

## **Different Senses of Place in the Poetry of Naomi Shihab Nye and Etel Adnan: An Interdisciplinary Perspective**

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### ***Abstract:***

The aim of this paper is to analyze the different senses of place in the poetry of Naomi Shihab Nye and Etel Adnan according to Eyles' categorization of senses of place. Eyles' model is selected due to the fact that Eyles is one of the first geographers to construct a scale of sense of place which identifies ten different categories. Both Nye and Adnan express their attachment to their place of origin in poetry written outside their homelands. Yet, each of the two poets uses a different approach in expressing her sense of place. Nye produces 'character poems' which focus on describing how particular characters give significance to specific places through their actions. Her aim is to reveal the social and cultural identity of the people of her ancestral homeland. Nye, in this sense, is socially, domestically and culturally oriented in treating her sense of place. Consequently, she displays more than one sense of place in her poetry. She shows a nostalgic sense, a social sense and a family sense of place. There is also the way of life sense and the sense of rootedness. All these various senses of place are linked to the various

Different Senses of Place in the Poetry of Naomi Shihab Nye and Etel Adnan,  
Vol. 7, Issue No. 3, July 2018, pp. 43 - 105.

characters who represent the typical Palestinian community. Unlike Naomi Shihab Nye, Etel Adnan produces 'crisis poems' in the sense that she focuses on the massacres in her homeland during the Lebanese civil war. Therefore, her approach is politically oriented. What concerns her most in her poems is the innocent people of Lebanon, those who suffer torture, oppression and cruelty. Adnan is closely attached to such people due to her sense of rootedness. Moreover, what distinguishes Adnan's sense of place is the way she universalizes her attitude towards the crisis of her homeland. She achieves this by tracing its historical development since prehistoric times, and by showing that the collapse of her homeland marks the end of the world. Both poets, therefore, find their own way of expressing the fact that they neither suffer from displacement nor do they feel alienated from their homelands. On the contrary, both poets are still attached to their homelands but each in her own way.

**Keywords:**

Naomi Shihab Nye, Etel Adnan, Arab American poets, senses of place, John Eyles

**الملخص،**

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة مقارنة للأنواع المختلفة للإحساس بالمكان في أشعار ناعومي شهاب ناي ذات الأصل الفلسطيني و إيتل عدنان ذات الأصل اللبناني و ذلك في إطار نظرية الأحاسيس المختلفة بالمكان للعالم الجغرافي جون إيلز، و جاء اختيار نظرية

إيلز كإطار نظري لهذه الدراسة لأنه يُعد واحداً من أوائل الجغرافيين الذين قدموا نظريات الإحساس بالمكان، فقد قدم في نظريته تصنيفاً يضم عشرة أنواع مختلفة من الإحساس بالمكان.

لقد عبرت كل من ناعومي شهاب ناي و إيتل عدنان عن الإحساس بالانتماء للوطن في أشعار كتبت خارج الوطن، غير أن كل شاعرة كان لها أسلوبها المميز في التعبير عن إحساسها بالمكان، حيث قدمت لنا ناعومي شهاب ناي قصائد تدور حول بعض الشخصيات الفلسطينية التي تمثل شرائح المجتمع الفلسطيني والتي من خلال تفاعلها مع الأماكن التي تقطن فيها اكتسبت هذه الأماكن أهمية و طابعاً مميزاً، وهدف الشاعرة من وراء تصوير هذه الشخصيات هو الكشف عن الهوية الثقافية و الاجتماعية لتلك الشخصيات من بني وطنها، و بالتالي نجد أن توجه الشاعرة في تناولها للإحساس بالمكان هو توجه ثقافي و اجتماعي، لذلك تتنوع طرق إحساسها بالمكان في قصائدها ما بين الإحساس بالحنين للوطن، و الإحساس بالألفة الاجتماعية، و الألفة الأسرية، إلى جانب الإحساس بالانتماء لأسلوب حياة بني وطنها، و الإحساس بانتمائها لجذورها. و على النقيض نجد أن توجه الشاعرة إيتل عدنان توجهاً سياسياً محضاً، حيث أنها قدمت لنا قصائد تتناول الجرائم و المذابح التي ارتكبت في لبنان أثناء الحرب الأهلية، و تصف فيها مشاهد العنف و التعذيب و القتل التي طالما عان منها الأبرياء من بني وطنها، و يرجع تعاطف الشاعرة مع هؤلاء الأبرياء إلى الإحساس بانتمائها لجذورها، على أن ما يميز إحساسها بالمكان في تلك القصائد هو تناولها لأزمة بلادها من منظور عالمي من خلال تتبع الأهمية التاريخية لوطنها و التعبير عن قناعتها الراسخة بأن انهباء هذا الوطن الذي تنتمي إليه هو بداية انهباء العالم بأكمله، و هكذا استطاعت كلتا الشاعرتين من خلال التعبير عن إحساسهما بالمكان في قصائدهما التأكيد على حقيقة هامة مفادها أن كل منهما لم تشعر بالاغتراب أو فقدان الهوية أو فقدان الانتماء للوطن.

### الكلمات الدالة:

ناعومي شهاب ناي، إيتل عدنان، شاعرات أمريكيات من أصل عربي، الإحساس بالمكان، نموذج جون إيلز

***Introduction:***

Place and sense of place theories have been widely discussed in geographical studies. In his discussion of the concept of place, John Agnew outlines three main aspects of place: location, locale and sense of place (43). Location, according to Agnew, refers to the simple notion of "where". By 'locale' Agnew means the actual setting for social relations between individuals. Sense of place, in his view, means people's "subjective" and emotional attachment to specific places (43). The key word in Agnew's definition of sense of place is his description of that concept as being 'subjective' which implies that people of a community do not necessarily have the same attitude or feeling about the place where they live. The meaning of place, thus, is different from one person to another.

Moreover, other geographers attempt a definition of the concept of sense of place. Bruce Nanzer, for instance, defines it as "the manner in which humans relate to, or feel about, the environments in which they live" (362-363). Yi-Fu Tuan more or less stresses the same point explaining that "only human beings can have a sense of place. People demonstrate their sense of place when they apply their moral and aesthetic discernment to sites and locations" ("Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective" 410). Richard Stedman, however, gives a more comprehensive definition of the concept. In Stedman's view, sense of place refers to the meanings, attachment and satisfaction people attribute to a specific place (672). Therefore, there is no single, clear-cut definition

of sense of place. It is a subjective concept and, thus, can be interpreted individually. However, all these various definitions give the idea that the sense of place is a broad concept which mainly explores people-place relations. Hence, it is described as an "umbrella concept encompassing various place relations" (Klaincka et al. 55). The human element is the main focus of this concept since it is the individual himself who is able to understand and appreciate the value of a particular place and, thus, gives meaning and feels attached to it.

In his exploration of the sense of place theory, Nanzer points out that sense of place depends on three main concepts: place attachment, place dependence and place identity (364). He defines place attachment as "the bond that develops between an individual or group and a particular spatial setting", whereas place dependence is defined as "the suitability of a setting for seeking satisfaction in the pursuit of some personalized interest or goal" (364). As for place identity, it is regarded as "the dimensions of self that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of ... ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals, and behavioral tendencies and skills relevant to this environment (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001, p. 234; Proshansky, 1978, p. 155)" (Nanzer 364).

Similarly, John Eyles analyzes the different senses of place and puts them into ten categories: social, apathetic-acquiescent, instrumental, nostalgic, commodity, platform/stage, family, way of life, roots and environmental (122 – 126). Places acquire a social sense, in Eyles' view due to people's social ties, interactions and activities which give social

significance to particular places. The second category, namely the apathetic-acquiescent gives a negative sense of place where people have a negative attitude towards their life in the sense that they are not attached to anything related to their place. They, thus, remain passive and their relations to place are meaningless. According to Eyles, a place has an instrumental sense when it has a function and when it renders services and provides goods to individuals. Moreover, a person can be said to have a nostalgic sense of place when he recollects memories of past events associated with specific places. The nostalgic feeling towards a place, as Eyles points out, can have either a positive or negative attachment to place. The positive attitude is associated with memories of a happy past, whereas a negative attitude is the result of miserable past events. A place can also be regarded as a commodity that is bought, sold and exchanged between individuals. A place, in this sense, can be seen as something to be used and consumed for a period of time and then discarded. People who have this commodity attitude toward a place are not highly attached, or perhaps not attached at all, to their place. The platform or stage sense of place concerns those people who search for a place where they can interact and identify with their neighbours. Attachment to place, in this sense, results from interaction, communication and identification among the residents who have the same interests and values. Family relationships, according to Eyles, are also an important motive for forming a family sense of place. This is the place where family, whether nuclear or extended, is living and where intimate relationships between family members are created. The more

intimate relationships persons of a family have, the more family sense they feel. People's way of life in a community can also affect their feelings toward a place. Way of life is not just restricted to social activities but also extends to include all the other shared aspects of life in society such as jobs, education, health and business. The one and the same way of life gives people a sense of belonging to the place where they live. Family roots, in Eyles' view, play an essential role in giving significance to place. A person can always feel attached to a place since it represents to him his origin, tradition and belonging. It is not necessary to live in a place in order to feel the sense of rootedness. It is an inexplicable feeling which comes from being familiar to a place as the only source of one's existence. Eyles' last category of senses of place is the environmental which regards place not as a commodity, stage or way of life, but as a valuable place in its own right. People have an environmental sense of place only when they appreciate a place for its own sake away from social activities or family connections (122-126).

