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Between Flesh and Being: Theorizing the Racial Body and the Position of Personhood in Claudia Rankine's Citizen

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BETWEEN FLESH AND BEING:
THEORIZING THE RACIAL BODY AND THE
POSITION OF PERSONHOOD IN CLAUDIA RANKINE'S *CITIZEN*

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
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by
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Accepted by:
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Abstract

In this paper I argue that Claudia Rankine, in *Citizen* (2014), by concentrating on the place and position of the radicalized body, creates a technique of resistance that emerges as assemblages against contemporary racism. *Citizen* narrates the stories of a range of racist incidents that happen to individuals, including the author herself and celebrities in Western societies. Those incidents have been narrated and re-contextualized through a unique technique of representation, where multiple genres, such as lyric, prose, and visual images, all collaborate in telling those stories in the text. In *Citizen*, resistance is the predominant mode of narration. The text privileges the moment of resistance during racist encounters. I draw from Frantz Fanon's black existentialism and Michel Foucault's theories of biopolitics and racism to illustrate that resistance precedes essence in the life of racialized people. Rankine, in *Citizen*, shows how resistance constitutes an important part in the life of racialized people's existence. Thus, this highlighting of resistance in the life of racialized people firmly places *Citizen* within the literature of resistance.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated primarily to my parents, Bayan Qadir and Najmalddin Karim, to thank them for their unconditional love and support. I would also like to thank my sisters and brother for their support and belief in me despite our being million miles distant.

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Between the Flesh and Being:
Theorizing the Racial Body and the Position of Personhood in
Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*

The flesh is the concentration of "ethnicity" that contemporary critical discourses neither
acknowledge nor discourse away. -- Hortense Spillers

I. Introduction

Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* (2014) portrays incidents of contemporary racism through sequences of lyrics, proses, images cut from media, and the visual arts. It is published as a response to current racism in the Western societies. *Citizen* narrates anecdotes, racist daily encounters, historical events, and personal experiences of the speaker herself. Rankine uses the technique of collage so as to create an artifact that contains multiple artistic genres. This enclosure of multiple genres indicates the necessity of recording and narrating the current state of racism. This arrangement of different genres is a form of active resistance against racism that creates a collective consciousness and lays bare how certain bodies are treated. Throughout the text, this notion of resistance dominates the text. Resistance is shown as an essence of life that precedes existence in the life of racialized people. Thus, throughout *Citizen*, there is a moment of resistance that precedes the existence of the speakers and the characters.

Citizen actively invites us to get engaged or to be aware of what we call the new racism. The term implies that there is a new form of racism that can be described as

"more indirect, more subtle, and more procedural," and which is mainly produced by mass media through the dissemination of ideologies that justify racism (Pettigrew 118; see also Barker). It is commonly understood as a reaction against the entrance of minorities into spaces or positions that had been occupied by the dominant race. New racism is widely seen in the public discourses on diasporic societies, refugees, transnationalism, Africans, and African Americans. In *Citizen*, this type of racism is featured in the form of everyday incidents of racism endured by individuals, importantly, however, the text privileges the moment of resistance over the act of racism itself. This privileging can be seen in the way Rankine first illustrates moments of resistance before narrating the racist encounter that gave rise to the resistance.

In *Citizen*, resistance is shown against a force which imminently tries to erase or create persons and selves out of the characters or speakers in the text. This force is the force of "the other" which finds its strength through the use of the politics of body and flesh. Thus, the politics of the human body and flesh is being used as a form of knowledge by which different persons and selves are constantly constructed and erased. In the study of biopolitics, what constitutes the body is different from what constitutes the flesh. The moment the human body is referred to as a body, it denotes the subjectivity and agency of the body in its fully human existence. However, the moment a human body is addressed as flesh it denotes a biological substance stripped down from any kind of agency or subjectivity. Flesh is the material biological existence of a form of matter among all other matters stripped from any human agency.

The construction of selves in *Citizen* is shown through the language of the speakers, who continually change their tone and subject/object position, which usually appear as "we," "you," and "I." Thus, the speakers are positioned as being in a mode of emerging and becoming due to resistance, misidentification, and denial. In this paper, I argue that Rankine, by concentrating on the place and position of the racialized body and flesh, creates a technique of resistance that emerges as an assemblage against contemporary racism. Thus, the created selves and persons end up as a positive force that can resist and sustain rather than diminish and become invisible. I draw from Hortense Spillers' theories of the black body and the flesh as well as Giorgio Agamben's and Michel Foucault's theories of bare life and racism to explain how racism is constructed and conducted on certain bodies by hegemonic powers or individuals. As a result, the individual selves can't stand as one subjective unified entity without experiencing oblivion. However, in *Citizen* this division, oblivion, and creation of selves emerges as powerful assemblages through resistance.

By collaging multiple genres, Rankine creates assemblages that are compatible with Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's theory of assemblage: "assemblages involve a continual process of emergence and becoming and are composed of a multiplicity of unstable organic and non-organic elements each invested with the capacity to transform the whole" (Deleuze and Guattari 4). Assemblages cannot be created only through utterances or signs. However, there are assemblages that are entirely composed of bodies. Based on our current understanding of assemblages, Rankine's *Citizen* stands as assemblages since it is not merely composed of language. Instead, it is a complex

combination of utterances (prose and poetry), visual images, and photos derived from news media, art galleries, and archives. Through the use of collage, Rankine includes multiple elements and objects (visual images) that emerge as an assemblage which is constantly changing, moving and emerging. Assemblages are inherently productive and positive; as Alexander Weheliye puts it, "assemblages are inherently productive, entering into polyvalent becoming to produce and give expression to previously nonexistence realities, thoughts, bodies, affects, spaces, actions, ideas, and so on" (46). *Citizen* as a form of art can stand as a set of assemblages because it creates new expression and produces a new reality of the racist encounters, which are narrated by the speakers.

In my explanation of Rankine's narration on Zinedane Zidane's and Serena Williams' incidents, I mainly focus on the creations of selves by the power of "the other." However, as I turn to her lyric which begins with: "some years there exists a wanting to escape." I focus on the creation of selves by "self" (himself/herself) and "the other" because of the way lyric participates in the creation of intended further semantic connotative meaning.

