

TIME OUT OF TIME

poems

ARLEEN PARÉ

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“In her seventh decade, Paré encounters Etel Adnan’s *Time*. As she reads it, she hears ‘the hush/the pages make.’ Inspired, she gives herself over to Adnan’s sheer attentiveness of ‘writing backwards,’ and chronology, fixed meaning, syntax, and privacy—reconfigure and vivify her recollections and musings. Alert: you will read this book more than once!”

—Betsy Warland, author of
Bloodroot—Tracing the Untelling of Motherloss, 2nd edition, 2021

“Graceful, sensual, and evocative, Arleen Paré’s latest collection pays fitting homage to the poetry of the late Etel Adnan. *Time Out of Time* is also very much its own text, moving and beguiling, and expanding in multiple directions as it explores mortality, lesbian identity, and queer poetics.”

—Annick MacAskill, author of
Swimming Upwards and *Murmurations*

Note from the Author

In April, my poet friend Maureen Hynes suggested I read *Time* by Etel Adnan. It was love at first page. The poems in *Time* are spare and exquisitely structured. And then I discovered the remarkable Etel Adnan herself! Born in 1925 in Beirut, the daughter of a Greek Christian mother and a Syrian Muslim father, she studied in France and spoke several languages. While protesting France's war in Algeria, Adnan stopped writing in French, which meant she stopped writing poetry altogether for that period of time. Instead, she began painting. Not only was she an internationally recognized poet and painter, she was also a novelist, a philosopher, a polyglot, a public intellectual and a teacher. She won the Lambda Award for Lesbian Poetry, the California Book Award, and France's l'Ordre de Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, among others. In her lifetime she wrote over a dozen books in English, and other languages. In 2020, *Time* won the Griffin Poetry Prize. Fully smitten, I have employed the poetics in *Time* to shape this tribute collection.

On the morning of November 14, 2021, before this book went to print, Etel Adnan died in Paris, the city of light. She was ninety-six. I was broken-hearted; I thought she would live forever.

Etel Adnan 1

the first *Time* is
in an empty bank 2 p.m.
first page
masked
the Pandemic
empties out all ambient noise
the hush
the pages make as they turn
untiming
the glass doors monumental
onto the unpeopled street

2

I want to follow you
into your small
verbal squares
elegant spare
enough cut
enough cut

follow you there despite
claustrophobia those five fearsome syllables
the o tight in the middle
3 p.m. even the word wants release
nonetheless
nonetheless

3

I would follow you anywhere
leave the pear halved
on the plate
meet you at O'Hare or Heathrow or at Marrakesh Menara
get lost once again
or forever
in your words
just your words
with or without any meaning
the shape of them
in perfect translation
I don't even know
what you look like

4

would I pursue her if
she didn't play on the same team if
I knew
what she looked like
would I trail her into tentative
darkness follow her
on a voyage of no return
track her to the edge of evil and good
stanza after sweet-smelling stanza
with no punctuation

no question
no question mark

5

when she entrusts us to what's subterrain
will we find
what's buried beneath
beetles broken glass rats
root systems teeth

when she says happiness is unbearable on page 67
despite how much
we love her
does it deflect us from peace

she a small moveable organism
bespeaking hope
even when hope is in hiding