While Rankine's use of the psychoanalytic approach of Fanon and Baldwin's psychological study of Black anger allows us to read her poem as a deepening of Zidane's actions, providing a social context for them missed in the "moment of madness" rhetoric of even the sport's governing body (not to mention the racist and xenophobic responses from fans and trolls in the immediate aftermath), there is also something even more transformative at stake here.

Rankine, later, quotes Baldwin's point that "The rebuttal assumes an original form." There is wry humor in the pun on "rebuttal" and "headbutt," with Baldwin's line spoken over Materazzi's body, the visible sign that Zidane has opted against the "precarious adjustment," has refused the premise that hatred is, this time, "unanswerable," and has provided an "original form" of the answer via his headbutt. Baldwin's sentence, juxtaposed with Fanon's point that "It is the White Man who creates the black man. But it is the black man who creates," lines Rankine speaks over Materazzi's slowed fall to the turf, recast Zidane's reaction as a creation. Zidane disavows the desire for the action but not the action: "Do you think [...] I wanted to do that?" Provocations (from Materazzi himself and from a long history, a centuries-long history, for which Materazzi is a metonym) have had to be answered. What commentators should have noticed and lamented are the conditions under which Zidane had to rebut this way, against what "I wanted to do."

While those conditions are the conditions of racism and the colonial legacies of racism, they are also the conditions of the border. Although Zidane, as captain of the French football team, has a thorough claim to the identities citizenship affords, a claim furthered, though no furthering should be necessary, by his birth on French soil, in Marseille, he remains also Algerian, part of his story connected to his parents' migration to France from Algeria in 1953. As John Vinocur points out in a *New York Times Magazine* profile that predates the World Cup final by 7 years,

> In the dismal hierarchy of French racism, light-years from the notions of tolerance that attracted the Richard Wrights and James Baldwins and Bud Powells to Paris, the country's millions of North Africans–Arabs in the French mind, regardless of their citizenship–people exactly like Zidane's family, are easy targets for daily scorn.

Zidane himself does not cross the kind of border that President Trump would have liked to see ensured and symbolized with his "wall." He does, however, experience, like the Venezuelans flown to Martha's Vineyard by DeSantis, the effects of the movable border, even all the way to Paris, to the metropole: even as French soccer captain, he is "Big Algerian shit. Dirty terrorist."

The poetic techniques in Rankine and Lucas's video offer an analogous "original form" to Zidane's own rebuttal. While Rankine's "script" allows us to hear missed parts of Zidane's narrative, and so writes and rights the record, the poem's curating of quotes, as they juxtapose discrepant thinkers and overlay moving image with the movability of language, replay the event as a kind of border incident. Materazzi's insults are the latest in a series of linguistic displacements of Zidane, uses of words that undo birth, documentary citizenship, and status as captain of a national team. Zidane's headbutt gets scripted by FIFA as the confirmation of Materazzi and others displacing Zidane: a "moment of madness" that recalls the way "barbarian" non-citizens have been repeatedly placed outside citizenship and European notions of civilization, a term synonymous, as Hegel makes clear, with the Germanic nation-state (a point made in Snead's (1984) brilliant exploration of how forms, esthetic and cultural, shape and resist divisive hierarchies of the human; Snead discusses the problem of Hegel on pp. 62ff).

Rankine's recontextualizing of Zidane's rebuttal is not to refuse its being of the border: she quotes "the state of emergency is also always a state of emergence," Bhabha's (2012, p. 129) reading of Fanon (129). Bhabha's concern in *The Location of Culture*, from which Rankine quotes, is with the stakes of "civil status" and "civil authority" and how a Fanonian narrative destabilizes Western hegemonies of progress: "collaborations of political and psychic violence *within* civic virtue, alienation within identity, drive Fanon to describe the splitting of the colonial space of consciousness and society" (62). If Zidane's "violence" is one such "alienation within identity," it is a violence that does not belong to Zidane alone: it is the violence done to and around him, before and within the moment of the World Cup final, a "violence *within* civic virtue" that can sunder the assumption that the border divides progress, protects civil authority, and legislates belonging.