All such geographical interest in the sense of place concept undeniably indicates that sense of place theories have been widespread in geographical studies in recent years. Yet, the sense of place concept is not widely explored in analytical poetic studies. In addition, little research has attempted to examine, from an interdisciplinary perspective, how the sense of place is expressed by Arab American poets. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to analyze the different senses of place in the poetry of Naomi Shihab Nye and Etel Adnan according to Eyles' categorization of senses of place. Such analysis serves to show how far

the two poets are similar or different in the way they are attached to their ancestral homelands. Eyles' model is selected for exploring the different senses of place in the poetry of both Nye and Adnan due to the fact that Eyles, according to Cristobal Mendoza and Ricard Moren-Alegret, is one of the first geographers to construct a scale of sense of place which identifies ten different categories (774).

Both Nye and Adnan express their attachment to their place of origin in poetry written outside their homelands. Their movement to the United States "increases awareness, not of exotic places, but of home as a place" (Tuan "Space and Place: Humanistic" 411). They, thus, produce poems that reveal their attachment to their homelands, and they take from the description of people and places in these poems a way of expressing their different senses of place. In their poetry, they reveal the fact that their senses of place are enriched by being attached to their people and to specific locations or landmarks in their own homelands.

### ***Senses of Place in The Poetry of Naomi Shihab Nye:***

Naomi Shihab Nye was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1952 to a Palestinian father and an American mother. She spent her high school years in Jerusalem and Texas. She graduated with a B.A. degree from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas and she still lives there. Her visit to her Palestinian grandmother in Ramallah in 1966 influenced her writing career so much that her poetry is replete with stories about her

Palestinian relatives and family members, particularly her grandmother, as is clear in her poem "The Words Under the Words".

Furthermore, Nye's awareness of her Arab heritage leaves a direct impact on her poetry. In her poems, she is deeply concerned about the political situation in her ancestral homeland. She also shows a keen interest in describing the life of the people there and she is largely preoccupied with the way people in the Middle East relate to their surroundings, events and time. Hence, she always reveals a nostalgic sense towards her ancestral past in her poetry. In "Brushing Lives", for instance, Nye describes the suffering of the displaced Palestinians focusing on her father's nostalgia for his homeland. She sets the scene in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, where her father unexpectedly meets a displaced Palestinian with whom he shares a sense of longing for Palestine:

Later my father appeared with a husky voice.  
In a shop so dark he had to blink twice  
an ancient man sunk low on a stool said,  
"You talk like the men who lived in the world  
when I was young." Wouldn't say more,  
till my father mentioned Palestine  
and the gentle man rose, both arms out, streaming  
cheeks. "I have stopped saying it. So many years."  
My father held him there, held Palestine, the dark,  
at the corner of two honking streets.  
He got lost coming back to our hotel. (*Red Suitcase* 91)

The suffering of the displaced father is obvious in describing his voice as "husky" and the atmosphere as "dark". The simplicity of the old man is revealed in his language which is simple, colloquial and monosyllabic and the rhythm which is common speech rhythm. He speaks in a nostalgic, sad tone. He feels he has a lot in common with the speaker's father. It is not simply the manner of speaking which they share together; it is rather a long life lived in their ancestral homeland. Here lies the sense of nostalgia which is defined as "a long longing for a particular place and time" (Farrar 728). The key word in the men's conversation is "Palestine." Once the word is pronounced, both men's emotions overflow as suggested in the use of words describing their reactions such as "rose," "arms out," "streaming cheeks," "held him" and "held Palestine." The two men immediately come to full identification with each other. Ibis Gomez-Vega argues that the poet meant her poem to be a poem of displacement and exile ("An Essay" 247). However, the poet accentuates here the common sense of longing for one's homeland more than the sense of displacement. Obviously, each man finds in the other something which symbolizes his homeland, and each inspires the other to realize what it means to belong to one's homeland.

Nye expresses the same nostalgic sense of place in "My Father and the Figtree." The poem recounts the speaker's memories of how her Palestinian father expresses his longing for figtrees:

For other fruits, my father was indifferent.  
He'd point at the cherry trees and say,  
"See those? I wish they were figs."

In the evening he sat by my beds  
Weaving folktales like vivid little scarves.  
They always involved a figtree. (*19 Varieties* 6)

The image of the figtree is a dominant image throughout the lines. The speaker's father is mainly concerned with the figtree. It is his wish to have a figtree in his house in the United States. Moreover, in the tales he recounts to his daughter he is only absorbed in figtrees.

"I'm talking about a fig straight from the earth - gift of Allah!- on  
a branch so heavy it  
touches the ground.  
I'm talking about picking the largest, fattest,  
sweetest fig  
in the world and putting it in my mouth."  
(Here he'd stop and close his eyes.) (*19 varieties* 6)

The figtree is used metaphorically throughout the poem. It symbolizes the father's homeland and shows how much he, who is now living in the United States, is attached to the heritage of his homeland. The speaker's father loves eating figs; it is true. Yet, what is more important for him is the idea that figs are associated in his mind with his childhood memories. The fig, thus, means a lot to him since it represents a whole past spent in Palestine. The fig, for instance, is linked with childhood stories of the

folkloric figure of Joha: "Once Joha was walking down the road and he saw a figtree / Or, he tied his camel to a figtree and went to sleep" (*19 varieties* 6). The speaker's American mother does not realize the symbolic significance of figs to her husband. Hence, she simply advises him to plant a fig tree in the garden of their house in the United States. She thinks that the taste of figs is appealing to him. Undoubtedly, she fails to understand that her husband feels homesick and that a figtree, as the poet writes in the last line of the poem, is "assurance of a world that was always his own" (*19 varieties* 7). Gomez-Vega comments that by having a figtree in their house in Dallas, Texas, the poet's family is able to "recreate their world" ("Extreme" 113). Gomez-Vega's argument is inaccurate because the father's longing for childhood home makes it really impossible to 'recreate his world'. That is why there is always the same painful note of suffering prevalent throughout the poem, and this is certainly due to the homesickness of a father who has a sense of nostalgia, not only for a memorable experience in the past, but also a memorable place in that past. "The sense of place," as Tuan asserts, "is.... never more acute than when one is homesick, and one can only be homesick when one is no longer at home" ("Space and Place: Humanistic" 419). Accordingly, the father's homesickness is a good proof that he definitely has a nostalgic sense of place.

The same image of trees recurs in "The Garden of Abu Mahmoud" which conveys the persona's attachment to his land. Abu Mahmoud's garden is located in the West Bank, Palestine and produces rich crops of

eggplants, onions, figs, peaches, beans, tomatoes and mint. Abu Mahmoud offers the speaker some vegetables and fruit from his garden:

He stooped to unsheathe an eggplant  
from its nest of leaves,  
purple shining globe,  
and pressed it on me.  
I said No, no, I don't want  
to take things before they are ripe,  
but it was started already. (*19 varieties* 20)

Although the speaker is not willing to accept his offer since some of the vegetables are not ripe, she enjoys being there. She also appreciates his devotion to his garden: "every morning found him here, / before the water boiled on the flame / he came out to this garden" (*19 varieties* 20). The speaker's description of the garden reveals a sense of fascination with its beauty and admiration for its owner:

handfuls of marble-sized peaches,  
hard green *mish-mish* and delicate lilt  
of beans. Each pocket swelled  
as he breathed mint-leaves,  
bit the jagged edge. (*19 varieties* 20)

The fruit's description is full of visual and sensuous images describing the peaches as 'marble-sized,' the "*mish-mish*" as 'hard green', and the 'lilt of beans' as 'delicate.' Abu Mahmoud's garden, in this sense, symbolizes the Garden of Eden. However, the act of picking the fruit before it is ripe is reminiscent of the act of picking the apple from the forbidden tree by Adam and Eve. Abu Mahmoud's garden, thus, is symbolic of the garden of Adam and Eve. More significant still is the fact that Abu Mahmoud's garden is located in the Holy Land of Palestine; a fact which makes the garden a synecdoche for Palestine. All these aspects add religious, cultural and historical significance to the poem.