In *Citizen*, Rankine narrates Zidane's and Serena's incidents with a strong language of resistance against denial and contemporary racism. During the World Cup 2010, Zidane hit an Italian player in retaliation for his racist verbal provocation. Serena on and off the court has been excessively under the camera's surveillance as a black woman athlete for her acts, clothing, and behavior. Serena and Zidane's incidents fall into the description of the new racism. First, they are in a space which is historically the space of the dominant power. The depiction of the incidents through media was to justify racism encountered by them as valid due to the way they resisted in the arena. The two incidents

are happening to two athletes whose bodies are in an active engagement of the sport they are performing. Thus, their bodies are paradoxically under the audience's and camera's surveillance. Third, the two incidents emerge out of the histories of colonialism (in Zidane's case) and enslavement (in Serena's case).

These two moments of encountering racism contain verbal and non-verbal interactions. In *Citizen*, verbal and non-verbal racism is narrated either in words or visual images cut from media coverage whereby the reaction from the victims is accurately addressed. Thus, as the force of resistance, denial, acknowledgment, identification, and erasing clash with each other multiple selves and persons are produced.

In *Citizen*, the black bodies are depicted as "the self" and the white figures or what falls beyond is depicted as "the other." "Self" is given the power to emerge, resist and defy the moment by not letting the position of "the other" become central to the existence of "self." Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Mask* argues that the existence of the black man does not equal the existence of Man: "there is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity" (Fanon 2). Fanon argues that there is a zone of non-being from the side of racialized people where they fall into an overwhelming moment of non-being because "the other" denies the existence of the black man. And yet, this is the zone where a truly decolonized and liberatory new man emerges, "where an authentic upheaval can be born" (2).

Rankine and Fanon use the experience of consciousness where both "self" and "the other" are in a dichotomy of resistance and denial. This dichotomy in Fanon's words is dominated by denial of "the other" where "the other" is the dominant figure. However,

with Rankine, the black subject defies "the other's" denial through resistance. For both, the body either gains or it gets fully purged from subjectivity by the "self." Therefore, the body becomes a mindless non-thinking object that can be contained by the power of "the other." Thus, the corporation of selves and the objectification of the human body are strongly correlated. Decades after Fanon, Rankine addresses the same issue: however, she makes "self" a strong source of resistance in the face of "the other" through words and poetry. The experience of "self" does not wait for recognition so as to acknowledge his own being by "the other."

As the body becomes most visible, the "self" starts to struggle between existence and nonexistence. As a result, multiple selves are created because of resistance and denial during racist encounters. This moment of the corporation of the "selves" is happening in the moment of racist and discriminatory encountering in *Citizen*. This moment of racist encountering is the moment of the production of multiple selves through both sides: "the other" and "the self." The concept what "self" that one comes to identify with gets distorted because it depends on "the other" for recognition, but the racialized "self" isn't recognized as a complex, fully human self by "the other." Thus, what used to constitute "self" is changed. The recognition of "self" is necessary for acknowledging one's being or existence by "the other." "The other" through prejudice eliminates the whole being of someone in a symbolic representation of an idea, race, or minority religion or ethnicity. Or the other refuses to acknowledge what one identifies with because they feel threatened. Paradoxically what counts as racial, ethnic, religious, sexual or national identity finds itself concentrated in the flesh because the self is thrown into non-

existence. In *Citizen*, the speakers are intensely engaged with this constant creation of selves and persistently attempt to free themselves and thrive.

Three dimensions exist within us: "self," "the other," and what falls in between, which is language or the symbolic world of meaning. "Self" is a person and all the concepts one possesses for that which constitute their being. "The other" is the opposite of "self" and refers to whatever stands outside "self." Language is the world of signs in which what is real is never attained completely. In this case of racialization or people who are put into an inferior position within a racial hierarchy, "the self" cannot stand as a rigid, defined, united entity that can be grasped autonomously. However, in *Citizen*, "the self" is given privilege through its acts of resistance and through its insistence on standing out despite denial and injury.

II. Racism, Biopolitics and Multiple Selves

In *Citizen*, the speakers are always mentioning history as an inseparable part of their existence. This inclusion of history brings with it the historical vulnerability of certain bodies and their encountering of racism. It also fashions a sense of substitution. In other words, it helps us to experience what other bodies are going through, not only through sympathy but by also imagining being put in the same situation as Rankine describes in narrating Serena's encounters: "every look, every moment, every bad call blossoms, out of history, through her, on to you" (Rankine 32). In narrating Zidane's experience, the order of names: "Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin, Zinedane Zidane, Frantz Fanon" stand out (Rankine 125). These names are put on a separate page as the citation of their speech, with their attributed quotes on the opposite facing pages, as part of the narration of Zidane's incident. However, this attribution is done in an unusual way in the text. At one level, the unusual placement of citations by those individual names space on a page allows them to be read as independent from attributed lines. At another level, Rankine uses this technique to remind us of history, as if to tell us we are still dealing with the same issue of "othering" the racialized bodies. These names represent ideas and concepts of struggling against and encountering racism. Rankine makes this process of "othering" accessible historically and temporally. Thus, history is also altered to a form of consciousness that collaborates with the present in defying racism.

The moments of racism are first presented through resistance to them before encountering the real moment of experiencing racism, and then again the language

returns to resistance. Resistance is privileged mainly by giving the victim agency to speak and by illustrating their mental and bodily stance. Therefore, we are intentionally left on the side of the victim. The resistance appears in different forms; it is either monologue spoken by a person or an action or an alienated sound. For example, we are introduced to Serena's resistance against the referee's decision in the words: "no, no, no" then we are taken back to the real moment where she feels she is being judged unfairly because of racial prejudice (Rankine 25).

Rankine's use of language changes the way she addresses the human body throughout the text. This is depicted either semantically or syntactically or together. She intentionally refers to the human body as an object or as a non-seeing entity such as: "some aspects of life," "flesh," "black subject," and "black object" (25, 63, 93). No person stands as a persistent single figure. There is a constant metamorphic change in the personhood of the speakers in the text whether bodily or mentally. Rankine illustrates body as a mindful object that participates in our daily experience:

Yes and the body has memory, the physical carriage hauls more than its weight. The body is the threshold across which each objectionable call passes into consciousness the unintimidated, unblinking and unflappable resilience does not erase the moment lived through, even as we are eternally stupid or everlastingly optimistic, so ready to be inside, a part of the games (28).

