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Everyday Resistance and Temporary Autonomous Zones in Etel Adnan's "To be in a Time of War"

Abstract

This research paper explores Etel Adnan's poem "To be In a Time of War" through Michel de Certeau's strategies of everyday resistance within Hakim Bey's temporary autonomous zones (T.A.Z). The aim of this paper is to analyze in Adnan's poetry the semblances of performative domestic acts of unstructured resistance. As a female exiled in America, Adnan is doubly marginalized. Being part of Cooke's 'Beirut Decentrist' group, Adnan desires to "give survival meaning".¹ In the wake of America declaring a hypocritical war on Iraq, Adnan experiences a relapse that hearkens back to her first-hand experience of the violence of the Lebanese Civil War. Arab women have been acutely aware of this "organized and random" violence, which has infiltrated their daily lives.² Thus, Adnan opts for resistance that does not revolt against the American government, but rather indulges in subtle acts of retaliation and confrontation within her ordinary life. As Adnan cartographs and untangles the temporal and spatial chaos experienced poles apart from the actual landscape, terrorized by the unleashing of continuous war, she participates in the creation of resistance that subverts expectations. The objective is to trace the transformative, performative, yet tenuous acts of resistance, and the formation of temporary autonomous zones in Adnan's poetic space.

Keywords: Etel Adnan, Michel de Certeau, Arab World, Feminist Poetry, Hakim Bey, Displacement, Exile, resistance

Introduction

The Arab poetry has been immensely affected by the historical and political upheavals, such as the *Nakba*, Lebanese Civil Wars, Iran Iraq War, Invasion of Lebanon, and the Gulf War. The modern period in Arabic poetry is characterized by a "spirit of revolt" invoking multiple schools and styles.³ For the women writing during wartimes the female "lost tongue becomes whispers becomes writing".⁴ These women collectively and individually "interrogated the hierarchic

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¹ Ammiel Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine culture*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 89.

² Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature*. (Routledge, 2001), 35.

³ Muhammad Mustafa Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge University Press, 1975), 261.

⁴ Cooke, "Women Claim Islam", 35.

power structures of Arab society” - the aesthetic, political, sexual and national issues emerging during the war, which they tackled radically.⁵

Today, Etel Adnan is one of the most celebrated Arab American writers writing in French and English. As a versatile poet, essayist, novelist, and artist she has published up to eighteen phenomenal works of poetry and prose, which include *The Arab Apocalypse* (1989) - a poetic collection prophetically foreshadowing Lebanese Civil War. Her poem - “To be In a Time of War” - analyzed in this research study is part of a larger collection of autobiographical prosaic verse *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country* (2004).

Adnan’s poetry reminds the reader of the surrealistic outbursts of Rimbaud, the transcendental poetic inquiry of Lyn Hejinian, and the politically questioning poetry of Jalal Toufic. Adnan’s poetic oeuvre has been explored by placing it within the context of European especially French influence as explicit in her allusions.⁶ Furthermore, the concepts of displacement and exile have been analyzed in her poetry and prose works.⁷ Her role in furthering the Arab feminist legacy in intellectual and literary arenas has been analyzed.⁸ Moreover, Adnan has been surveyed as a Levantine poet, addressing violence, presenting peace-building strategies and investigating identities situated within the contemporary world.⁹ Her conflicted allegiances towards her homeland and her transnational identity, her role in decentering national and physical borders, and bodies, in lieu of her exile, have been inspected through the lens of her poetry.¹⁰ In the light of the scholarship available on Adnan, it is evident that radical or subtle performative forms of resistance have not been analyzed through her poetic works.

This research explores resistance in everyday spaces within Adnan’s poetry. Spaces, whether filled with nothing, or filled with humans, animals, or haunted things have a certain resistance to external forces. Spaces are then, not only affected by politics, but they carry their own spatial politics as well. Thus, politics, power, knowledge formation and exclusion all participate in the emergence of a space.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau elaborates the art of “making do” - the art of performativity and mobility of resistance within everyday life.¹¹ He

⁵ Cooke, *War's Other Voices: Women Writers on the Lebanese Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 210.