Subversing the dominant narrative around Zidane's rebuttal, Rankine and Lucas's video poem comments on more than that one incident. By revealing a complexity of what we understand to be lyric poetry, they also uncover the way border encounters themselves operate along a (perversely) lyric schemata—that border encounters and border logics are, in their politics, freighted with the conditions and contentions of the poetic. *Citizen,* after all, is subtitled *An American Lyric,* like Rankine's decade-earlier volume *Don't Let Me Be Lonely* (Rankine, 2004), a quasi-oxymoron: if "lyric" is the poetic site of subjectivity, an "I" speaking to a "you," the "American" wrestles with poetry's collective, even federal, possibilities. As Adorno's (1991, p. 45) essay "On Lyric Poetry and

Society" points out, the lyric is produced by the conditions of society rather than escapes from them: "A collective undercurrent provides the foundation for all individual lyric poetry". While Adorno's equally famous rejection of poetry in the wake of Auschwitz—that it is impossible or barbaric[3]—can position him within arguments against the political valences and values of poetry, he recognizes, quite to the contrary, that "even the solitariness of lyrical language itself is prescribed by an individualistic and ultimately atomistic society" (38).

Citizen reveals lyric's stakes in the conditions of society but also disputes Adorno's sense of lyric as marked by "solitariness." Indeed, Rankine's (2014) framing of her book casts citizenship, and thus the question of borders that governments and their citizens use to maintain, police, and deny citizenship, as a fundamentally "American lyric" question. And, at the end of *Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric*, which muses on the devastations of physical violence to both the wounded and killed and to the perpetrators—"violence *within* civic virtue," perhaps—Rankine writes:

> Or Paul Celan said that the poem was no different from a handshake. *I cannot see any basic difference between a handshake and a poem*—is how Rosemary Waldrop translated his German. The handshake is our decided ritual of both asserting (I am here) and handing over (here) a self to another. Hence the poem is that—Here. I am here. This conflation of the solidity of presence with the offering of this same presence perhaps has everything to do with being alive. (130)

Reaching out toward Celan, between languages and with the interpretive community that includes two translations of Celan's sentence, the em-dash is a typographical instance of the bridge that is both between and connecting them, Rankine sees the poem, fundamentally lyric, in "self to another" tradition, as a kind of unsettling or rethinking of the boundary between people. Or, as she puts it in the next poem, here means "I am here. It also means to hand something to somebody—Here you are (131). She is not writing 'about' the border at this stage and yet, especially with Celan and the haunting of the Holocaust in the poem, how could she not be? Formally, the poem is, in its very existence, in its lyric moment of handing itself over, a "conflation" that creates new relations that are foundational to "being alive."

That the poem creates new relations—"original form"–in this handing of "something to somebody," that it creates both an "I am here" and a "here you are" in ways that allow those two here's to be the same location and to be dissimilar, suggests that the poetics of the poem matter in how it addresses the expectation of the border. Rankine and Lucas's video poem is a border poem because of its formal quality as much as its thematic concerns. Consider Williams (1994, p. 19) often-quoted lines about the stakes of poems:

> It is difficult to get the news from poems yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there.

Against the easing into metaphor by which Customs and Border Protection and Anduril speak of a "family of systems" and mean a panopticon that removes both humans and humanity, I am interested in what Williams' lines say about the form of poetry and about what and where we find "lack." I read these lines as asking us to think about what is constitutive of "poems" rather about the importance of news: the miserable deaths Williams lament stem from "the lack" of what is found in the "there" of poems, not from the lack of news in poems. Williams' argument, thus read, is another version of Isin's: we have misunderstood, we have set aside, the role the poetic plays in the political.