In this prose, Rankine makes a drastic shift while narrating Serena's experiences with racism by using the word "body" instead of her name. The position of the body in this writing is paradoxical. The body is shown first by having memory, being in the

stance of resistance and remembrance, therefore, it is made visible. However, it is also put into a form of invisibility by being purged from personhood and having it speaking not as a person--but as a body. The creation of selves has been empowered through Rankine's narration by being able to be visible despite its invisibility. Here, Rankine not only narrates the selves and personas created from the athlete known simply as "Serena" but also creates a complex persona out of Serena that we get to meet in Rankine's prose. The persons fashioned out of the racist incidents in Rankine's *Citizen* usually stand as conscious persons who are quite conscious of what their bodies are going through. This illustration of the body follows for a few paragraphs, where "visceral disappointment" occurs. Earlier, Rankine mentions types of anger that are felt by people of color because of their experience. She determines their experience as the production of a form of knowledge that both "clarifies and disappoints." This disappointment, however, is experienced through the body; as she says, it is "visceral disappointment" (Rankine 24). Early in this section, this disappointment has been illustrated as the result of resistance by reacting against that to which the black body is exposed. Therefore, what this disappointment finally leads to is not known. It can be either a "more isolated self" or an "insane" person (Rankine 24).

Any act of racism is the clash of two binary forces: degradation and resistance. Rankine wrote: "No one could understand what was happening. Serena, in her denim skirt, black sneaker boots, and dark mascara, began wagging her finger saying 'no, no, no' as if by negating the moment she could propel us back into a legible world" (Rankine 27). Rankine's focus on the body, clothes, and space are relevant to the way in which the new

racism is conducted in the contemporary moment. In Rankine's words the fact of Serena's blackness is brought to our attention as the major cause of all the racism against her: "it could be because of her body, trapped in a racial imaginary, trapped in disbelief--code of being black in America is being governed not by the tennis match she is participating in but in a collapsed relationship that had promised to play by the rules" (30).

In mainstream coverage, Serena's outfit is always being described as outrageous, striking, bold or unpredictable, and has been widely criticized for showing too much of her feminine features. So it is not only the race that creates or builds different dimensions of the same person by "the other": gender and sex also participate in the corporation of persons and selves. Serena's gender and racial identity become a flexible form of matter where she is constantly invented, one time through her clothes, another time through her skin, and finally through her gender. Here, racial identity is overly visible, but also her gender and sexual identity is being constantly brought to question and hostile accusation.

According to Hortense Spillers, the black body so as to speak a truer word concerning themselves needs to strip down through the "layer of attenuated meaning, made an excess in time, over time, assigned by particular historical order, and there awaits whatever marvels of my own inventiveness" (Spillers 65). Therefore, a body of a black person is referred to as a "marked body." Serena faces an alternate version what Spillers calls "inventiveness." The idea of inventiveness in Rankine's narration varies from Spiller's inventiveness, since it is the dominant "other" that constantly invents multiple selves of the black body in *Citizen*. Her body is constantly invented not by her own marvels but by others'. Her body emerges in different forms through an imaginary

production that aims at defining her body subjectively through her race, gender, and sex. Serena's body becomes a subject of metaphor in its material and abstract phase. This constant forming of selves that is happening to Serena, in Rankine's narration, is given another treatment. Rankine, through art, turns these moments of encountering and attempt to erase Serena's personhood to create a person that survives, contrary to the world that seems to be impossible to survive in reality.

This inventiveness in Serena's life is off and on the court. For example, Brit Piers Morgan calls her victory dance a gangster dance. When Serena asks if she looks like a gangster to him, he answers "yes" (Rankine 34). Serena despite her achievement cannot strip herself down from all the myth that is attached to black people due to prejudice, place, and history. She is straightforwardly assimilated with a gangster as if being a gangster has to do with an entire race or culture. This is how Serena is constantly invented into different racial personae. Looking at the political dimension of the body of a gangster under the juridical system and outside the juridical system is interesting in relational to labeling Serena as such. First, under the juridical system, a gangster is a person who is involved in crimes or criminal activity such that, when convicted, their life and body becomes the state's territory. Thus at the moment that Serena is seen to be like a gangster, she is put in a bubble of not being seen as Serena or a woman or an athlete but rather a person whose skin color puts her beyond what she is, and whose skin color gets recognized as criminal. Metaphorically, Serena becomes a gangster that deserves this labeling and mistreatment because she is in possession of what an entire culture is being falsely accused of. Again Serena gets lost as a person in the imaginary idea of "the other."

Rankine ends narration of this conversation between Morgan and Serena by saying: "Serena Williams blossoms as Serena Williams" (34). Rankine, throughout the text, is aware of giving back agency to the victims and to let them stand out. Rankine uses the word "blossom" as if every hurtful experience is a form of growing, becoming, developing, and glowing. The use of the word "blossom" is crucial to how Rankine gives back agency to Serena to stand out as Serena. How agency is shown and given back to the victim can be seen through different elements. Ruth Ellen Kocher in a roundtable on *Citizen* claims that agency is created out of the use of the word in an unusual context, as she argues:

The act of freeing here — manumission as it traditionally defines the process whereby the master frees the slave — becomes the act of freeing oneself. Serena Williams is freeing herself. There's something familiar there in terms of racial discourse I suppose. Agency, and the power that comes with it, attributed to the master in manumission is transferred to the enslaved and so here Rankine empowers the black body. (Los Angeles Review of Books)

Encountering moments of racism makes the victim conscious of one's background again. It makes the victim ask: who is she/he or what is she/he? It is a critical moment of denial, acknowledgment, resilience and identification. This moment creates a phase of consciousness after which a form of dilemma follows. It brings a psychological tension to the mind of the victim. It is the moment of returning, and the paradox of being and not being. It does not only make the victim feel like they have been treated as thing or object but also, it makes them wonder if they ever existed. I call this a verbal annihilation by the other against the victim in abstract form. The victim turns into a form of bare life from

the other's eyes—into a living being that is stripped down from all their identity and personhood for what they are born with. The victim is left to feel they do not exist or they don't deserve to exist. This moment of racism is not being felt or seen by "the other"; we come to label the victim as sensitive or over reactive. Thus, the victim is twice the subject of injury; first, at the time of racism; and second, when they are labeled, interpreted, and judged by their reaction. The hegemony of "self" and personhood in any encountering moment of racism breaks down between being and not being, erasing and bolding, denial and acknowledgment and rebuilding. In *Citizen*, Serena is becoming a subject of hate and judgment twice. Serena has to fight racism twice first when it happens, and then again after she reacts and her reaction becomes another subject of interpretation that can be used to justify discrimination against her.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, racism is something that is only felt by the race that is made to feel inferior. Therefore, racism only appears to exist from the side of the people who are made to feel inferior. As they contend in their speech on racial difference: "race-tribe exists only at the level of an oppressed race, and in the name of oppression, it suffers: therefore there is no race but inferior, minoritarian; there is no dominant race" (Deleuze and Guattari 379). Racism exists on the side of the inferior: this is why mainstream media came to interpret Serena as sensitive or overactive. Serena sees what others can't see because they do not share the same inferior position within the constructed hierarchy of white supremacy. She sees the chasm made between her and other players based on how she is being judged differently.