Furthermore, the poet's sense of time is closely related to her sense of place in the poem, though time is not as prominent as place. This is particularly true when the speaker describes the specific location of Abu Mahmoud's garden in the West Bank where he can see "Across his valley the military / settlement gleamed white. / He said, That's where the guns live"(19 *varieties* 20). The poet here makes a contrast between the peaceful setting of the garden with the hostile, military setting of the Israeli settlements; a contrast between a garden which produces vegetables and fruit, and a settlement which has guns and offers nothing but violence. The purpose of this contrast is to emphasize Abu Mahmoud's sense of attachment and belonging to his roots represented by his garden. "In his garden," as Lorrain Mercer and Linda Strom point out, "he . . . regains a sense of connection to his past and of belonging to a specific geographical space"(36).

he came out to this garden,  
dug hands into earth saying, I know you  
and earth crumbled rich layers  
and this result of their knowing –  
a hillside in which no inch went unsung. (*19 varieties* 21)

It is quite obvious that the man loves his garden so much that every morning he speaks to its soil saying 'I know you' as he digs his hands into it. What is remarkable is that the man's attachment to his land is not only emotional but physical as well. The metaphor comparing the act of digging his hands into the soil to the act of singing and praising this soil stresses his sense of attachment. Tuan refers to the same attitude by asserting that rootedness and profound attachment to the land and its soil are common sentiments among agricultural people (*Space and Place: The Perspective* 156). Abu Mahmoud comes to full identification with his garden when he is connected "to the deep place / of darkness and seed" (*19 varieties* 21). This image symbolizes a woman's womb which evokes the beginning of man's life. This image, therefore, suggests Abu Mahmoud's return to his origin, his roots and his land. Through the portrayal of a man's devotion to his garden with all its cultural, religious and historical connotations, the poem as a whole embodies Nye's awareness of the significance of the sense of rootedness particularly for the suffering people like the Palestinians.

Likewise, the sense of rootedness is evident in "The small Vases from Hebron." the poem describes a scene of violence and aggression

taking place in a specific location in Nye's ancestral homeland, namely, a school in Hebron. The poem is written in the form of an elegy lamenting the destruction and loss of life of innocent school children as a result of Israeli bomb attacks. The poem, however, does not focus on the description of the incident itself and its details. It rather drives the reader's attention to a particular object that forms part of the whole scene, but which may go unnoticed. This is the small vase of flowers which is located in the center of a table inside the classroom:

Tip their mouths open to the sky.  
Turquoise, amber,  
the deep green with fluted handle,  
pitcher the size of two thumbs,  
tiny lip and graceful waist.

Here we place the smallest flower  
which could have lived invisibly  
in loose soil beside the road,  
sprig of succulent rosemary,  
bowing mint.

They grow deeper in the center of the table.  
Here we entrust the small life,  
thread, fragment, breath.  
And it bends. It waits all day.

As the bread cools and the children  
open their gray copybooks  
to shape the letter that looks like  
a chimney rising out of a house. (*19 varieties* 63)

There is a visual image in these lines describing the bright, colourful vase of flowers with its small size of 'two thumbs,' its colours: 'turquoise, amber' and 'deep green' and its flute-shaped handle. The small flowers placed inside the vase are an essential part of this visual image. It is a 'sprig' of succulent rosemary' with its gray-greenish colour and 'bowing mint' with its green colour, not to mention the fragrant smell of these flowers.

The lines of the poem make it clear that Nye uses the images of the vase and the flowers metaphorically. In other words, the small vase of flowers becomes a metaphor of the small classroom. Moreover, the table where the vase is placed symbolizes the school where the classroom is located. In addition, the fragrant, colourful flowers stand for the Palestinian schoolgirls who "open their gray copybooks / to shape the letter that looks like / a chimney rising out of a house" (*19 varieties* 63). The poet skillfully establishes the similarities between the flowers and the girls. Both have small life and small breath; both 'could have lived invisibly' and both 'bend' and 'wait all day;' the flowers bend over the vase, and the girls bend their heads over "their gray copybooks" (*19 varieties* 63). In spite of the glamorous images of the vase, the flowers and the schoolgirls, there is an atmosphere of uneasiness and a

foreboding tone. This is created by a sense of foreshadowing of the coming disaster, particularly in describing the life of flowers as being 'small' and a 'fragment' and the colour of their copybooks as 'gray' which suggests depression. The sinister mood is also evoked by using the past modal 'could have' in the second stanza and the image of 'a chimney rising out of a house' which is associated with the smoke of a bomb. The horrible tragedy of bombarding the school is alluded to in the abrupt question: "And what do the headlines say?" (*19 varieties* 63). Then follows a description of the tragic scene itself: "Men and boys, praying when they died, / fall out of their skins." (*19 varieties* 64). Consequently, the school with all its buildings, classrooms, and vases of flowers is totally destroyed and comes to ruin. The bright image of the vase of flowers immediately turns to "a crushed glass under the feet / still shines" (*19 varieties* 64). The schoolgirls are described as sleeping which signifies their death. The glamorous, green colour of flowers changes to the red colour of blood. By using such vivid imagery, the poet bears witness to the violence and atrocities committed by the Israeli forces against the innocent people of her ancestral homeland. The poet uses here two contrasting images: the first is a delicate image of vases of flowers, innocent Palestinian schoolchildren and their copybooks where children are learning how to write the alphabets; and the second is a dreadful war-like image of Israeli bombers and soldiers committing terrible acts of violence and destruction. This sharp contrast serves the purpose of indirectly articulating the grief-stricken feelings of a poet whose

Palestinian background always connects her to the people of her ancestral homeland.

A social sense of place is evoked in "Lunch in a Nablus City Park." The poem describes the social activities and interaction of a group of friends who decide to share a meal in a park in the city of Nablus, Palestine. The main activity that brings those friends together is having lunch in a specific location at a specific time. The place, as the title clarifies, is a park in Nablus and the time is lunch time. The opening lines shed more light on how the aspects of time and place are established in the poem:

When you lunch in a town  
which has recently known war  
under a calm slate sky mirroring none of it,  
certain words feel impossible in the mouth.  
Casualty: too casual, it must be changed.  
A short man stacks mounds of pita bread  
on each end of the table, muttering  
something about more to come.  
Plump birds landing on park benches,  
surely had their eyes closed recently,  
must have seen nothing of weapons or blockades. (*19 varieties*  
35)

What makes lunch in this specific area of the world a significant activity is the fact that it takes place immediately after an Israeli military attack on the people living in the West Bank including the city of Nablus. It is ironic, indeed, to find that a peaceful place which is suitable for a park or restaurant where people usually come to share meals and enjoy company is itself a place of violence and fighting, a place "which has recently known war." In spite of all the violence and destruction, the park still remains unchanged and the people still persist. Although time is described as a time of war, it is by no means able to affect the place..

The poem is overflowing with a description of the peaceful atmosphere dominating the place. It is an overall visual image where the town is described as having "a calm slate sky," a sky which is not affected by the smoke of guns and shells. There are also birds which do not fly away from the violence. They "surely had their eyes closed recently, / must have seen nothing of weapons or blockades." Similarly, trees are there receiving the young people's laughter when sharing their meals. People are still an essential part of this image. They socialize over "mounds of pita bread" and meatballs. What makes the image more effective is that the young people's lunch meal is described in detail: "A short man stacks mounds of pita bread / on each end of the table, muttering / something about more to come" (*19 varieties* 35). Shortly, the man brings them "a plate of hummus, dish of tomato" and "friends dipping bread" (*19 varieties* 36). For those people, life never stops; it goes on albeit all the fighting and suffering. In their intimate conversation over lunch, they discuss such various topics as marriage and

universities. They are hopeful people as they look forward to their bright future. It is true that they are unavoidably affected by their war circumstances. They are living in a place where "a beggar displays / the giant scab of leg he must drag from alley to alley" (*19 varieties* 36). It is a place where a young man finds his dream of joining the university of Texas "remote to him / as Mars, and last month he stayed in his house / for 26 days" (*19 varieties* 36). There is, nevertheless, a hopeful note in the attitude of such people. It is only their sense of hope which enables a woman to choose a husband for true love. The people living in this town have, in this sense, an inner source of power; a power which makes a group of friends who come to enjoy lunch together "toast one another in languages of grace" (*19 varieties* 37). This simply answers the poet's question: "How can there be war and the next day eating" (*19 varieties* 37). The source of these people's power is derived from their attachment to a place where they can socialize, where they can belong to some particular community and where they can live a life of good, hope and love:

For you who believe true love can find you  
amidst this atlas of tears linking one town  
to its own memory of mortar,  
when it was still a dream to be built  
and people moved here, believing  
and someone with sky and birds in his heart  
said this would be a good place for a park. (*19 varieties* 37)

These closing lines of the poem links the past with the future as the poet recounts how the town of Nablus was established and how the park was built. The speaker explains that all this started with a dream of having a town with a park. Then the dream came true and "people moved here." This town's past, thus, gives people a sense of attachment to their land and a sense of hope for a better life in the future.