⁶ Caroline Seymour-Jorn, “The Arab Apocalypse as a Critique of Colonialism and Imperialism”, in *Etel Adnan: Critical Essays on the Arab American Writer and Artist*, ed. Lisa Suhair Majaj and Amal Amireh (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2002).

⁷ Wen-Chin Ouyang, “From Beirut to Beirut: Exile, Wandering and Homecoming in the Narratives of Etel Adnan”, in Lisa Majaj and Amal Amireh, ed, *Etel Adnan: Critical Essays on the Arab-American Writer and Artist* (London: McFarland and Company, 2002).

⁸ Fawaz Traboulsi, “Variations on an Andalusian Theme: Undated Letter to Etel”, in Lisa Majaj and Amal Amireh, ed, *Etel Adnan: Critical Essays on the Arab-American Writer and Artist* (London: McFarland and Company, 2002).

⁹ Christina LaRose, “Arab American Women’s Poetry: Violence and Boundaries in the Levantine Diaspora”, (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2018).

¹⁰ Safa Abdulrahim, “Between Empire and Diaspora: Identity Poetics in Contemporary Arab-American Women’s Poetry”, (PhD diss., University of Sterling, 2013).

¹¹ Certeau, 35.

found resistant practices as “multiform”, “tricky and stubborn procedures that elude discipline”.¹² For Certeau the skill of “making do” with what is present at hand “recreat(es) opacities and ambiguities – spaces of darkness and trickery”.¹³ This skill disappears and reappears, never confined within the constraints of a totalizing absoluteness. Therefore, spatial resistance is “flexible and adjusted to mutation”.¹⁴

Tactics depict the interlinking meshwork between knowledge and the “everyday struggles and pleasures that it articulates”. Whereas strategies are veiled under the objectivity of their relationship with the power that “sustains” them, and which emerges from a specific space.¹⁵ A tactic does not perform within a proper “spatial or institutional localization”, and thus operates within the opponent’s vision and reach.¹⁶ For Certeau “the place of a tactic belongs to the other” within the other’s space, it is performative right under the other’s nose.¹⁷ A tactic is determined by “the absence of a proper locus”¹⁸ - decentralized hegemonic power postulates the necessity for improvised acts of resistance to occur within the other’s space.

A strategy to Certeau is “the calculus of force-relationships”¹⁹ which comes into, takes up a “proper” place that can be “circumscribed”, and thus exists within a cordoned off site of resistance that can be delimited, and excludes the opponent. A strategy would thus distinguish its own place, where it exerts power and will, and formulates its own environment. This autonomous space created strategically consists of a “specific kind of knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power” to create a space of one’s own.²⁰ Thus, strategy makes such spaces and knowledge formation possible. Having once established spaces of power, strategy explicates theoretical formation “systems and totalizing discourses” within the space, and provides them the capacity to create a set of places where “forces are distributed”.²¹ Tactics are then in opposition to and in contrast to strategies.

Steve Pile suggests that resistance makes it possible for new geographies to emerge that “seek to appropriate space”.²² Resistance is placed in opposition to oppressive powers and is an attempt at retaliating for defense and freedom. He states that resistance can be mapped, due to its “visible expressions”, its physical consequences and because “it always takes place”.²³ Spaces permit some forms of resistances and inhibit others. Resistance does not only take place through overtly political subjectivities in opposition to power, but also through “experiences which are not so quickly labeled ‘power’”, such as dreams, desires, memories, happiness

¹² Robert. T. Tally, *Spatiality: The New Critical Idiom* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 129.

¹³ Certeau, 18.

¹⁴ Certeau, 41.

¹⁵ Certeau, xx.

¹⁶ Certeau, xix.

¹⁷ Certeau, xix.

¹⁸ Certeau, 37.

¹⁹ Certeau, xix.

²⁰ Certeau, 36.

²¹ Certeau, 38.

²² Steve Pile, “Introduction” in *Geographies of Resistance*, ed. Steve Pile and Michael Keith (Routledge, 2009), 16.