Race is merely a social construct and it came into existence through various systems of power and spread to all aspects of the society. It has no biological base or scientific origin. It came to create an inferior/superior dichotomy for the benefit of the powerful and wealthy within different systems by different state powers. Race and ethnicity have been used as an excuse for racial extermination and for casual hate incidents among people. Thus, people of a particular race as they consistently faced racism and racial extermination is always in a position to be targeted again for the difference they possess. Their racial identity creates a platform based on which discrimination can occur as something normal, as if the racialized body is naturally prepared to undergo discrimination within the expectation of no resistance. The common expectation from discriminated people is zero resistance because the moment of resistance is also commonly interpreted as an excuse to see racism as valid.

According to Foucault, there are two kinds of racism, biological racism (evolutionary racism) and ethnic racism. Evolutionary racism is what is practiced against people with mental illness, criminals, and political adversaries, as for example during the Soviet era. The second type of racism he calls ethnic racism, "when there are two groups of which, although they coexist, have not become mixed because of the difference, dissymmetry, and barrier created by privileges, customs and rights, the distribution of wealth, or the way in which power has been exercised" (Society 77). Foucault minimizes racism and discrimination into a context of various races within the same nation or country, where not enough space is provided for mutual collaboration. However, it might be inconvenient to fully apply Foucault's argument to Serena Williams's condition where

her confrontation is not because of the difference but also a norm or a culture of conduction, where certain bodies are always okay to be categorized and treated as such. Her experiencing is not because of the lack of cultural collaboration. Instead, it is the result of a form of anxiety that is felt from the side of the dominant race or power. This anxiety is because of their reluctance to accept the inclusion of some people into certain positions and places of which they were historically deprived. It is also the perception of seeing this inclusion as a form of manifesto. Also, Foucault is missing the spectrum of the body and how the body participates in the construction of race.

In reference to Deleuze and Guattari's argument of racism, they contemplate race on the level of collectiveness of any particular ethnic group where the creation of superior and inferior race is treated as a necessity to select some and deselect some others. This selection is mainly the production of power and is to the benefit of power. Weheliye argues that racism is the product of power and has founded its agency based on false claims of creating a superior race by implying race as a biological fact:

All modern racism is biological, first because it maintains the believed natural--often evolutionary--inferiority of the targeted subject and, second, because racialization is instituted, as elucidated by [Sylvia] Wynter, in the realm of human physiology as the sociogenic selection of one specific group in the name of embodying all humanity (60).

Serena's body clearly becomes the embodiment of all black people regardless of their gender, status, position or condition. Thus, racism is constructed out of the dark pigments of skin she shares with many people of color. Her body has to deal with what any other black body went through during slavery and plantation era in the contemporary

moment, not necessarily through torture and violence but rather through labeling and interpretation, as the way her dance and appearance gets assimilated or metaphorically compared to a "gangster." The way the homogenous power in Western societies works is accusing an entire race or culture for certain types of negative form of conduct or behavior, as in the case of contemporary gangs. Or, in relation to Zidane, the mainstream media do not restrain themselves from accusing the whole so-called Islamic world or Middle Eastern culture of terrorism.

Race as a powerful material that forms assemblages in *Citizen* begins with the paradoxical book cover featuring the art work of David Hammon's *In the Hood* (1993), where a black hoodie is put in contrast to a white background. Below it is the full title in black and gray: *Citizen: An American Lyric*. This composition of the two contrasting colors on the cover is extended to the thematic content of the book, where the struggles of encounters between people of different colors are depicted in the poetry and in the visual images. Rankine materializes race in this text by simply using as many objects as possible to represent race in reference to objects and in this way turning race into something material. The black hoodie as an object that represents a race and the having of a racial body treated as an object are two parallel ideas that can be seen throughout the text as we see in the case of Serena. Thus, Rankine's objectification can stand both as Spillers' objectification, on one hand, where the body is purged from its human-hood. On another hand, race is seeing as an object where numerous myths surround it.

The inclusion of visual images and images cut from media give the text so much materiality beside the language. According to Deleuze and Guattari's assemblages theory,

"assemblages involve a continual process of emergence and becoming and are composed of a multiplicity of unstable organic and non-organic elements each invested with the capacity to transform the whole" (Deleuze and Guattari 4). This wholeness or collectiveness emerges in different parts of *Citizen*. We are always thrown back into a moment of reality through the inclusion of media images directly into the text. In the text, bodies and objects have a political arrangement and convert into a racialized assemblage that is constantly emerging, forming and changing. I do not intend to say that race could not work as an assemblage but rather to say objects are also shown as an assemblage in an extended sequence in which the human body merging throughout the text. The human bodies are not turned into lifeless animate objects whenever they are presented in the form of objects, but rather Rankine brings life into otherwise lifeless objects to work as an assemblage alongside the racial body. The black hoodie on the cover would presumably belong to a human body, but that body is missing due to its invisibility as a racialized body. Thus, it is a part of a chain of racial assemblage. The representations of objects as an assemblage work as a positive force, as Weheliye states: "assemblages are inherently productive, entering into polyvalent becoming to produce and give expression to previously nonexistence realities, thoughts, bodies, affects, spaces, actions, ideas, and so on" (46). In *Citizen*, the racial assemblage shows the political life of the racialized body. So the biopolitics of the racial body is intensified by their representation as an assemblage. Eventually, by creating assemblages, Rankine creates a response of resistance and resilience to the racist encounters.

It is not the biological life but the political life of the human body that gains most agency and gains the power to create multiple persons and selves. It is after this consumption of political life of the biological body turns the body into bare flesh. Thus, the biological body also gets purged from having any life and thus turns to the bare flesh (object).