The way of life sense of place is also palpable in Nye's poetry. An exemplar of this category is illustrated in "Arabic Coffee." The whole poem focuses on the tradition of making and serving coffee for family and guests. It is a tradition that is popular not just in Palestine but the whole Arab world as well. The tradition of serving coffee, for the Arabs, is a sign of hospitality and one possible way of creating a cordial atmosphere and intimate social relationships among members of a society. In the opening lines the speaker remembers the tradition of making coffee in a spectacular way that is appealing to Palestinians:

It was never too strong for us:  
make it blacker, Papa,  
thick in the bottom,  
tell again how the years will gather  
in small white cups,  
how luck lives in a spot of grounds. (*19 varieties* 38)

The Palestinians' way of drinking coffee, as the speaker shows, is unique as they prefer a strong, black coffee that is 'thick in the bottom.'

The use of the adjectives 'strong,' 'blackier' and 'thick' to describe this type of coffee is significant. These adjectives clarify what distinguishes the Palestinian culture from other cultures in one aspect of their life. Moreover, drinking coffee is a daily activity associated with another social activity that appeals much to Palestinians, i.e., story-telling. The speaker here remembers how drinking coffee is a good occasion for listening to her father's stories. She also remembers how using a cup of coffee to tell the future becomes an Arabic tradition.

The speaker proceeds in the next few lines to describe the process of brewing and preparing the Palestinian coffee:

Leaning over the stove, he let it  
boil to the top, and down again.  
Two times. No sugar in his pot.  
And the place where men and women  
break off from one another  
was not present in that room. (*19 varieties* 38)

What is peculiar in these lines is the visual image describing how the speaker's father prepares coffee so that we can visualize the movement of the father when he leans over the stove waiting for coffee to boil, and we can observe the slow process of boiling the coffee: "he let it / boil to the top, and down again." It is also interesting to know the number of times the father lets coffee boil without adding any sugar to make it strong and black. All such description helps to convey the idea that this specific way

of making coffee is only typical of Palestinians. In addition, it is also typical of Palestinians to sit together, both men and women, in one room drinking coffee, while at other times, such as having their meals, men and women are separated from each other in separate rooms. Drinking coffee, therefore, becomes a social gathering where all family members and guests "took their places on the table" (*19 varieties* 38), to chat together and enjoy talking about their life affairs. This creates a very intimate atmosphere of hospitality where everybody feels at home and where "none was more important than the others, / and all were guests" (*19 varieties* 38). The way the speaker's father offers his coffee to all guests adds another cultural significance to the whole event: "he carried the tray into the room, / high and balanced in his hands, / it was an offering to all of them" (*19 varieties* 38). The host's manner of serving coffee, as described here, accentuates his Palestinian identity and represents an important part of his cultural heritage. It is a sign of cordiality and hospitality which are typical of all Palestinians who welcome their guests in their own way. The speaker, thus, describes her father's coffee as "the center of the flower" (*19 varieties* 39) because it is the coffee meeting which creates such a positive attitude toward life in the sense that their social meeting helps them to discuss their future life and plan for a better future. That is why the poet uses a hopeful tone which is clearly shown in her words: "a motion of faith. There is this, / and there is more" (*19 varieties* 39). The coffee table is the place where such gathering can take place every day. Drinking coffee, in this sense, is not just a social activity; it is a common cultural factor that forms an essential part of the

Palestinian identity. It is, thus, evident that the poem's focus is not on coffee itself; rather it is what coffee implies that is significant here. Making and drinking coffee in the manner described in the poem is a way of life which all Palestinians share and which gives them a sense of attachment to the culture and the place where they belong.

The way of life sense of place is still more clearly reflected in the opening stanza of "Her Way":

What water she poured on the floor  
was more than was needed. Someone suggested  
she mop in strips as they did  
on the television, yet her buckets were full,  
the great buckets of field and orchard,  
she was dragging them room to room  
in a house that already looked clean. (*19 varieties* 22)

Here is a description of how a Palestinian old woman cleans her house. She puts water in large buckets that are used in the fields and orchards and drags them everywhere to wash the floors of her house. This is a simple housekeeping activity that most unsophisticated Palestinian housewives practice almost every day in their houses. What attracts the speaker's attention is the amount of water used in cleaning the house which is, in fact, more than is necessary. Although someone suggests that the woman uses a mop instead of all the large buckets, the woman herself prefers to use the buckets; an activity which is really

tiresome for her. However, it seems that she enjoys the activity and she performs it regularly though the house needs no cleaning. Here, the poet reveals her fascination with such domestic, unsophisticated activities one of which is housekeeping in the simple, traditional manner described in the poem. The poet is still more fascinated with the character of the Palestinian woman whose way of life is appealing to the poet. The poet's message, thus, is as simple as this: this is the old woman's way of keeping her house clean which is typical of the traditional Palestinian woman, and this is the way she lives in her own house

A different sense of place is clearly revealed in "The Words Under the Words." Nye dedicates this poem to her Palestinian grandmother, Sitti Khadra, who lives in the north of Jerusalem. At the age of fourteen, Nye paid a visit with her family to her grandmother and she was much impressed by her character and lifestyle as shown in her poem:

My grandmother's hands recognize grapes,  
the damp shine of a goat's new skin.  
When I was sick they followed me,  
I woke from the long fever to find them  
covering my head like cool prayers. (*19 varieties* 14)

The speaker starts by expressing admiration for her grandmother. She particularly admires her manual skills and talents. She also appreciates her grandmother's caring for her when she was sick. The poet's appreciation of her grandmother springs from her feelings of familial

love and belonging. What is peculiar in the last line of the first stanza is the image comparing her grandmother's hands to 'cool prayers.' This simile serves to give spiritual significance to her grandmother.

In the second stanza, the speaker reveals her nostalgia for the past days of her grandmother:

My grandmother's days are made of bread,  
a round pat-pat and the slow backing  
She waits by the oven watching a strange car  
circle the streets. Maybe it holds her son,  
lost to America. More often, tourists,  
who kneel and weep at mysterious shrines. (*19 varieties* 14)

The speaker here describes the homely activity of baking bread in which her grandmother is skilled. This activity is typical of rural housewives in Palestine and the Arab world. In a revealing visual image, she describes her grandmother's 'slow baking' of loaves using 'a round pat-pat' while sitting in front of the oven. The image of the oven helps to create an atmosphere of warmth and intimacy which the speaker longs for.

The speaker then moves to focus on another aspect in her grandmother's character:

My grandmother's voice says nothing can surprise her.  
Take her the shotgun wound and the crippled baby.  
She knows the spaces we travel through,

the messages we cannot send - our voices are short  
and would get lost on the journey.  
Farewell to the husband's coat,  
the ones she has loved and nourished,  
who fly from her like seeds into a deep sky. (*19 Varieties* 15)

The grandmother is good not only at homely activities but also in rendering social and medical services to other people in the community, as she is able to heal the 'shotgun' wounded and nurture 'the crippled' babies by using her traditional, unsophisticated style. Furthermore, she has a sense of wisdom to the extent that 'nothing' can surprise her' as she is ready to deal with any crucial situations with easiness and self-satisfaction. She also has the power of thinking and good judgment which is evident in her ability to know 'the spaces we travel through' and 'the messages we cannot send.' All this gives her a leading role in her family and her community. She represents the source of love, intimacy and nurturing for 'the ones she has loved and nourished.' Her ultimate wisdom is stated in her recognition of the fact that 'we will all die' (*19 Varieties* 15); a fact which reveals her acceptance of fate. Whatever happens to her, she will certainly do what she always does: loving all and caring for all.

My grandmother's eyes say Allah is everywhere, even in death.  
When she talks of the orchard and the new olive press,  
when she tells the stories of Joha and his foolish wisdom,

He is her first thought, what she really thinks of is His name. (*19 Varieties* 15)

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When she talks of the orchard and the new olive press,  
when she tells the stories of Joha and his foolish wisdom,  
He is her first thought, what she really thinks of is His name. (*19 Varieties* 15)

The speaker reveals in these lines the source of her grandmother's power: it is her faith in "Allah'. This definitely gives her life spiritual transcendence and special significance. She always thinks of God in all aspects of daily life. Her sense of faith and piety is the real source of moral guidance and support from which she gains her power and finds meaning in life. That is why she gives her grandmother some valuable advice in the last three lines of the poem: "Answer, if you hear the words under the words - / otherwise it is just a world with a lot of rough edges, / difficult to get through, and our pockets full of stones" (*19 Varieties* 16). The grandmother's advice to her granddaughter is to "hear the words under the words" which means to find meaning in life by understanding what words cannot express. It is the ability to gain a source of spiritual power which cannot be verbally communicated and the ability to effect changes in others; changes that would enable them to understand who she is. The grandmother's image, as created in the poem, helps to reveal Nye's sense of family connection through which she describes how she is intimately connected to her Sitti Khadra and how she is grateful to her for learning how to search for "the words under the words."