²³ Pile, 2.

and forgetting .²⁴ According to Pile, resistance intends to “occupy, deploy and create alternative spatialities”.²⁵ Spaces of resistance are about “insinuations”, always dynamic, multiple, and not always strong and assertive. At times they subvert domination by existing simply within everyday life and practices.²⁶

Following the same trajectory, Angela McRobbie too reinserts resistance into the “mundane, micrological level of everyday practices”.²⁷ Furthermore, Routledge defines resistance as “any action, imbued with intent, that attempts to challenge, change, or retain particular circumstances relating to societal relations, processes, and/or institutions”.²⁸ He theorizes that different forms of resistance; collective or individual, of long or short duration, “metamorphic, interconnected, or hybrid; creative or self-destructive” emerge within certain spaces.²⁹ Once spatialities of resistance are formed they participate in creating rhizomatic new trajectories of “alternative futures” and “autonomous zones”.³⁰ These spaces of resistance are ambiguous, not stable, and more than fluid; these sites once created are then claimed, defended and employed to aid the resistance. These spaces, Routledge claims, are always contestable and negotiable.

In a similar stance, Hakim Bey explores the possibility of the everyday as a form of revolution beyond revolution. He brings forward the possibility of *temporary autonomous zones (TAZ)* “freed from all political control”.³¹ Bey refrains from defining the term and states that it is self-explanatory and demands autonomy. The TAZ is an “uprising which does not engage with the State directly”, which “liberates” zones from time, space, and imagination only to “dissolve itself to reform elsewhere/elsewhen”.³² These zones are invisible and emerge from anarchy’s desire for a “free culture” and the refusal to “engage in spectacular violence”.³³ TAZs operate through “strike(ing)” at “structures of control” and remain invisible, and maintain “invulnerability”.³⁴ Bey retains that “only the autonomous can plan autonomy, organize for it and create it”.³⁵

Similar to Japanese art of *satori*, TAZ begins with a moment of realization, a “psychological liberation” of realizing not only the possibility of freedom, but its actuality.³⁶ TAZs demand a physicality and the involvement of all the senses. Bey considers the map a political weapon. The act of cartographing is the act of

²⁴ Pile, 3.

²⁵ See note 28 above.

²⁶ Pile, 16.

²⁷ Angela McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), quoted in Donald S. Moore, “Remapping Resistance: ‘ground for struggle’ and the politics of place” in *Geographies of Resistance*, ed. Steve Pile and Michael Keith (New York: Routledge, 2009), 89.

²⁸ Pile, “Introduction”, 69.

²⁹ See note 32 above.

³⁰ Pile, “Introduction”, 69.

³¹ Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z: the temporary autonomous zone, ontological anarchy, poetic terrorism* (Autonmedia, 2003), 38.

³² Bey, 39.

³³ Bey, 40.

³⁴ See note 37 above.

³⁵ See note 37 above.

³⁶ Bey, 52.

surveillance controlling landscape and spaces, yet within the map are spaces not accounted for, and thus the map fails to be accurate. Where the map is closed off, the TAZ is open, unfolding within “fractal dimensions” in the map unaccounted for, and therefore TAZs concentrate on “power surges”, and momentary insurgencies.³⁷ TAZ searches for spontaneous yet “self-order(ed)”³⁸ “flows of forces” and “spots of power”³⁹ anchoring it within time and space frames.

The TAZ has a “temporary but actual” location in time and space; lying at the “intersection of many forces” it adheres to “immediate” experiences.⁴⁰ Bey considers TAZ as a “tactic of disappearance”⁴¹ consciously and unconsciously carrying “elements of refusal”.⁴² Such zones are beyond the State’s ability to gaze, comprehend, define and name, beyond “enslaving”.⁴³ TAZs demand “ferality”:⁴⁴ a return to the wilderness, which is in actual moving forward.

Discourse Analysis

Adnan’s poetic prose collection *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country* is sketched out against the background of Arab Western relations in lieu of the United States invading Baghdad in 2003. For Adnan there was never a pause in the tumultuous political and military chaos unleashed on Arabia. To the West pandering to the conception of an aggressive and terrorizing East Adnan says “come here and see for yourself the mire into which we’re sinking”.⁴⁵ The never truly buried specter of the Lebanese Civil War has returned upon the arrival of an external and more vivid form of violence. In this collection Adnan recedes into the crevices consisting of the “myriad little happenings” and “small ecstasies” lining up in her mind.⁴⁶ She pondered the effect of incessant brutality on the land unfolding “layers of violence, transience and madness”.⁴⁷

In the space between the incoming news of more violence escalating in Baghdad, the brief pregnant pauses between two wars, one civil and one international, Adnan finds herself pondering over what it entails “To be In a Time of War”. The ongoing cyclical nature of the “suffering condition” escapes definition and placement, yet it is in “a perpetually present tense”.⁴⁸ On stepping outside the perimeters of the house Adnan experiences paranoia, guilt and an extreme sense of longing to return to that space of shelter.