In a similar incident that happened to Serena's, Zidane's incident at the World Cup is presented through a series of prose and images, emerging as an assemblage that is constantly changing and moving in the text. (During the World Cup (2010) Zidane hit an Italian player when he called him a terrorist.) We are variously introduced to what happened not only through words but also through a sequence of images taken from the actual video. The chapter starts with these lines: "something is there before us that is neither the living person himself nor any sort of reality, neither the same as the one who is alive nor another" (Rankine 122). Rankine writes those lines even as she makes the racial body the center of her prose and continues to perform race as an assemblage: the imaginary place of the body through the mind of "the other" takes command.

Leonard Cassuto, in his book *The Inhuman Race* (1997), explains the moment when a person is treated as a nonperson, a "thing," an "it": their body goes through an imaginary metamorphosis that does not involve any equivocal or literal corporeal change. Since we as human put our life in the position of the highest being on earth, the moment of treating other humans as "thing" or "object" is not a tranquil process (42). Indeed, this transformation from human to object can result from many perceived differences, among them racial objectification. Zidane's objectification is happening by being merely

recognized with a created identity by "the other" in which being Algerian is being "shit," being African is being "nigger" and finally being Muslim is being "terrorist." (Rankine 122). Thus through labeling Zidane is being purged from subjectivity and given the identity of what main stream media or mass media came to establish as the new racism against people of color.

In *Citizen*, the speaker is tackling the position and place of being in relation to their racial body, and in relation to "the other." "The other" comes to present as a powerful force that sees something as Rankine says neither "real" nor the "living person himself." This imaginary realm of imagining the subject or the person is because of the way "self" is perceived by "the other." In the case of Zidane and Serena, their bodies exist before of them and they cannot escape that imaginary aura around their existence and the racial prejudice surrounds them. They are two well-known athletes yet they are encountering the same issue that has to do with their background and ethnic identity. Thus, the two of them struggle with who they really are and how they can be perceived.

Zidane is not wearing any religious banner or clothes that could tell his religion, however, his religion is already known through his popularity. Racism against individual Muslims often is constructed from the code of their dress unless the racism is directed against an entire population, such as in the case of Europe's current refugee crisis. In other words, a person who is wearing hijab or turban has been racialized through the clothes that signify, correctly or not, their affiliation with the Muslim faith. Thus, we have external objects covering the body, such as hijab or turban or a medal as markers of race. For a black man, skin color was used as a biological signifier of race. However, in

most of the cases, for a Muslim the cloth or the turban becomes an external signifier outside the physical body, which gives a way for racism to be constructed despite the fact that Muslims come from many different ethnic groups and that such clothing is not exclusive to Muslims. Rankine broadens this idea of the further construction of race in and outside the body by assigning space as a part of the body too. In her narration on a woman's refusal to sit next to a black man in a subway, she says: "the space belongs to the body of the man next to you, not you" (Rankine 131). Thus, race is something that always and gradually builds up more meaning.

According to Paul Sartre and his philosophy of existentialism, every human being is born in a meaningless world where we are equipped to attain individuality, freedom of choice and meaning: "Existence precedes essence" (Sartre 4). Every human being is to dwell in a world where anything inherently means nothing and it is only us who apply meaning to them therefore through these implications of meaning we can discover our true "self" and attain individuality. These claims of existentialism are applicable for any group of a community who are the hegemony of any particular society. In other words, the rights and status of those people are regulated under an equal constitution and they all attain the same legal status of being a citizen. Thus for individuals from minorities whose rights and legal status does not equal the status and position majority of the dominant hegemony "resistance" precedes existence and essence may become an unattainable delusional phantom. For people whose race and ethnicity were subject to institutional racism and eradication, their existence is forever marked by a history that makes them be an easier and more vulnerable prey of racism. Illustrating this argument from Fanon's

experience, his race as an African-descended dark-skinned Caribbean (Martinican) colonial person is subject to multiple rhetorical questions regarding his being and existence by power, individuals and himself. It is a new order of power, "self," and "the other" that isn't equal to the order of the hegemonic race with power and "the other."

For some people whose ethnicity or race or identity has been treated as guilt, they are in a constant struggle. First, proving the racial or ethnic identity they were born with to themselves as something to be proud of instead of hating it. Second, they need to neutralize what is perceived as unnatural to the other. Thus reaching essence may get lost in pursuit to reach the status of a full human. This is not to say they cannot reach their essence but to say it is a very different ordeal. Thus, what is to be is strongly coined with their ethnic or racial identity. Their attempt to find the true self will terminate, in most of the cases, in an effort to normalize their being as a full human in the eyes of "the other."

Both experiences by Serena and Zidane have been narrated by Rankine in the manner of her remembrance of their resistance. The two figures in Rankine's narration are in the stance of resistance against what tries to erase or degrade them. Through this, we are left to feel precisely what we were intended to miss through mass media's representation of their experience. Rankine turns their stance, in *Citizen*, into an immortal moment of resistance. In her words: "The endless struggle to achieve and reveal and confirm a human identity, human authority, contains for all its horror, something very beautiful" (Rankine123). Thus this text leaves us in the side of the victim and entails us to wait for a while and go back to the victim's consciousness and feeling rather than just dwelling in the cloud of the incidents.

III. The Self, "I" and Lyric

In the lyric which begins "some years there exists a wanting to escape," a consoling sound of resistance stands against what seem to be an overwhelming force surrounding the speaker (Rankine 139). The tone of the speaker, early in the lyric, struggles with non-existence and longing to escape. This person's alienation is because of his "injured body" and the multiple references to "you" in the lyrics. The pronoun "you" and the way it has been positioned in the structure of the sentences are in an excellent corporation and description of the selves (Rankine 141).

Rankine illustrates those "selves" changing their position from subject and object of the sentence in the lyric. Thus, when the "you" is losing its agency and becomes an entity to be acknowledged merely by "the other" it becomes the object of the sentence: "And always, who is this you?" Or the "you" falls into fragmented sentences such as, "you nothing / you nobody" (Rankine 142). Thus, this production of selves because of injury, resistance and denial get reflected through pronouns in the lyric. Rankine, in this lyric, without any direct assertion of any incident, in reality, makes the lyric relevant to anyone. It stands as an exquisite description of what the victims feel. Resistance is born out of injustice or the feeling of being treated inhumanly or inferiorly. In this lyric, the body is being addressed with different linguistics term where the humanhood of the body is brought to doubt and questioning.

