

M. E. Valverde

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**B o r d e r L i n e s**

*for SATB chorus (div.) and guitar or cello*

Some maps have blue borders  
like the blue of your name  
or the tributary lacing of  
veins running through your  
father's hands. & how the last  
time I saw you, you held  
me for so long I saw whole  
lifetimes flooding by me  
small tentacles reaching  
for both our faces. I wish  
maps would be without  
borders & that we belonged  
to no one & to everyone  
at once, what a world that  
would be. Or not a world  
maybe we would call it  
something more intrinsic  
like forgiving or something  
simplistic like river or dirt.  
& if I were to see you  
tomorrow & everyone you  
came from had disappeared  
I would weep with you & drown  
out any black lines that this  
earth allowed us to give it—  
because what is a map but  
a useless prison? We are all  
so lost & no naming of blank  
spaces can save us. & what  
is a map but the delusion of  
safety? The line drawn is always  
in the sand & folds on itself  
before we're done making it.  
& that line, there, south of  
el río how it dares to cover  
up the bodies, as though we  
would forget who died there  
& for what? As if we could  
forget that if you spin a globe  
& stop it with your finger  
you'll land it on top of someone  
living, someone who was not  
expecting to be crushed by thirst

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#### Composer's Notes

"Border Lines" was composed for Adams State University's choral concert series "An Immigrant's Tale: Hopes, Dreams, and Fears in an Uncertain Time" as part of their ETHOS project—Exploring Equity through Music. In collaboration with Harlem-based Afro-Latina poet Yesenia Montilla, this work is born out of empathy for immigrants to the United States who have been separated from their families in the spirit of xenophobia. Her words call out the arbitrary nature of geopolitical borders and implore all of us to unify at our roots in our common humanity. The music is inspired in meter and melody by Central American folk song; and the guitar, a common denominator in a variety of folk traditions, portrays the undulations of "el río" as the narrative unfolds, expressing a clear yearning for belonging.

\*Please credit Ms. Montilla in programs and album liner notes with this statement verbatim.

dur. = ca. 5'

Commissioned by Adams State University Chamber Choir, Beth Robison, Director of Choral Activities

# Border Lines

for SATB chorus (div.) and guitar or cello

**Yesenia Montilla**  
b. 1974

**Mari Esabel Valverde**  
b. 1987

**Flowingly, andante** ♩ = ca. 80 *mp* solemnly

Soprano  
Alto  
Guitar

*p* *mp* *son rubato*

S  
A  
Gtr.

maps have blue bor - ders like the blue of your name or the  
maps have blue bor - ders like the blue of your name or the

*p* *mp*

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9

S trib-u-tar-y lac - ing of veins run-ning through your fa-ther's hands.

A trib-u-tar-y lac - ing of veins run-ning through your fa-ther's hands.

T *mp solemnly*

B *mp solemnly* & how the

Gtr. *mp*

13

T 8 last time I saw — you, you — held me for so long I saw whole

B 8 last time I saw — you, you — held me for so long I saw whole

Gtr. *p* *mp*

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17

T  
8  
life - times flood - ing by me small ten - ta - cles reach - ing for both our fa - ces.

B  
life - times flood - ing by me small ten - ta - cles reach - ing for both our fa - ces.

Gtr.  
p mp

21

S  
*mf* beseechingly  
I wish maps would be with - out bor - ders &

A  
*mf* beseechingly  
I wish maps would be with - out bor - ders &

T  
8  
*mf* beseechingly  
I wish maps would be with - out bor - ders &

B  
*mf* beseechingly  
I wish maps would be with - out bor - ders &

Gtr.

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27

S that we be - longed to no one — & to eve - ry - one at

A that we be - longed to no — one — & to eve - ry - one at

T that we be - longed to no one — & to eve - ry - one at

B that we be - longed to no one — & to eve ry - one at

Gtr.

33

S once, what a world — that would be.

A once, what a world that would be.

T once, what a world that would be.

B once, what a world that would be.

Gtr.

*sf* *mp*

**Più mosso** ♩ = ca. 100  
*sub. p*

38

S Or not a world may - be we would call it

A Or not a world may - be we would call it

T Or not a world may - be we would call it

B Or not a world may - be we would call it

Gtr. *mf*

43

S some - thing more in - trin - sic like for - giv - ing or may - be we would

A some - thing more in - trin - sic like for - giv - ing or may - be we would

T some - thing more in - trin - sic like for - giv - ing or may - be we would

B some - thing more in - trin - sic like for - giv - ing or may - be we would

Gtr.