The poet finds herself navigating her home space, oscillating between windows, chair, door, kitchen, back to the door, only to return to the window. Adnan categorically lists a procession of actions in the poems, a to-do list similar to Gary

³⁷ Bey, 40.

³⁸ Bey, 41.

³⁹ Bey, 53.

⁴⁰ Bey, 43.

⁴¹ Bey, 50.

⁴² Bey, 51.

⁴³ Bey, 52.

⁴⁴ Bey, 53.

⁴⁵ Etel Adnan, *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country* (City Lights Books, 2005), xiii.

⁴⁶ Adnan, xii.

⁴⁷ Adnan, xiii.

⁴⁸ Adnan, 62.

Soto's mechanical listing of "How Things Work". The poem is categorically executive and manual, yet filtered with the delay of suspended action - the detailed description of mundane actions, such as the act of having cheese for lunch delays, and the arrival and onset of the avalanche of emotions. The center of violent explosive action is coated and surrounded by paraphernalia of constraints and initial avoidance. Only after incessant meanderings she "let go of the day" resigned to the expectation of a similar cyclical format to be repeated.⁴⁹

The tone of the poem reflects increased depression and the poet's suppressed rage. At first glance the poem descends into a delirium, after the initial loss of coherence. The form Adnan chooses breaks down the fortresses of the prosaic and the poetic, the comprehensible and the incomprehensible, the political and the poetic; she creates a discourse that is hybrid and resists definition. She desires to produce a form that cannot be contained, akin to her rage, that refuses to be sublimated into her mundane surroundings, and that filters through her daily ministrations. The poetic form in this collection is a departure from her previous poetic interlude inked before the Lebanese Civil War began. In *The Arab Apocalypse* Adnan's language collapses into the hieroglyphic imagery and doodles repetitive yet mobile patterns. The mood in "To be In a Time of War" is melancholic, gloomy and dejected.

The poem jogs at a steady, sedated slow pace; the reader follows the poet in her escapades about her home place and the cityscape. An underlying anxiety to get on with the day coincides with the guilt Adnan experiences being physically cut off and distant from her homeland. The languidity before the release and anticipation of the news is juxtaposed against the tempo rising, as the anxiety towards the news of America declaring war on Iraq is released. The poem is not compressed.

Resistance involves the physical, social and political environments of an individual. Adnan's poetic resistance is self-centered and does not engage in an organized form of resistance. Adnan juxtaposes the advent of the catastrophe of the Lebanese Civil War "the night of the non event" and the US-Iraq war, as she witnesses the execution of Iraq.⁵⁰ In "To be In a Time of War" Adnan does not present a form of resistance that is violent, pronounced or detectable. Contrarily, her tactics of resistance are disguised, subtle, seditious, and physical. The political and the resistant cannot be cordoned off to public spaces, or to overtly political spaces; they infiltrate and are performative within the domestic and the daily space.

Adnan appears to be preoccupied with time in the poem; she tactically embalms and encapsulates war within time frames, not permitting it to spill over and outside temporal formation "to look at the watch, the clock, the alarm clock".⁵¹ "To consider the present time as sheer lead"⁵² she refuses to keep up with time; she realizes its characteristic of becoming stationary and desires to "enter Time's movement"⁵³, and wonders the possibility of time moving when the spaces remain

⁴⁹ Adnan, 99.

⁵⁰ Adnan, "The Arab Apocalypse" (Post-Apollo Press, 1989), 109.

⁵¹ Adnan, "To be in" 99.

⁵² Adnan, 103.

⁵³ Adnan, 109.

static. Adnan retaliates against the knowledge produced regarding time, defines it as “c(oming) out from the triangular confrontation of a place already visited”,⁵⁴ and its recurring quality reflected in war’s constant reemergence in her land, in Arabia, distinctly fixed in perpetual chaos. So, she inhabits time and space momentarily, forming a *temporary autonomous zone* emanating from an excess of rage and vehemence directed towards the onslaught of constant brutality and rampage in Arabia.