It becomes now evident that Nye's treatment of the different senses of place in her poetry is by no means personal. In other words, Nye is not the only figure who has a sense of place in all her poems. The characters she portrays have the same common attitude though her personal figure is always present in most of her poems. This is the case in "Brushing Lives," "My Father and the Figtree," "The Garden of Abu Mahmoud," "The Words Under the Words," and "Arabic Coffee." Different

characters with different ages but with the same national background are also shown to have senses of place. There is the character of the Palestinian father who is homesick and longs for things connected with his homeland. There is also the character of the farmer who remains devoted to his land in the West Bank. A group of young people from Nablus are part of the picture where they share social activities and look forward to a better future. Schoolgirls from Hebron are also portrayed sitting inside their classroom and learning how to write the alphabets. The talented grandmother who is able to express her skills and her inner spiritual power in her own way is given space in Nye's poetry. Finally, there is the Palestinian housewife whose way of life reveals much about her cultural identity.

Likewise, Nye's poetry is in no sense restricted to describing one particular activity. On the contrary, different activities are connected with the poet's senses of place. Such activities as planting vegetables and fruit particularly figtrees, sharing a lunch meal in a restaurant, school learning, baking bread, making and serving Arabic coffee and other housekeeping and home activities are described in Nye's poems. These numerous activities and the various characters who perform them form part of the entire community which Nye identifies with. Gomez-Vega rightly observes that "the stories that she creates define her ties to a people who endow her with an appreciation for heritage and a strong sense of what she has lost and what she has gained as she defines her own place in the world" ("An Essay" 252). Nye's poetry, in this sense, describes the lives

of the Palestinian common people whom she feels attached to and who play an essential part in forming her Arab identity.

### ***Senses of Place in the Poetry of Etel Adnan***

Etel Adnan was born in Beirut in 1925 to a Syrian father and a Greek mother. She received her early education in a French convent school in Beirut. Then she went to Paris on a scholarship after her father's death in 1947. After that she went to the United States in the 1950s to complete her studies of philosophy. After visiting Beirut from 1957 to 1959, Adnan came back to California to teach philosophy. In 1972 she visited Beirut once again and stayed there until the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975. As a result of the civil war, Adnan decided to go back to the West living in Paris and California and has lived there since then. It is clear from this brief biography that Adnan remains attached to her homeland, Lebanon, and is deeply engaged in the problems and crises facing it particularly the civil war. Adnan distinctively describes the war as a "nuclear explosion, not from a bomb, not from the exterior, but from the very heart of their race's memory" (*Sitt Marie Rose* 40). The civil war, according to Adnan's argument, comes from within, from the Lebanese themselves. Adnan's description of the civil war, thus, reveals that she treats the war in the manner of one who is directly involved in it. Moreover, the poet's treatment of the civil war reflects her perfect understanding of the whole political situation in Lebanon.

Consequently, Adnan makes various references and allusions to her homeland throughout her poetry. For instance, in her poem "An Alley of Linden Trees, and Lightning" Adnan uses a bitter, nostalgic tone towards Beirut. The alley of linden trees in Paris reminds her of the alleys of Beirut:

We burned our wings over candles  
in the alleys of Beirut we played:  
    Ball  
    Hopscotch  
    Cards  
    And love games  
Then we slept in the belly of huge airplanes  
flying over territories at war. (*The Indian* 97)

In these lines the speaker reveals her nostalgic sense of place as she remembers her own childhood memories of Beirut and its alleys where she used to play as a child. She still remembers the kind of games she used to play such as playing ball, hopscotch and cards. These games are significant since they are closely associated, in the speaker's mind, with the places where she used to live and play as a child. Her use of the first person plural pronoun 'we' increases the sense of nostalgia to the places, the good company of children living in these places, and the activities they used to do together as indicated in the use of the verbs 'burned,' 'played', and 'slept'. However, the worst of these childhood memories is

seeing "huge airplanes / flying over territories at war." She alludes here to the Lebanese civil war. Two contradictory visual images are brought side by side in this scene: The first is a peaceful scene of innocent children playing games; and the second is a dreadful scene of "huge airplanes / flying over territories" to kill innocent people and destroy valuable places. The arrangement of verbs significantly adds to the sharpness of this contrast: "we burned our wings over candles," "we played," "then we slept." The first two verbs 'burned' and 'played' imply energy and vitality while the last verb 'slept' suggests the end of all activities and death. The description of the whole scene helps to reveal the speaker's sadness over the destruction and massacres committed against the innocent Lebanese people as a result of the civil war.

Similarly, in her volume *The Indian Never Had a Horse* which is mainly concerned with the predicament of the Native Americans, Adnan never forgets the plight of her own homeland. In the volume's title poem "The Indian Never Had a Horse," Adnan describes how native Americans suffer from oppression and tyranny, but she deviates to highlight the atrocities committed against the oppressed Lebanese in their own country.

Syria has two rivers:

The Euphrates and a River of Blood. (*The Indian* 31)

In these lines the poet makes a direct reference to Syria, the homeland of her own father, and makes an indirect reference to her own homeland,

Lebanon, by using the phrase 'River of Blood'. In a bitter tone Adnan describes Syria as having two rivers, one is Euphrates and the other is 'a river of blood'. It is an implicit reference to Syria's military intervention in Lebanon during the civil war especially Syria's raids on Lebanon in 1978 which resulted in massacres and bloodshed. Adnan's sense of rootedness reinforces the bitterness of her tone and renders the description of suffering and torture more effective.

Adnan's concern with the political situation in her homeland before and during the civil war finds its expression in much of her poetry. A good example is her poem "The Beirut-Hell Express" whose title alludes to the legendary myth of taking an express train to hell. The poem mainly reveals Adnan's anticipation of a civil war as well as her powerful feelings of bitterness and discontent. Hence, she starts the poem with a sense of pessimism: "The human race is going to the cemetery / in great upheavals" ("Beirut-Hell Express" 72). Michelle Hartman describes Adnan's poem as a "highly political poem" and as "a dizzying journey in which the poet connects symbols, figures and images from diverse locations to express her disgust with corruption and hypocrisy and her hope for a better future" (150). Moreover, Hartman emphasizes that the poem "laments colonialism and imperialism, in addition to the corruption of Arab regimes" (151). He also cites from the poem examples of political conflict and corruption in the Arab world such as "the question of Palestine, massacres in Jordan, the corruption of the Hashemite family, and the deteriorating situation in Beirut" (152). In this poem, Adnan reveals a bitter sense of dissatisfaction with the world due to cruelty and

injustice. She, thus, displays a wider vision of the world including people all over the world and all periods of history:

I love the men who cover their  
head and show but one eye  
not the blind one, but the one  
which looks inside.  
From two thousand years of History I  
keep but JAZZ  
because it is Black. ("Beirut-Hell Express" 73)  
Then the poet focuses on her ancestral homeland:  
My father was Ouranos  
and my mother Queen Zenobia  
I am the initial Fish  
rejected on the beach  
but determined to live. ("Beirut-Hell Express" 74)

The poet here alludes to the earlier source of evil and corruption in the universe and relates it back to prehistoric times when Cronos, as narrated by David Livingstone, shared in a conspiracy with his mother to get rid of his father Ouranos by mutilating and killing him in order to overthrow him and rule the universe in his stead (89). Similarly, Adnan reveals that the chaos and decline in her ancestral homeland, Syria, relate back to the early time of Queen Zenobia who, after the assassination of her husband and his eldest son by a previous marriage, took the opportunity to rule

and announce her kingdom's independence from the Roman Empire (Southern 78-81). These classical stories create an atmosphere of treachery and conspiracy which serves to increase the poet's sense of bitterness and disgust at the deteriorating situation in her homeland which results in the civil war.

What increases Adnan's bitter tone is the fact that she describes herself as the daughter of the murdered leader, Ouranos, and the treacherous Queen Zenobia. Adnan, in this sense, depicts herself as a victim and a traumatized figure. That is why she compares herself to "the initial Fish" which has no place in this suffocating atmosphere. The poem also reveals Adnan's violently passionate tone of anger as shown in the following lines:

The flag of prophesy floats on the ships  
Fire! let the hurricane enter  
the holes and like a boiling river  
carry away the angels stricken with fear  
on the summit of the Sannine!  
move on people full of slime  
let your lemonades go to the sea  
let your casino crumble  
let your race horses carry their owners  
to those undergrounds where Babylon  
used to cook its poisons ("Beirut-Hell Express" 74)

The poet sums up in these lines the intolerable situation in Lebanon which ultimately leads to the civil war by using a metaphor comparing the civil war to a destructive hurricane which destroys a ship carrying angels. Her homeland is compared here to the sinking ship and the innocent Lebanese are compared to "angels" who are "stricken with fear" and who, as a result, move to Mount Sannine to flee from the hurricane or from the "boiling river." The safe, peaceful atmosphere is no more attainable as suggested in the images of the destroyed "casino', 'lemonades' pouring into the sea, and racehorses carrying their owners to the underground. The image of the underground suggests darkness and death and the allusion to the classical city of Babylon where Alexander the Great was poisoned reinforces the scene of desolation.