Poets, though, have not set that aside. Rankine stretches the ego-centered, subjectivity of the lyric mode to draw attention to its bidirectional invocation of both "I am here" and "handing over," including a fraught "Americanness" of lives lived withstanding microaggressions and linguistic displacements in "American" space ("Every day I think about where I came from"). Tejada (2019, p. 160) understands that the poem can be a cultural proposition, that "poetry is political when produced in relation to a community whose shared pattern of value and conviction are implicitly affirmed or visibly contradicted–or better still, when expression discovers those other patterns society fails to recognize" (160). Carroll's desert series offers a hospitable border, moving readers between linguistic contexts not to finally arrive "in" one of these spaces "from" another but to become political in their interstices. Poet and activist Alsous (2019) says, of the poets Raquel Salas Rivera and Layli Long Soldier, that they offer a "poetic logic" in which "to take back the land is to take back the language, to return to a not-yet-realized subjunctive territory of mass-belonging" (Alsous, 2019). Alsous' focus is on the ecopoetic possibilities of reclaiming land and language, the poets she cites working to decolonize, to resist imperial legacies, "to poem the de-territorialized we." The infinitive, dare we say, infinite?, hope of that poetic logic operates within border spaces, spaces which are infinitely increasing as Republican and Conservative lawmakers explicitly and visibly reterritorialize the borders they also insist on demarcating and enforcing. More than speaking of what is happening at the border, the poem reverses what is happening at the border, replacing what border authorities would have us understand about the border with the knowledge of the expectation of the border, so that we may, becoming political, rewrite that expectation as part of a more just citizenship.

In making claims about the relationship between poetry and the expectation of the border, in going further, even, suggesting poetry as a specialized site for documenting and reimagining the expectation of the border, formally and philosophically, I am also following a vision of poetry Giorgio Agamben articulates in "The End of the Poem," a vision of poetry that is political in the way it is formal. Agamben's title flirts with the poem's finality and disappearance (its coming to an end) only to instead activate its vitality and sense of political purposefulness (its end goals) through recognizing what is formally particular to poetry: line ends and line breaks. For Agamben, "the possibility of enjambement constitutes the only criterion for distinguishing poetry from prose" (109).

Deploying a language of "noncoincidence," "schism," and "disjunction" in which "all poetic instruments participate" (110), Agamben situates poetry as an activation of both rupture and correspondence: the process of manifesting for a reader a break

3 For a nuanced discussion of the importance of "barbarism" as a term in Adorno's oft-cited phrase, cf. Rowland (1997).

while also suggesting for them a means of reconciliation. Agamben defines rhyme, for instance, as a "disjunction that brings the mind to expect a meaningful analogy where it can find only homophony" Agamben (1999, p. 112). His argument that "tension and difference [...] between sound and sense" is activated in the opposition between the line and the sentence, between "metrical segmentation and semantic segmentation," is not only or primarily a formal consideration, it is a first step in an argument for a poem's disruptive disputations (p. 112).

The political stakes of the argument Agamben makes can be seen from his use of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, which, as Rosier-Catach (2017, p. 35, 45) has argued, is a text about "man as a political animal": in arguing for the "illustrious vulgar" language, Dante aims to "invent [...] a new kind of linguistic norm that lets diversity thrive but at the same time guarantees the unity that is necessary for any collectivity." Agamben brings Dante's politics into his argument to solve what he terms a "state of poetic emergency" occasioned by the poem having to face its own end, a moment where it risks "trespass[ing] into prose" as it surrenders enjambement (113, 112).

Dante's "matter of rule" about "the most beautiful way to end a poem" utilizes the "*baciata* ("kissed") rhyme" (115), achieving an elegant formal solution with theological and philosophical repercussions: "language does not die away into a final comprehension; instead, it collapses into silence, so as to speak, in an endless falling" (155). This silence is not voiceless; it reverberates with the kinetic energy of an ongoing falling, and with the potential of the impact to come. Think of Amy Sara Carroll's poems passing into a silence in which the GPS network can never be activated, for fear of the very lives of those whose lives it seeks to rescue, and yet in that collapse, that falling into disuse, her poems articulate a gap between sound and sense, across and within languages.

The comprehension of the border would have us trust its logic of exactness, of division, of language—trust, even, the ways it thwarts becoming political. Agamben's reading, via Dante, reveals poetry's role in disrupting the meaning and functioning of the border: for Agamben, drawing on Wittgenstein, language that "acts as if sound and sense coincided in its discourse" is tantamount to "lacking thought" (115); poetry, on the other hand, works against the comprehension of the border, acts as a moment of disjunction between experiences and realities that brings to light the instability of the way the border is being imagined for us and by us. Poetry cannot, must not, be set aside in the attempt to rearticulate the border: to recognize that the border is not a fixity but an expectation of the border, an expectation in which we all as citizens or immanent citizens or would-be citizens or migrants or asylum seekers have a (poetic) role.

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