The onset of the war leaves the individual bereft. Adnan however ensures that she savors the fleeting moments of life by holding on to them, tactically refusing to let the war preoccupy every facet of her life. Adnan’s resistance is performative in her cherishing life, in her ability “to feel lucky”,⁵⁵ to hope, and to still manage “to be ecstatic about the garden’s beauty”,⁵⁶ despite the atrocities occurring back in Arabia.

It is while she is “fac(ing) the day’s chores” that she turns up the radio’s volume only to have the conflict invade her domestic space: “the war against Iraq has started”, the radio declares ominously, it is here that the poet’s recurring spectre of conflict returns and keeps returning.⁵⁷ What follows is extreme anxiety and restlessness as Adnan proceeds to “bite (her) nails” and leave the house.⁵⁸ The domestic has become a political landscape of lived space. She is triggered by the word “WAR”, appearing as a “spider”, resonating the ability of war to occupy more than half of the newspaper’s front page, more than half of space and time, and to produce and build threads in every corner and crevice of human life.⁵⁹ Her temper is prompted by the thought “that they dared, that they jumped the line”.⁶⁰ “To know that war is everywhere”,⁶¹ Adnan realizes the inevitability and the futility of keeping the war at bay. She admits the pervasiveness of the conflict’s inability to contain itself, as she admits to “wait for the end of that which will not end”.⁶² Her home space induces a spatiality of struggle, an intense desire to construct a home place of organized and conceptualized resistance.

The form of resistance that appears within Adnan’s everyday space is creative, yet self-destructive. She envisions “a rain of fire” only to feel paralyzed, and helplessly endeavors “to prevent the trajectory of inner defeat from reaching the centre”. She feels worn out, disoriented and experiences intolerable sadness. Adnan searches for the meaning of existence: she lumbers through the daily chores as an “acclimated ghost”⁶³ who “face(s) the mind’s emptiness”⁶⁴ for a coping mechanism to deal with the expanse between her and Arabia. Resistance despite not being physical becomes psychologically and emotionally taxing for Adnan;

⁵⁴ Adnan, 110.

⁵⁵ Adnan, 99.

⁵⁶ Adnan, 100.

⁵⁷ Adnan, 101.

⁵⁸ See note 59 above.

⁵⁹ See note 59 above.

⁶⁰ Adnan, 101.

⁶¹ Adnan, 102.

⁶² Adnan, 109.

⁶³ Adnan, 102.

⁶⁴ Adnan, 105.

she is “not capable of finding, within, one’s source of energy”.⁶⁵ She struggles “to measure the extent of (her) sadness, while denying its power”. She curbs the ultimate realization of an all-encompassing anguish and grief; to acknowledge later the channeling of this grief towards subversive tactics is what oppressive powers have attempted to restrain.⁶⁶ She endeavors to stop the “flow of these defeatist considerations” of weariness and has accepted that such a melancholy will have to be subverted and considered an act of retaliation.⁶⁷

Sorrow and dejection emanate from her physical distance from the actual site of combat. Adnan’s tactics of resistance become transformative in the instant when the sites of resistance resonate within sites dislocated and distant. Resistance is not maintained within a spatial temporality; rather it collapses barriers to exist within localities from where violence is emerging “to hear a war from far-away”⁶⁸, and to hear the “soundtrack of the war”.⁶⁹ Here right within the opponent’s vision, right in the heart of the USA, Adnan mourns “people smashed to a pulp”.⁷⁰ A tactic that subverts loyalties to the place one is situated in, that declares loyalty to a land she no longer inhabits, and a personal revolt that emerges from within the other’s geographical locale. Adnan introduces a “play” within the strict confines of power, repressive and despotic.⁷¹

Adnan fluctuates between a sense of despair and a sense to perform an act “to exit from one idea to another”.⁷² Her tactics refuse to be constructed or anchored; they shift and morph refusing to be formulated. Her customary established routine is dispersed with the constant remembrance of war. She repeatedly listens to “the poison distilled by the military correspondents”,⁷³ distinguishes the fed discourse, and identifies it for what it truly is repressive and autocratic. She experiences gratitude towards those who participate in totalizing forms of resistance, yet she chooses to hone her own niche in everyday resistance.