Yet, Adnan never loses hope as the poem expresses her faith in a new life for the Lebanese:

The world is being born  
The people are coming  
The people are coming  
The eagle has carried the message  
To the tribe  
The camel has carried the message  
To the tribe  
The shark has carried the message  
To the tribe. ("Beirut-Hell Express" 75)

The three elements of air, earth and water which represent the sources of physical life are included in these lines by referring to 'the eagle', 'the camel' and 'the shark.' These elements suggest the possibility of change and the beginning of a new life with no corruption or injustice. With the advent of change, all forms of corruption and oppression will be removed. This is "the message" that the poet gives to the Lebanese people. Moreover, Adnan reveals her appreciation of the key figures behind the passionately-awaited change: "hello the beggar / hello to the fedai / . . . / hello to the prisoner" ("Beirut-Hell Express" 75). These are the real victims of anarchy and oppression, not just in Lebanon but in the whole world as well. The poet then reveals a sense of hatred and disgust against the crimes committed and the intolerable situation of the people of Beirut:

Hamra Street: our nerves shrink at this name  
blood becomes white the pedestrian  
becomes a ghost the Lebanese pound  
exudes a stench  
and I fall on my knees  
In front of the children we sell  
for the pleasure of some night  
for the afternoon pleasure or  
the four in the morning one sadism  
costs so little in Beirut. ("Beirut-Hell Express" 78)

The poet uses here a very dark image to describe the violence and moral decadence that is typical of gangs and militia men during the civil war. Hamra Street, which was a lively center of culture, art and entertainment before the war, is now described as a terrible place which is associated in the minds of the Lebanese people with savage crimes including murder, kidnapping, rape and prostitution. The poet's use of the nouns 'blood', 'ghost', 'stench' and 'sadism' adds to the darkness of the image. The poet is involved in this dark image by using the first person subject pronoun 'I' in her line "and I fall on my knees" which suggests physical as well as psychological collapse and submissiveness as a result of all these evil deeds. What adds to the bitterness of Adnan's tone is the metaphor comparing 'sadism' to a service or commodity to be offered with so little a cost.

In her poem, Adnan is also uttering an angry outcry against the submissiveness and passivity of those who are capable of denouncing and resisting the deteriorating situation and those who are capable of bringing about the long-awaited change but, unfortunately, are not taking any positive action:

Traitors the painters: they plunge in buckets of acid  
Traitors the poets: they speak of roses when the city is an  
Asphalt garden  
Traitors the officials: they have as umbilical  
cords the telephone lines that link them to Washington  
.....

traitors the priests: there is a business shuttle in the schools and  
consciences covered with vermin ("Beirut-Hell Express" 79-80)

Nye condemns here different sectors of the Lebanese community including artists such as painters and poets, government officials and priests for being detached from the bloody scene and for not playing an active role in effecting change. The poet's painful tone is still prevalent throughout the lines as expressed in the repetition of the word 'traitors' which suggests a sense of conspiracy against Lebanon. "The Beirut-Hell Express," thus, portrays Adnan's homeland entrapped in various crises including lack of unity, morals, humanity and even sensible human feelings and leading to segregation, enmity, an entire collapse of the social structure and eventually chaos and disorder. The poem's form, with its irregular length of lines and breaks within sentences, signify physical struggle and a note of despair and frustration. The poem, therefore, ends on a note of appeal to put an end to the meaningless state of anarchy: "take your vertebrae and squeeze out / colonialism like pus" ("Beirut-Hell Express" 83). It also ends with an appeal for change and for a return to the normal flow of life with its basic so that there be

air

so that there be

water

so that there be

earth

so that there be fire

.....

take the Beirut .....Hell Express. ("Beirut-Hell Express" 83)  
elements:

It is quite evident that Nye's poem reveals her sense of rootedness as demonstrated not only in referring to specific locations and incidents throughout the poem but also in her detachment and objectivity in describing Lebanon's crisis. In other words, Adnan cares only for the welfare of the Lebanese people and never takes sides with the warring factions. What concerns her most is only keeping her homeland secure and peaceful.

The same sense of rootedness in place is also evoked in "Jebu" which is mainly concerned with Jerusalem and the Palestinian crisis. The title alludes to Jebu, Canaan's son and king of the Jebusites. According to the Biblical story, the Jebusites were a Canaanite tribe living in Jerusalem which was named Jebus at that time. When David came to conquer Jerusalem, Jebu gathered the "lame and the blind" and sent them to fight David putting them on the front lines of his army (Wansbrough 298). This was Jebu's plan to make David withdraw from the city out of pity for "the lame and the blind." David, nonetheless, conquered the city and seized power as the king of the city of David (Wansbrough 298). The lame and the blind, in this sense, are victimized since they are placed in the front lines by their king in a very humiliating way. For Adnan, the

situation of the Biblical times is quite similar to that of modern times. In other words, Jerusalem nowadays is torn and devastated by wars as it was in ancient times and the Palestinian citizens are the real victims since they are the target of military operations by the Israeli army. The Palestinians, thus, bear great resemblance to the lame and the blind of the ancient Jebus. Hence, Adnan is always swinging between ancient and modern times in her poem: "Ra Shamash Marduk / the astronauts have invaded the moon" ("Jebu" 53). The past is represented here by the classical allusion to the ancient god of justice while the present is evoked by referring to the astronauts on the moon.

In her allusion to past and present wars and crimes, the poet attempts to disclose the violence and atrocities committed in Jerusalem and Beirut. In other words, by introducing the idea of placing the weak at the front lines in battle for the benefit of others, the poet is able to prove that the Biblical story of Jebus and David is reenacted in the present not only in Jerusalem and Beirut, but in Tel Aviv as well. The poet, thus, expresses a note of prophesy and doom: "O dead cities of the xxIst century / Beirut and Tel Aviv" ("Jebu" 52). This is accompanied by a note of cynicism:

in the geological cliffs of Western  
Asia vultures thank the sky for the  
abundance of their food: more dead  
Arabs than stones in this desert! ("Jebu" 52)

The poet is using overstatement in these lines to refer to the innumerable Arab victims who fall every day as a result of the conflict in Jerusalem and Beirut. The poet also makes allusions to Shylock, Shakespeare's character in *The Merchant of Venice*, and this certainly increases the sense of bitter irony which is dominant in the poem:

Jebu:

they let us rot near obscene women castrated  
our men and sold the pound of their flesh on  
the markets of London at a laughing price ("Jebu" 49)

The poet still uses overstatement, together with the literary allusion, to portray vividly the scene of violence and tragedy and to give her readers a very clear picture of the crimes committed with such brutality and savagery against the innocent Palestinian.

In focusing her description on the Palestinian strife, the poet swings between past and present creating a mixed atmosphere of myth and realism as shown in these lines:

He [Jebu] had taken armies on fields  
of thorns today he takes them on  
mined fields and the rain is made of oil. ("Jebu" 50)

What separates the past from the present in these lines is the details in the description of the scene. Instead of fields of thorns, today's battlefields are mined. Acid rain also adds to the miseries of modern life.

we are conquered by  
falsifiers of History thieves of  
undergrounds and we have in our own  
councils a rottenness more dangerous  
than the sea serpent surrounding Sinbad. ("Jebu" 50)

In an accusatory tone Adnan denounces here the Israeli criminals who are falsifying the history of Jerusalem and ascribing a heritage which is not their own to themselves. Then the tone changes to be warning and indignant particularly when she criticizes the Arabs for their corruption and weakness as demonstrated in their futility, lack of action, helplessness and indecisive attitude. The Arab's rotten situation is described as more dangerous than the "serpents" the mythic figure "Sinbad" faces in his adventures. The poet's accusatory tone of indignation is not only directed against the oppressors and criminals but also against those who are inept in handling their crisis and those who are submissive and who never utter a word of protest. What is peculiar in these lines is the fact the Nye is not detached in describing the Arabs' plight; she rather identifies with the people of Jerusalem as evident in her repeated use of the first person plural 'we' and 'us' throughout the poem. In so doing, Adnan is trying to arouse a sense of injustice in all those good citizens who care about their country and their people. She warns them:

When the enemy shall have but grasshoppers to  
eat and the asphalt wells be dry

when the earth will tell the dead about the  
plots worked out by the live  
when the tribe will wash in the camel's urine  
and rape the women in the hot air of June  
.....  
the ancestors will come out of their mirror. ("Jebu" 58-9)

Using a desperate note of doom and inevitability, the poet predicts that the fate of our ancestors will be repeated only when the Israeli enemy destroys everything and leaves behind no signs of civilized life; when savagery and barbarity become the horrible realities of our life; and when killing and rape, the worst of all crimes, prevail everywhere.

