Grenets-ganovim (Border Thieves)
Lilye Weitzman

Grenetsn boyt men umetum. Ay yay yay yay Zey ringlen di mentshn arum, arum, Tseteyln say layt, say land.	Borders are built everywhere. Ay yay yay yay They encircle around and around people, Divide both people and lands.
Nor grenets-ganovim zenen mir. Ay yay yay yay Mir ganvenen grenetsn on a shir, Un shafn fun zey farshtand.	But we are border thieves. Ay yay yay yay We steal borders without limit And from them create understanding.
[Refren] To ganvet un ganvet un ganvet di grenetsn, Ale in eynem! Makht fun zey brikn, un makht fun zey tikn, Un makht fun undz shkheynem!	[Chorus] So steal and steal and steal the borders Everyone together! Make from them bridges, and make from them reparation, And make from us neighbors!
Aribern rand fun min tsu min. Ay yay yay yay Di grenets gekhapt afn veg ahin Tsu shpinen fun ir a fodem.	Across the margin from gender to gender Ay yay yay yay Grab the border on the way there To spin from it a thread.
Mir vebn fun fodem a gevant, Ay yay yay yay Kolirndik, glantsik vi a brilyant, Vos flit inem frayen otem.	We weave from the thread a tapestry, Ay yay yay yay Multicolored and bright like a diamond That flies in free breath.
[Refren]	[Chorus]
A grenets tseshnaydt di same erd, Ay yay yay yay Un taynet az teyl mentshn ze'en farvert, Vos zenen dokh mentshn glaykh.	A border cuts through the very land, Ay yay yay yay And claims that some people are prohibited, Though they are still people.
Fun grenetsshtof boyen mir a brik,	From the border material we build a

Ay yay yay yay Vu yederer ken geyn ahin un krik Ariber a frayen taykh. [Refren]	bridge, Ay yay yay yay Where everyone can go back and forth Across a free river. [Chorus]

One way to say “to steal across the border” in Yiddish is “ganvenen di grenets,” the words of which literally mean “steal the border.” This song plays with the idea of not only stealing across borders, but stealing them away. It envisions deconstructing the various borders that are imposed on us, be they political, interpersonal, or internal—and creating something liberating out of them instead. In writing about borders separating groups of people, landscapes, genders, and resources, the song recognizes the interconnectedness of people and our justice movements. Envisioning the building of bridges and the creation of reparations from the borders, rather than simply discarding them and building anew, is a way to acknowledge the harm that has been done and work repair it, rather than casting it aside and pretending it didn’t happen. Many thanks to Harry Bochner, Adah Hetko, and Jonah Sidman for their feedback on this song. -Lilye

Gre-nets-n boyt men u-me-tum.
Ay yay yay yay
Zey ring-len di mentsh-n a-rum a-rum,
Tse-teyl-n say layt, say land.

Nor gre-nets-ga-no-vim ze-nen mir.
Ay yay yay yay
Mir gan-ve-nen gre-nets-n on a shir,
Un shaf-n fun zey far-shtand.

[Refren]
To gan-vet un gan-vet un gan-vet di gre-nets-n,
A-le in eyn-em!
Makht fun zey brik-n, un makht fun zey tik-n,
Un makht fun undz shkhey-nem!

A-ri-ber-n rand fun min tsu min.
Ay yay yay yay
Di gre-nets ge-khapt af-n veg a-hin
Tsu shpin-en fun ir a fo-dem.

Mir veb-n fun fo-dem a ge-vant,
Ay yay yay yay
Ko-lir-n-dik, glants-ik vi a bril-yant,
Vos flit in-em fray-en o-tem.

[Refren]

A gre-nets tse-shnaydt di sa-me erd,
Ay yay yay yay
Un tay-net az teyl mentsh-n ze'en far-vert,
Vos ze-nen dokh mentsh-n glaykh.

Fun gre-nets-shtof boy-en mir a brik,
Ay yay yay yay
Vu ye-der-er ken geyn a-hin un krik
A-ri-ber a fray-en taykh.

[Refren]