In the study of biopolitics, when the human body is being treated as an object, it is because the body is being degraded and turned into bare flesh or a form of biological being that is purged from all forms of subjectivity. Rankine continues: "when you lay

your body in the body / entered as if skin and bone were public places," Rankine clearly describes a body turned into a form of an object, where degradation is seen as normal, and as a territorial entity that can be owned. This depiction of the body in the lyric ends up in the production of an "injured body" (Rankine 141). Thus, the body as itself in a racialized context cannot stand alone without being injured. This "injured body" does not equal a body that isn't injured, therefore this "injury" incorporates different selves and personae because this body wasn't "injured" before. This "injury" is seen throughout the text where no description or visual image of the human body is shown without distortion (Rankine 143).

Rankine makes the perception of two persons clear throughout the lyric which are the speaker and the addressed person. However, these are not the only persons that participate in the dynamic life of the addressee. There is multiple "you" which are felt in the narration of the speaker.

It is common that in the literature of resistance the desired form of writing is lyric poetry for a number of reasons. First, the literature of resistance requires this subjective voice which shows individual agency and existential acknowledgment of the speaker. The notion of urgency seems prevalent throughout the text. In other words, the text is an urgent reaction against oppression. The inclusion of the subjective pronouns are, on one hand, personal; on another hand, universal, in Hegelian terms: "When I say 'I' this individual I, I say quite generally 'all I's, everyone is what I say, everyone is I, this individual I'" (Blasing 27). Second, according to Mutlu Blasing, poetry has a material resistance that creates an autonomous tone and agency from the perspective of the

speaker or the poet. This materiality is produced because of the way the words are creating a somatic production where sounds are always reproduced as words and vice versa. Also, the reference and signifier have the potential of multiple meaning. For example, in this three lines in *Citizen*: "You Nothing. You Nobody. You" (142). It is within the frame-work of lyric that one could argue that "You" can stand as a sentence or as a substitute of a whole range of expressions that can mean "you exist" or "you are here."

Citizen within the content of its lyrics is the literature of resistance rather than revolution. Not only subjective pronouns possess a universal resonance in *Citizen*, but also personal names are mentioned as a substitute to all the universal "I's" and "We's." The lyrics with the visual images all together create a moment of both resistance and recognition, where the reader is required or guided to look around again and see things with a different eye.

Resistance is the result of denial and non-acknowledgement. Adorno explains the consoling sound in the lyric as a response to the society is what makes lyric the suitable form of poetic in creating resistance. Lyric despite its individualistic voice and its anti-social connotation--Adorno believes the individual "I" is also the product of society, therefore nothing exists outside the society, as the "I" is originally social.

There is a form of dialectic interruption in Rankine's poetry in which lyric is further complemented by visual images. There is something staying inherently hidden or absent in her poetry which is expressed through the scattered lines. Therefore, a feeling of

absence from "self" is present in a more complicated way; similarly, the society doesn't stay permanently hidden in her poetics.

Unlike traditional lyric, in *Citizen*, we don't get to have a complete image of what the individual subject is going through: instead, there is a strong sense of something missing. Anthony Reed argues that what seems to be the unseen social force that creates the individual voice, indeed, appears as an embedded voice taken from the language of popular culture and the social language of difference in Rankine's poetry. For this reason, he labels Rankine's poetry as "postlyric" poetry (Reed 98).

This lyric that begins with "some years there exists a wanting to escape" is followed by a controversial visual image (Rankine 139). The content, the existential referent, and the position of the black body makes this lyric stand out. This lyric is where multiple subjective and objective pronouns are used which makes us further understand Rankine's use of lyric instead of other forms of poetry. This lyric starts with this desire of escaping or longing not to be somewhere. "You, floating above your certain ache--"(Rankine 139); this precedent of the pronoun "you" might be read as unnecessary for the addressee, since we know the addressee is the second singular person. However, "you" becomes a linguistic expression that creates an agency, gives strength to the poem and emboldens resistance. It crafts resistance through poetics. This acknowledgment of "you" is to further strengthen the position of the addressee and give agency to the person so as not to be forgotten and to create a plural voice. Rankine throughout the lyric changes the subjective pronouns so as to generate different personae with the same struggle. She

fashions a collective of personae that make us want to further look at this relationship between racism and the position of "self" through lyricism.

The following lines: "you floating above your certain ache- / still the ache coexists / Call that the immanent you" (Rankine 139) is continuous with the same pained body but on a psychological realm. Rankine forms this interruption that makes us always shift our focus from different phases of the speaker, body to self, self to personhood and personhood to existence. She turns the artistry of lyric into an emblem of salvation that aims at calming down the reader and protects the volume of resistance in a beautiful way. She crafts a circle of representation where the struggle of the speakers are constantly falling into existence and resistance, dilemma, nonexistence, a willing to fight, a willing to escape and finally a willing to resist.

Rankine magnificently delineates the mental state of racialized people or any person who has been subject of ethnic or religious or racial racism. "You are you even before you" in this line Rankine denotes the power of "the other" in shaping the "self" (Rankine 140). This flexible pronoun "you" in this line linguistically and semantically is the production of multiple selves within one person or one body. Three mentions of "You" stand with different connotation for different selves, and each time it is a different person created from the same body. In this line, "given the histories of you and you--And always, who is this you?" complement the previous stage of the production of selves and persons; Rankine puts the selves and person in a state of oblivion (140).

Reed believes Rankine not only takes out lyric from a personal private experience into a universal experience but also makes it to be metonymic to an entire race. Reed

further contends that the techniques used by Rankine includes a method of distortion of what was anticipated, because of the sudden interruptions and the abrupt exclusion of media images and visual images. As he expresses in his own words: "Postlyric poetry uses certain recognizable lyric strategies in a way that disrupts the genre's hermeneutic enclosure, which figures the expressions and experience singular intending consciousness that is in turn metonymic for race" (Reed 98).

Therefore, in the reading of race and lyric together, Adorno's concept of the universality of lyric is interchanged by universality through race. The personal individual experience constantly complemented by the plural subjective pronouns and moments from media. Rankine uses this technique of disruption and interruption where we are facing an obstacle to get a true sense of what the speaker is going through.

The tone or the voice of the speaker is torn and scattered like the lines and the visual images that follow. In this line: "The opening between you and you, occupied, zoned for an encounter, / given the histories of you and you- / And always who is this you?" (Rankine 140). Rankine generates this dialectic interruption by including multiple situations and putting them in a moment of collision. She mentions history, which implies the history of all black people, "self" and again the primary question of existentialism: "who is this you?" Rankine does not phrase the question as "who are you?" Instead, she determines "you" as "this you," suggesting that this "you" is already being considered and labeled by "the other" as a different "you." Their existence is not an individual pursuance for "self" and freedom as Paul Sartre and Albert Camus suggested, but rather it is an existence of resistance where "self" is already created by "the other" and "you" are

always in a moment of encounter. Therefore, resistance precedes existence. This technique of interruption is a minimized dilemma in the existence of the speaker between "self," existences, and "the other."