In "Jebu" the earth itself is physically and morally deteriorating as a result of the corruption of the people:

the surgery of the oil business requires  
it to be taken from the belly of my mother  
so that we have a new rain: nocturnal [sic] birds  
charred by the sun do not envy our men:  
napalm made you brothers. ("Jebu" 50)

The horrible realities of war including violence and bloodshed together with acid rain and pollution are all regarded as leading to the inevitable destruction of the earth. This is evoked by a warlike image

which refers to various victims of napalm strikes including "my mother," "charred" birds, "our men" and "brothers." Such imagery refers to the high, terrible cost the Arabs pay due to their ineptitude and submissiveness. The message Adnan tries to convey to all the victims in the Arab world, particularly in Palestine, is, thus, quite clear: it is those victims, the lame and the blind who are used by Jebu, as well as the innocent people of Jerusalem and Beirut who are, as she puts it in her poem, "guilty of innocence" ("Jebu" 54). For without their resigned attitude and submissiveness, their suffering would not exist at all.

Therefore, the implication of the poem's meaning is that this kind of submissive people is found everywhere in the world, not just in the Middle East, and is found in every age, past and present. Jebu, king of the Jebusites, is not only embodied here in Jerusalem but also in all the cities of the world including the West:

Jebu has millions of roots innumerable heads  
a proliferation of bodies he is the whole and  
each one of us since the first break of Time  
he is the people on the space-time equation  
.....  
a rapacious foreigners drinkers of  
bitumen. ("Jebu" 55)

Jebu is compared here to a plant with "millions of roots" and "innumerable heads." This metaphor accentuates the poet's idea that there is a Jebu in every age. Jebu, thus, is embodied in all forms of oppression and colonialism. The oppressors and colonialists themselves are depicted

in the poem as "drinkers of blood / drinkers of petroleum" and "racist conquerors" ("Jebu" 57).

Adnan's sense of rootedness is not explicitly expressed in "Jebu" by merely referring to Jerusalem's historical past which is put in parallel to its present tragedy. On the contrary, it is implicitly reflected in her awareness of the political, historical and religious causes of the Jerusalem crisis. This is reinforced by using a tone of accusation, warning and anger which is dominant throughout the poem. This simply shows that Adnan never writes her poem as an outsider who detaches herself from the innocent Palestinian victims and sufferers. She rather identifies with them and analyzes their crisis in a way that reveals that she is really one of them. This is particularly demonstrated in her deep concern for the innocent Palestinians, in stressing the idea of their victimization, and in trying to demonstrate the real cause of their suffering.

Adnan's sense of rootedness is still more explicit in her long poem *The Arab Apocalypse* which also deals with the political crisis of her own homeland, particularly the massacre of Tel El-Zaatar during the siege of the Palestinian refugee camp in 1967. The poem consists of 59 sections corresponding to the 59 days of the siege and is written in the form of a tragic epic which laments the suffering and torture of the innocent victims of the Tel El-Zaatar massacre:

7 thousand Arabs under siege thirsty blinded STOP extinct suns  
There are tumors on the moon's craters and Mars' dunes

7 thousands Arabs in the belly of vultures STOP a yellow sun in  
their eyes. (*Arab Apocalypse* 31)

The imagery of the sun is dominant throughout the poem to represent the state of chaos and conflict that prevails not only in Lebanon but in the whole world as well. The image of the sun symbolizes the destructive power of the ruling Maronites and their Christian militias who commit massacres everywhere in Beirut. Hence, the poem, as Sonja Mejcher-Atass argues, "is a vision of the Arab Middle East destroyed by colonial and neo-colonial power, repressive regimes and militias" (209). The fragmentary structure of the poem suggested by using signs and visual symbols together with fragments of verbal language evokes a sense of chaos, disorder and meaninglessness, and reflects the angry tone of a poet who violently criticizes the oppressive political regime in Lebanon.

Section 7 clearly reveals Adnan's concern for Lebanon and her awareness of the political factions involved in the civil war:

A warring sun in Beirut thunderous April cool breeze on the ships  
yellow sun on a pole an eye in the gun's hole a dead from  
Palestine ....

a bird on a dead Palestinian's toe a fly at the butchery  
Beirut-sulphuric-acid STOP the Quarantina is torching its inmates  
STOP

Beirut. (*Arab Apocalypse* 19)

The phrase "a warring sun in Beirut" refers to the outbreak of the civil war in April 1975. The "yellow sun" represents the oppressive Maronite militias who commit massacres, abductions and rape. These militias are described as "fascism dressed in green masturbate its gun" (*Arab Apocalypse* 19). This metaphor depicts the moral deterioration of the Maronite militiamen in their ferocious atrocities against the Palestinian refugees. The whole poem is replete with such violent scenes. Two lines in section 45, for instance, describe how brutal and barbarous those militiamen are: "On every branch the militia hung severed heads / they dug out the dead cut their organs and stuffed their mouths" (*Arab Apocalypse* 64). These two lines portray one of the most terrifying scenes of the civil war crimes in Lebanon. What increases the horror of the scene is the cannibalistic acts of removing the corpses' heads, mutilating the organs, eating their bowels and decorating the branches of trees with their heads. Such a terrible image stresses the senselessness and horrible reality of war. On the other hand, there are the Palestinian refugees who are barbarously killed and mutilated in acts of butchery and genocide. Adnan's repetition of the verb "STOP" highlights her helpless, indignant attitude towards the excessive cruelty and brutality which become inevitable realities in her homeland.

Adnan's indignant attitude is evident through her use of imagery, particularly in section 17:

Beirut is a poultry yard with peacocks and the stench of poultries  
Jupiter swims in a metallic solution the discharge is incoherent

Beirut is a satellized planet domesticated by its enemy profanated  
by EVIL

An electric current covered with hair like a mate circulates in the  
universe

Beirut hides in trenches bending its neck goes to the slaughter  
house. (*Arab Apocalypse* 36)

Adnan's metaphor in which she compares Beirut to a "poultry yard" and a "stench of poultries" suggests her sense of disgust and suffocation at the moral deterioration and corruption of the Lebanese themselves and the Maronites in particular who are compared to "peacocks" due to their aggressiveness and their superior attitude towards the Palestinian refugees. Their indecency is part of the morally deteriorating situation in Beirut. There is also the metaphor comparing Beirut to a "planet domesticated by its enemy." This metaphor refers to the destructive power that controls Lebanon. Such power, whether they are the Maronites and their Syrian allies or the colonial power represented by the Israeli enemy, creates an authoritarian, political regime which ultimately leads to the total collapse of civilization in Lebanon. That is why Beirut is described as "profanated by EVIL" due to its moral degradation and sterility. As a result, Beirut is compared to an animal which "bends its neck" and "goes to the slaughter house." This metaphor brings to mind unjustified, violent scenes of butchery and massacres committed by the immoral militias. All such metaphors serve to emphasize Adnan's note of

despair and hopelessness regarding the deteriorating situation in her homeland.

Adnan's gruesome description of violence and atrocities results from her real experience as a witness of all the crimes committed in Beirut during the first two years of the civil war. She herself admits that her poem is written "out of the type of tension that brought about the war, the sense of explosion, of catastrophe. An apocalyptic sense . . . I was so inhabited by that ominous sense of disaster . . . I was writing on an explosion per se, on apocalypse per se and I saw it in color" (quoted in Majaj and Amerieh 18). Hence, Adnan is far from any romantic or nostalgic tendencies towards her homeland. Some critics, including Mahwash Shoaib (21-28) and Miriam Cook (212-216), argue that Adnan is a transnational poet who is much influenced by a combination of three different cultures: Lebanese, French and American, and this, according to the two critics, negatively affects her view of homeland and her sense of belonging. Yet, this view is still debatable bearing in mind Adnan's sense of rootedness which reinforces her attachment to her homeland. Wen-Chin Ouyang rightly remarks:

Having escaped from Beirut in some of the worst moments of the civil war, including the siege of Tel Zaatar . . . , Adnan finds refuge in Paris. However, her mind is preoccupied with the perils of war and the fate of her people (77).

Moreover, Adnan's harsh critique of the political situation in Lebanon never negates her sense of attachment to place and her belonging. On the contrary, it emphasizes her attachment to her homeland and enriches her feelings of belonging as it reveals how deeply concerned she is about the Lebanese crisis.