Adnan yearns “to blow up the planet”⁷⁴ and “wait(s) for the reaction, the vengeance”,⁷⁵ and for justice to prevail, while she believes in “mysteries and secrets” of the universe.⁷⁶ She is left “wonder(ing) if the human race is not in chaos”, as she drives across the Golden Gate bridge.⁷⁷ She proceeds to lose patience, and “curs(es) the savagery of the technologically powered new crusades”.⁷⁸

⁶⁵ Adnan, 108.

⁶⁶ Adnan, 106.

⁶⁷ Adnan, 106.

⁶⁸ Adnan, 102.

⁶⁹ Adnan, 104.

⁷⁰ Adnan, 101.

⁷¹ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday*, 39.

⁷² Adnan, “To be In a Time”, 102.

⁷³ Adnan, 101.

⁷⁴ Adnan, 102.

⁷⁵ Adnan, 103.

⁷⁶ Adnan, 104.

⁷⁷ Adnan, 101.

⁷⁸ Adnan, 102.

This poetics of confrontation forms fluid *temporary autonomous zones* in the public. Adnan opts for an external form of violence that is perpetuated within collective and known geographical spaces. She witnesses police brutality, and attends poetic recitals in revolt of a state that refuses and denies freedom of mobility and movement to her people back home. Her refusal to let the combat limit her to certain spaces renders her occupation of external sites as a subtle and ingenious act of retaliation. In accordance with Bey's account of TAZs, Adnan constructs an *autonomous zone* free of anchorage in time or space. *Autonomous zones* dissolve from her house to reform and reappear out in the external world: in cafes, on the Golden Gate Bridge, at the gas station, and in literary circles.

Within the domestic space Adnan settles for another form of opposition: she tactically puts up "with an inner rage"⁷⁹ through cleaning out the house and "speak(ing) of evil" by making phone calls to acquaintances.⁸⁰ From hesitating to enunciate the details of the war Adnan switches her tactics to verbally expressing her disgust by "count(ing) the dead of either side".⁸¹ These momentary insurgences within the ordinary flow of life create another *temporary autonomous zone*. Her next strategy within the confines of herself and space is "to transform matter into spirit",⁸² to cross the spectral boundary, and to permit herself to "enter a void"⁸³ - an autonomous region exempted from all political intrigues.

Strife and conflict in Iraq and previously during the Lebanese Civil War had left Arabia bereft, had barred it from functioning ordinarily, from marrying, from sleeping and from walking casually through the alleyways of Bassorah. "To die of thirst is for the natives"⁸⁴ a strategy opted by American and British government in Iraq "to program chaos" and "to pervert language".⁸⁵ Adnan peruses the radio and "finds the official hypocrisy untenable"⁸⁶ - that of the American government "trash mixing the blood of war with business stench".⁸⁷ She recognizes the role and strategies American soft power is playing; by exacting its power and will on the mindsets of those who tune in and listen to the radio "believe that democracy has become a charade".⁸⁸

Adnan resists and decimates the image created of an invasion emblemized by "Die, You Magets [sic]" etched on the missiles utilized for the aggressive strikes on Iraq.⁸⁹ Adnan forthrightly determines them as "war criminals" participating in "displace(ing) hills" and "wipe(ing) out an open market".⁹⁰ It is the spatial "non-

⁷⁹ Adnan, 102.

⁸⁰ Adnan, 102.

⁸¹ Adnan, 103.

⁸² Adnan, 108.

⁸³ Adnan, 109.

⁸⁴ Adnan, 106.

⁸⁵ Adnan, 109.

⁸⁶ Adnan, 104.

⁸⁷ Adnan, 105.

⁸⁸ Adnan, 109.

⁸⁹ John M. LaForge, "Commentary: U.S.—U.K. War on Iraq: Hypocrisy and Lies", *Peace Research* 33, no. 1 (2001): 1.

⁹⁰ Adnan, "The Arab Apocalypse", 5.

event”,⁹¹ or as State Department official Thomas Pickering would term it, “non-War”⁹² would “meddle with Arab destiny”.