Rankine with the inclusion of prose marks her "postlyrical" further distinguishable by letting of what produced the solace and the individual voice into light, as she wrote: "Soon you are sitting around, publicly listening, when you hear this –what happens to you doesn't belong to you, only half concerns you. He is speaking of the legionnaires in Claire Denis's Film *Beau Travail* and you are pulled back into the body of you receiving the nothing gaze--"(141). Rankine keeps the technique of lyricism in this prose (the subjective pronouns and solitude), without necessarily creating lyric, but she highlights what seems to be not individual—the "nothing gaze" from "the other." What here has been violated is the hermeneutic consciousness of a singular person; instead, we are required to turn to the public and see "the other" (141).

Rankine's extraordinary shift of subject matter in her lyric from the representation of an exhausted voice to "injured body" is significant in creating a form of lyric where further dimension of a situated individual person can be shown so as to fashion coherency out of chaos. This chaos, however, is accessible with beauty (143). By all means what is going on in Rankine's *Citizen* is suffering in a chaotic dystopia world where nothing really matters except for the body, but in a very paradoxical context. The body matters as long as it reaches the point of injury: once it's injured, it no longer matters. Therefore, the world she creates or presents is chaotic. In this lyric, Rankine forms a voice that constantly fluctuates between alienated, fashioned selves and the society. The society is

shown through the monologue of the speaker from what is pushed on the speaker. Thus, detachment from the society is shown by making the society another angle of attention. However, at the end of the lyric we are appalled by this visual image of a dismembered human body parts in a collaged painting as if it is a visual reflection of the lyric. Rankine continues to exclude lyric from the conventional creation of one single consciousness by shifting to the consciousness of "the other;" in other words, by letting the selves made by "the other" speak and have agency.

Reed draws an interesting conclusion to the notion of being in Rankine's poetry by illustrating how the irruptions and discontinuities are used as a technique to reach what he calls "initial silence of being" (107). Thus, he subtly implies that resistance within Rankine's lyricism is shown through silence. Silence becomes the last escape from their condition where alienation and detachment seem to provide the solace voice with the highest volume of confinement.

IV. Personal Experience

I would like to turn to some of my personal experience because of the feeling I had while reading *Citizen*. Reading *Citizen* was a unique experience. It was very cathartic. Although *Citizen* is focused on what people of color feel in certain societies, I believe something about this text is inherently universal. Perhaps it is because of what art always ends up doing: becoming universal. It may seem what I experienced looks very different from what *Citizen* is concerned with, but in many ways, it is the same story of misrecognition, non-acknowledgment, denial and the non-being.

In my life, I have dealt with both: ethnic discrimination under state power and from individuals. In the first place to be a Kurd in the Middle East means you are always under attack by Iraq, Iran, Turkey or Syria because they see our existence on our land as "*tâwân*." The word "*tâwân*" in this context is a culturally constructed concept, and its literal translation is "guilt." For so long, Kurds' ethnic identity has been shaped by being seen as "*tâwân*/ guilt" on their land or is being denied constitutionally to identify themselves with or by the state powers. The term was gradually culturally created when—in the case of people being detained, especially in Iraqi Kurdistan under Saddam Hussein's power during interrogation—if the victims asked what is his/her guilt the answer was: "you are a Kurd." This term was gradually used as a parallel to our ethnic identity. Even in most of the books written on the prosecution and oppression of the Kurds, the cause of their prosecution is being described as because of "*tâwâni Kurd bûn*" which literally means "being a Kurd."

Within the territory of the previous Iraqi regime, being a Kurd was being from the inferior race and being constantly persecuted on a dangerous level. In Turkey, first the Kurds as an ethnic group did not have the right to recognize themselves as Kurd until 1991 (instead, they were called "Mountain Turks" and they were decreed as Turks). Also, all their external cultural symbols were suppressed. The denial of identity went to absurd lengths. In case a Turkish soldier should hear the word "Kurd" mentioned while on duty in the southeast, his service handbook informed him that this was a nickname born of the "‘kürt, kürt’ sound made when crunching through the ‘mountain Turkish’ snow" (Human Rights Watch).

In Syria, until 2011, the five million inhabitants of West Kurdistan (Syrian Kurdistan) were not recognized as citizens and by law; they were stateless people besides the denial and prosecution of any resistance found by the state power. In Iran, although ethnically and regionally Kurds are recognized, state racism is nonetheless at a shocking stage regarding their civil rights as a minority and ethnic group.

Kurds in the four mentioned states were highly vulnerable to many acts of mass eradication and genocide, among them the use of chemical weapons in Halabja in 1988 and the Anfal genocide by the Hussein-led Iraqi regime (1986-1988). Racism against Kurds in Iran, Turkey and Syria is still at a shocking stage by the state powers. Except for Iraqi Kurdistan, the Kurdish inhabited areas in Turkey, Iran and Syria are extremely underdeveloped. The governments purposely do not invest in those areas so as to keep the literacy rate as low as possible for the benefit of the homogenous power. Kurds in these areas are also constitutionally deprived of getting education in their native language.

Growing up in a relatively semi-independent Kurdistan region in Northern Iraq, I did not face direct torture or violence as my parents did. What surprises me are the racist ideologies that some people from the four above-mentioned states have held against me in actual face to face encounters that I happened to experience in a transnational space. My first encounter was with a Turkish man who couldn't hear or accept a name which is "Kurdistan." I was at the University of Arkansas Fayetteville during my pre-academic orientation program when I happened to meet two Turkish men who were Ph.D. Fulbright scholars; interestingly, Fulbright students are exchange students who work to

promote and further cultural understanding between the US and their home countries. They were invited to a coffee by my Turkish roommate, and I happened to be at home when they arrived. As my roommate introduced me to them they asked where was I from. I said: "Kurdistan" One of the guy's face showed his sudden shock and he replied: "Where? Where? Oh, what is that? That does not exist." I never knew a moment of being discriminated against could be that hurtful until I experienced it. I remember all I felt was an extreme pain in my chest. I felt it with my body. I never thought I would experience who I am through my flesh but I did. It was a moment that I felt most Kurdish, but at the same time, I felt like I didn't exist at all. "The other" was denying me and I was here to resist and disapprove him. I don't hide it: our encounter left me angry and injured. The next day I wanted to gather all the paper maps that are there of Kurdistan and stick them in his face. I was expecting that the Turkish guy, after four years of university education, had learnt to respect the right of the minorities and to acknowledge their suffering. Apparently, he hadn't.