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**poco rit.**

49

S  
call it some-thing sim - plis - tic like ri - ver or

A  
call it some-thing sim - plis - tic like ri - ver or

T  
call it some-thing sim - plis - tic like ri - ver or

B  
call it some-thing sim - plis - tic like ri - ver or

Gtr.

55 **Tempo primo** *\*\* mp solo*

S  
dirt. & if I were to see you to -

A  
dirt.

T  
*\*\* mp solo*  
dirt. & if I were to see you to -

B  
dirt.

Gtr.  
*p*

\*This is either a tenor solo or a soprano solo, but not both. The desired affect is a feeling of isolation or separation.

59

S mor - row & eve - ry one you came from had

T mor - row & eve - ry - one you came from had

Gtr.

63

S dis - ap - peared I would weep with you

A I would weep with

T dis ap - peared

B

Gtr.

*mp tutti*

*mp*

*mp*

68

S  
A  
T  
B  
Gtr.

& drown  
you & drown  
*mp* I would weep with you & drown  
*mp* I would weep with you & drown

73

S  
A  
T  
B  
Gtr.

out an-y black lines that this earth al-owed us to  
out an-y black lines that this earth al-owed us to  
out an-y black lines that this earth al-owed us to  
out an-y black lines that this earth al-owed us to

*mf*  
*mf*  
*mf*  
*mf*

Gtr.

*mf* *p poco a poco cresc.*

ossia

*mf*

78 *f*

S give it— be - cause what is a map but a use - less

A give it— be - cause what is a map but a use - less

T give it— be - cause what is a map but a use - less

B give it— be - cause what is a map but a use - less

Gtr. *mf*

84

S pris - on?

A pris - on?

T *mf* pris - on? We are all so lost & no nam-ing of blank spa - ces can

B *mf* pris - on? We are all so lost & no nam-ing of blank spa - ces can

Gtr. *mp*

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88 *f*

S & what is a map but the de - lu - sion of

A & what is a map but the de - lu - sion of

T 8 save us. & what is a map but the de - lu - sion of

B save us. & what is a map but the de - lu - sion of

Gtr. *mf*

93 *mf*

S safe - ty? The line drawn is al - ways in the sand & folds on it -

A safe - ty? The line drawn is al - ways in the sand & folds on it -

T 8 safe - ty?

B safe - ty?

Gtr. *mp*

97 **poco rit.** *mp with passion*

S self be - fore we're done mak - ing it. & that

A self be - fore we're done mak - ing it. & that

Gtr. *mf*

102 **Tempo primo**

S line, there, south of el \*\*rí - o, how it dares to co - ver up the bo - dies, as —

A line, there, south of el \*\*rí - o, how it dares to co - ver up the bo - dies, as —

Gtr. *mp*

\*\*Sing with a strongly trilled [r]. "El río" translates from Spanish to English as "the river."

106

S  
though we would for - get who died there & for what?

A  
though we would for - get who died there & for what?

T  
*mp with passion*  
As

B  
*mp with passion*  
As

Gtr.  
*mp*

110

T  
if we could for - get that if you spin a globe & stop it with your fin - ger you'll

B  
if we could for - get that if you spin a globe & stop it with your fin - ger you'll

Gtr.  
*p* *mp*

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114

T  
8 land it on top of some-one liv-ing who was not ex-pect-ing to be crushed by

B  
land it on top of some-one liv-ing who was not ex-pect-ing to be crushed by

Gtr.  
*p* *mp*

118

S  
*mf* beseechingly  
I wish maps would be with-out bor-ders &

A  
*mf* beseechingly  
I wish maps would be with-out bor-ders &

T  
8 thirst- I wish maps would be with-out bor-ders &  
*mf* beseechingly

B  
thirst- I wish maps would be with-out bor-ders &  
*mf* beseechingly

Gtr.

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124

S that we be - longed to no one & to eve - ry - one at

A that we be - longed to no one & to eve - ry - one at

T that we be - longed to no one & to eve - ry - one at

B that we be - longed to no one & to eve - ry - one at

Gtr.

130

*rit. al fine*

S once, what a world that would be.

A once, what a world that would be. *p*

T once, what a world that would be. *p*

B once, what a world that would be. *p*

Gtr. *sf* *mp* *espress.*