Arab women partook in resistance not just as nurses, or cross-dressing soldiers, they “fought as women”,⁹³ they became organizers, fighters, fought with their maternal bodies, and confronted apartheid with their femininity. Adnan’s “hurt was repressed. It was bound to return”,⁹⁴ bound to claim an autonomous zone repetitively. Resistance in the everyday form takes its toll on Adnan: she finds herself “inanimate. To be immured”.⁹⁵ She ultimately reaches a “state of parallel awareness” where she deliberates over the reason behind her placidity.⁹⁶ Her placidity is a disruptive tactic in a geographical space that is prepared for dissent. Adnan’s resistance morphs into an apparent tranquility.

Her insurgent tactics include her acute sense of knowledge “of the impossibility to be ever totally where one is”,⁹⁷ of the inability of a revolutionary to exist within a permanent marker of space and time, and to celebrate courage and spontaneity. She “meditate(s) on cruelty”⁹⁸ as she sits in the corridor, subject to noise and her neighbor’s food odor, and “cleans the bathtub with disgust”.⁹⁹ In doing so, the café and the corridor become *temporary autonomous zones* liberated from time and space, produced from a heightened cognizance and psychological liberation.

In *The Spring Flowers*, known for its transcendental notes and imagery, Adnan states “flowers do not grow on rifles” only to rise and never bend; the rifles employ “colors as we use words”, leaving spectacular powder dust and kaleidoscopic chaos behind.¹⁰⁰ Adnan’s domestic space permits both individual and collective forms of resistance. “To say nothing, do nothing, mark time” is not resisting the existence of the predicament, but it is the refusal to permit the violence to filter into daily conversations and the space of language.¹⁰¹ The moment the words of war are uttered they manifest in their most grotesque and menacing form.

Adnan’s tactic revolves around limiting the violence from poisoning her language and discourse; but later she opts to “vomit the war”, and “sneeze out the pollution”.¹⁰² She deliberates over the brutality doled out by the British and the Americans in Iraq. Towards the end of the poem the reader finds an exhausted Adnan, a poet “impatient in front of nothingness” and “acutely aware of the inherent futility of any action”.¹⁰³ She relieves and exempts herself of desires as

⁹¹ See note 94 above.

⁹² LaForge, “Commentary”, 4.

⁹³ Cooke, “Women Claim Islam”, 7.

⁹⁴ Cooke, “War’s Other Voices”, 17

⁹⁵ Adnan, “To be in”, 107.

⁹⁶ Adnan, 107.

⁹⁷ Adnan, 108.

⁹⁸ See note 101 above.

⁹⁹ Adnan, 109.

¹⁰⁰ Etel Adnan, *The Spring Flowers Own and The Manifestations of the Voyage* (Post-Apollo Press, 1990), 23.

¹⁰¹ Adnan, “To be in”, 99.

¹⁰² Adnan, 103-104.

¹⁰³ Adnan, 111-112.

she "look(s) at the narrow and long road which leads the world to the slaughter-house".¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

This research paper analyzes Adnan's refusal to adopt the role of an onlooker and her participation in prosaic and covert forms of resistance. Adnan's defiance against normative knowledge productions, her initial rejection and subsequent admission of war clamour to enter and accumulate within her home space are all practices of resistance. Adnan depicts resistance against the oppressive state's surveilling and expectant gaze. She persistently relocates her tactics, permitting them to transpire in the house and later occupy space outside on American land. Such employment of tactics results in the formation of multiple spontaneous *temporary autonomous zones* in spaces outside the generic map, such as in concerts, poetry recitals, cafes and apartment corridors. These zones, with their porous mobile borders, become resistant spaces disappearing and reappearing on the map. The multiform yet microscopic strategies Adnan opts for, while physically disconnected from her land and situated in a place hostile to her people, promise opportunities and spaces of resistance that are revolutionary and mutative. Her actions become individual opportunistic acts of subversiveness. *Temporary autonomous zones* exist in Adnan's poetic landscape where they are least anticipated, within mundane domestic spaces and dream lands. Adnan's *temporary autonomous zones* permit creative and self-destructive, individual and collective, isolated and rhizomatic forms of resistance to develop. These spaces determine that women are often the architects of resistance.

¹⁰⁴ Adnan, 112.