This is not to say I have never said I am from Iraq when I am asked where I am from. Indeed, due to the extreme division of my homeland, sometimes, so as to avoid giving a history lecture and explain all the division, I just simply say Iraq. In this way, I can avoid the whole context and long conversation of trying to make the other understand where am I from. However, I am quite conscious of saying Kurdistan especially in front of people when I know that hearing it give them discomfort. In the context of Turkey, the word "Kurdistan" is such a strong word and such a threat to their national security that even parents by law are prohibited from naming their children "Kurdistan," which is a

very common name among Kurds. In a rare case and for the first time in Turkey a Kurdish family was allowed to name their new baby born daughter "Kurdistan". This decision faced a backlash from a local civil registry who had filed a complaint in response to the baby's name saying her name could "offend the society." The court finally decided in favor of the complainant and changed the name to Helin, agreeing the name is "offensive to the society" and has a foreign origin (Daily News). Thus mentioning Kurdistan or speaking in Kurdish in an official place in Turkey has always been seen as a political defiance: a manifesto.

We look at our homeland as part of our identity. We are always prosecuted for it, but to avoid mentioning it is tantamount to approving our prosecution as righteous behavior. I must mention during my whole month living with the Turkish girl I didn't endure similar cases of denial simply because she was always replacing "Kurdistan" from my conversation with "Iraq" if we ever to discuss anything that had to do with my country. In other words, if I talked about Kurdistan she would respond by talking about Iraq. Thus her stance was slightly different from the Turkish man, who so rigidly insisted "it doesn't exist."

In my encountering, the only thing that can speak of my identity is language. Nothing on my papers says Kurdistan, no piece of cloth or jeweler symbolizes my homeland that I possess at the moment. Language is what makes my existence be acknowledged by "the other." Thus, the moment I utter the word "Kurdistan" is the moment the other believes they should accuse me of being in denial and refuse to identify me as what I identify myself with. Fanon illustrates the phenomenon of language and the

act of speaking as such: "to speak is to exist absolutely for the other" (Fanon 8). Thus, the moment of utterance which is the moment to be connected to the other becomes a moment of rapture and denial. Rankine illustrates the function of racist language at the moment of the encounter as the result of hypervisibility. After quoting Judith Butler's remark on language and its capability to navigate us and our suffering from the condition of being addressable, Rankine asks for action against this power of hurtful language- she demands us to talk back and look up:

For so long you thought the ambition of racist language was to denigrate and erase you as a person. After considering Butler's remarks, you begin to understand yourself as rendered hypervisible in the face of such language acts. Language that feels hurtful is intended to exploit all the ways that you are present. Your alertness, your openness, and your desire to engage actually demand your presence, your looking up, your talking back, and, as insane as it is, saying please (Rankine 49).

The perspective of the Turkish man in my situation explains how the systematic racism of the Turkish state and their nationalism regulated and created his racist ideology, which merely depends on the dehumanization and extermination of the other practically and theoretically for the benefit of creating their privileged ethnicity.

In school, we were always told: "Being a Kurd is painful but running from it is a disgrace." For me, this sentence never made full sense because I did not know how someone could possibly run away from who they are until I experienced being put in denial because of who I am. I could definitely say I am from Iraq and avoid the whole pain and situation, but it didn't feel like the right thing to do at all. If I did this, I would later hate myself for cheating who I am and for not being proud of where I am from.

Politically, Kurds have been called in the four states to assimilate themselves with the dominant race and that is what the Turkish men were expecting from me, to assimilate myself. The men, by saying my land does not exist, not only deny the fact of a geographical place that gives them discomfort but they also were denying me, my whole existence and my whole being and identity. By denying the place of my being and my whole life, they deny me too, because I wouldn't exist. The mental state of the Turkish men to implicate their attitude on me in that way was to see me and imagine me the way they want; that is, a person who is "stripped out from the land and culture" (Spillers 72). They wanted to see me as a person who can be outside of the context of any racial or ethnic identity that they see as offensive to theirs.

In several other occasions, the moment I introduced myself as being from Kurdistan, I was rejected by a bitter comment by someone who happened to be in most of the meetings and gatherings I have had with friends. This time, I am in Clemson and have friends from all over the world. I explain to them all the unequal geographical equations of my homeland. The moment I say I am from Kurdistan, I am answered by a person as such: "Can I see your passport? What does it say? Anytime she says Kurdistan, I say show me your passport." This person always follows his statement with deriding laughter. Of course, this person's point of view is again an act of negation, but in a very political form. This time, the land somehow exists but cannot be represented unless there is a paper that can prove it with my name on it.

The mentioning of Kurdistan has a different connotation within the border territory of Iraq where the use of the word isn't a national security threat as it is in Turkey.

However, we are expected to say "Iraq" in a transnational space. We are expected to limit our national identity to a regional perspective with the Iraqi state, again another moment of denial: another moment of refusal to be allowed to speak of what I identify myself with. It is the denial of me and my land through a piece of paper (passport) which I carry due to the fact that officially we don't have a state. Thus, if Kurdistan as a geographical land can't exist officially, then it can't exist theoretically. As a person, I will be purged from all sovereignty to say where I am from because of the passport. I as a person don't determine or am not given the right to say where I am from. A passport can speak for me and represent me but not really me. Here, the paper of a passport, as a political invention is putting me in denial again making me wonder so where did I live all these years? I am sure it was Kurdistan.

V. Conclusion

One question that might be asked after reading *Citizen* is, what can art do? Or how does *Citizen* change the way we see art as a form resistance? What answer can *Citizen* provide by turning all these hurtful incidents into art? *Citizen* definitely changes the way we experience racist encounters through mass media, or other forms of narration we hear in our daily life from individuals. It creates a kind of textual platform where individuals differently can subject themselves to what is happening throughout the text. Rankine, in *Citizen*, asks: "what is the purpose of art? James Baldwin wrote: 'is to lay bare the questions hidden by the answers.'" She puts Baldwin's quote as mediation toward Dostoyevsky's remarks that; in art: "we have all answers. It is the questions we don't know" (Rankine 115).

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