***Conclusion:***

Exploring the different senses of place in the poetry of both Naomi Shihab Nye and Etel Adnan according to Eyles' model of sense of place makes it clear that the two poets have a real sense of belonging to their homelands and that they are, in fact, unique in expressing their emotional attachments to their places of origin. It is true that both have a first-hand experience in developing their different senses of place. As for Nye, she recollects her and her father's memories about their ancestral homeland and records them in her poems. Gomez-vega asserts that "so much of [Nye's] work harks back to her memories of the Shihab family home in Palestine" ("An Essay" 247). Nye also describes memorable scenes about her father and her grandmother, especially the scenes which represent the cultural identity of her ancestral homeland. Moreover, despite her displacement, Nye never loses her attachment to her ancestral homeland and this is evident in expressing her emotional and physical attachment to Palestine.

Likewise, Adnan is deeply engaged in the political crisis of her homeland during the civil war. This is quite obvious in her identification with the people of Lebanon in their suffering from oppression, tyranny

and violence. It is also clear in her playing the role of a witness to some disasters as is the case in the Tel El-Zaatar massacre. All this, undoubtedly, justifies the personal tone in their poems which is represented by using the first person singular or plural pronouns. It also justifies the description of different settings in their homelands; settings which acquire special significance and from which each of the two poets reveals her sense of place. It is also true that the element of time is always introduced in the poetry of both Nye and Adnan. In her poems, Nye always refers to her past memories of her father's family and of her early childhood visits to her grandmother. Similarly, in Adnan's poetry, time sets scenes of violence and oppression which are repeatedly depicted in her poems. However, time is subordinated to place in the poetry of both as their sense of place is given prominence over their sense of time. Both poets, thus, adopt a spatial, rather than historical, approach in their poetry.

Yet, each of the two poets uses a different approach in expressing her sense of place. As a matter of fact, Nye produces 'character poems' which focus on describing how particular characters give significance to specific places through their actions. Her poems, thus, introduce typical Palestinian characters. There are, for instance, the character of the displaced father who longs for the traditional Palestinian way of life, the character of the pious grandmother who is an exemplar of the typical Palestinian old woman, the character of the farmer who is devoted to his garden, the group of hopeful young people who socialize while sharing lunch in a park, the promising schoolgirls who are keen on learning, and

the old housewife who performs her housekeeping activities in a typically Palestinian way. Hence, Nye in her poems focuses on the specificities of her homeland and her people by describing their close attachment to their homeland, their social activities and their peculiar way of life which is typically Palestinian.

Moreover, Nye's aim, it seems now clear, is to reveal the social and cultural identity of the people of her ancestral homeland. Hence, she depicts the simple everyday life of some characters who represent the typical Palestinian community. "Rather than being polemical or overtly political," Persis Karim asserts, "Nye's sense of protest is depicted in the quiet and subtle images of everyday life in the face of the indignities of the Israeli occupation" (254). Karim's words refer to Nye's domestic approach through which she reflects the Palestinians' resistance to the Israeli atrocities. By depicting the domestic aspects of the Palestinians' daily life, Nye shows how they persist and continue living their normal life in spite of the Israeli occupation. Nye, in this sense, is socially, domestically and culturally oriented in treating her sense of place. Consequently, her sense of place is multi-faceted. In other words, Nye displays more than one sense of place in her poetry. She shows a nostalgic sense in "Brushing lives" and "My Father and the Figtree." The sense of rootedness is demonstrated in "The Garden of Abu Mahmoud" and "The Small Vases from Hebron." She also expresses a social sense in "Lunch in a Nablus City Park" and a family sense of place in "The Words Under the Words." There is, ultimately, the way of life sense which is evident in "Arabic Coffee" and "Her Way." All these various senses of

place are linked to the different social and domestic activities that are described in her poems and which are typical of the Palestinian community. They are also linked to the various characters who perform such activities.

Furthermore, in dealing with her different senses of place, Nye concentrates on "the small and the ordinary, insisting on the mundane and the everyday to stress human connections" (Najmi 152). To put it differently, Nye's description of minute details of domestic, everyday life of the people of her homeland dominates her poems. Her poems, for instance, reveal her meticulous observation of ordinary activities such as baking bread, making and serving Arabic coffee, cleaning a house, and placing a small vase of flowers in the center of a classroom. All such domestic scenes are set in peaceful settings which acquire social and cultural significance. The settings of her poems are, therefore, a garden in the West Bank, a park in Nablus, a school in Hebron, and a traditional house in Jerusalem. Nye's sense of belonging to such settings is quite palpable in her poems.

Unlike Naomi Shihab Nye, Etel Adnan produces 'crisis poems' in the sense that she focuses on the disasters and massacres in her homeland during the civil war and this, in fact, accounts for her emphatic use of place names which are connected with war scenes in her poems. Adnan's use of place names reflects the view that place names, according to Keith Basso, can be easily memorable and gain significance only when people keep referring to them in connection with crucial events and the locations where these events occur (51). Thus, such places as Beirut, Hamra Street,

Tel El-Zaatar, Jerusalem and Mount Sannine are used as suitable settings for bloody scenes of violence and savagery. Here lies the main difference between Nye and Adnan in revealing the sense of place in their poetry. In other words, Adnan describes in her poems what the Lebanese people have done to their homeland in view of the state of deterioration, anarchy, destruction and violence as a result of the civil war. Nye, on the contrary, focuses on what her ancestral homeland has done to the people in the sense that it positively helps them construct their place identity and rootedness which are largely derived from their powerful attachment to their homeland.

Moreover, Adnan's approach in her 'crisis poems' is politically oriented. In other words, Adnan concentrates on the political crisis of her homeland during the civil war exploring the various conflicts involved in the crisis on a historical and political basis. In so doing, she reveals her awareness of the real causes of the decline and deterioration of her homeland. What concerns her most in her poems is the innocent people of Lebanon, those who suffer torture, oppression, cruelty and injustice, and those who are abducted, raped, killed and mutilated. Adnan is closely attached to such people and she identifies with them due to her sense of rootedness which is predominant in all her poems about the Middle East with the exception of "An Alley of Linden Trees, and Lightning" which reveals her nostalgic sense of place towards Beirut. The sense of rootedness is demonstrated in such poems as "The Indian Never Had a Horse" which mirrors Adnan's deep concern for the crimes committed against the innocent civilians in Lebanon during the civil war, "The

Beirut-Hell Express" which articulates her disgust and indignation at the corruption, and injustice that lead to the outbreak of the civil war. It is also reflected in "Jebu" which traces back the real causes of the Jerusalem crisis and describes how the innocent Palestinians fall victims to violence at the hands of an oppressive colonial power, and in *The Arab Apocalypse* which deals with Lebanon's civil war crisis especially the Tel El-Zaatar massacre and the tyranny of the oppressive regime which leads to chaos, military strife and deterioration. In all these poems, Adnan depicts scenes of violence, destruction and the suffering of innocent victims as a result of aggression and injustice. Such violent scenes are portrayed by using warlike imagery which signifies destruction and collapse of civilization including images of 'hurricanes', boiling rivers', destroyed places, dark 'undergrounds', blood, ghosts, 'slaughter houses' and 'a warring sun.'

What makes Adnan's sense of place explicit in her poems is not only her identification with the victims in her homeland but also her harsh and violent critique of her people's submissiveness, passivity and weakness. Adnan condemns here all those who are incapable of resisting oppression and corruption in the Lebanese community. Hence, her tone is always painful, warning, accusatory and indignant. Similarly, the structure of her poems, particularly *The Arab Apocalypse*, is irregular as represented by irregular line lengths, fragmentary sentences and phrases, and use of breaks, signs, visual symbols and unusual punctuation. All this simply refers to the poet's inability to express the state of chaos and disorder and signifies a note of frustration and dissatisfaction as a result

of the deteriorating situation in her homeland. Nonetheless, Adnan never loses hope. In "The Beirut-Hell Express," for instance, she anticipates change and the beginning of a new life with no corruption or injustice. What distinguishes Adnan's sense of place is the way she universalizes her attitude towards the crisis of her homeland. She achieves this by tracing its historical development since prehistoric times as in "The Beirut-Hell Express," or Biblical times as in "Jebu," or by relating it to the ordeals of other oppressed people in the world and showing that the collapse of her homeland marks the end of the world as in *The Arab Apocalypse*.

What makes the sense of place a remarkably distinctive characteristic in the poetry of both Nye and Adnan is the fact that the two poets are exposed to two different cultures, since they are Americans with an Arab background. This bicultural background reflects the heightened sense of place that dominates their poetry. Therefore, by describing their different senses of place in poems written about the Middle East, both poets find their own possible way of expressing the fact that they neither suffer from displacement or loss of Arab identity nor do they feel alienated from their homelands. On the contrary, both poets are still attached to and concerned about their homelands but each in her own way.

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