OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS | International Political Sociology

Standing Acts: The Political Aesthetics of Defiant Resistance

Journal:	*International Political Sociology*
Manuscript ID	IPS-2018-0053.R1
Manuscript type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Resistance, Defiance, Aesthetic and Politics, Antony Gormley, Taksim Square

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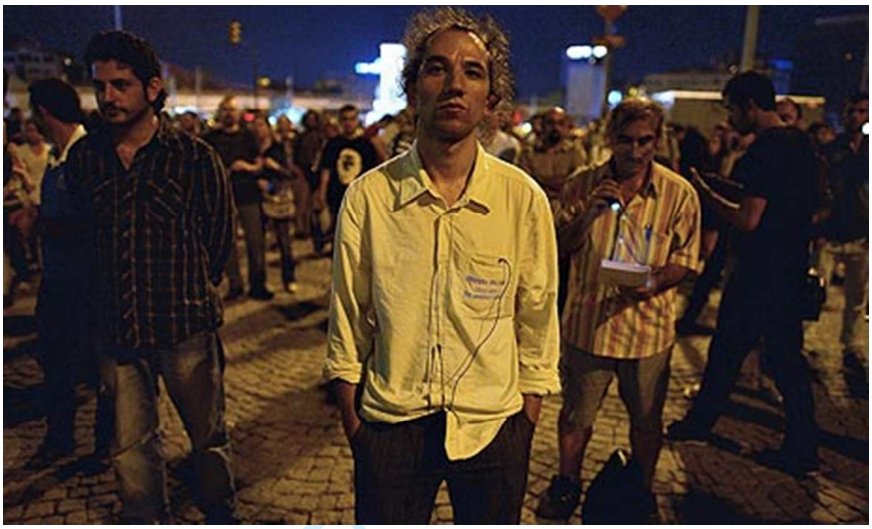

Standing Acts: The Political Aesthetics of Defiant Resistance [1]

9,971 words

Abstract

We most commonly encounter the word defiance when used as an adverb to classify a peculiarly courageous or risky act of resistance. However, the use of the word defiance in this way is a departure from the historical meaning of the word. Moreover, it occludes the possibility that there exists political activity that is manifestly defiant. The article takes issue with this tendency and identifies a mode of resistance that is explicitly defiant. In order to do this the paper draws from the phenomenological approach underpinning the standing sculptures of the British sculptor, Antony Gormley. This informs an exploration of the protest enacted by the standing man of Taksim Square, who participated in a large anti-government movement in Turkey in 2013. In acts we might distinguish as defiant, the paper demonstrates the materialist vulnerability of the protesting body, the aesthetic ontology at work, the prevalence of the standing metaphor, the role of silence and the absence of futurity. By unearthing defiant modes of protest, the heterogeneity of resistance is affirmed and a new domain where art encounters the political is revealed.

Introduction

This paper explores the possibility of disentangling gestures of defiance from the generalized concept and manifold practices of resistance. In short, it aims to contribute towards an understanding of what constitutes a politically defiant act. To do so, it will be argued that, semantically and pragmatically, an act of defiance differs substantially from other forms of resistance with which it is often conflated. It posits that defiance is a distinctive practice of resistance that is temporally limited and primarily aesthetic in character. Defiance, moreover, is a mode of resistance premised on a relational understanding of space that utilises the body to transform how space is perceived. Importantly, it is a unique form of protest that refuses to be

[1] The author is indebted to Dr _____ for providing an insightful reading of an early version of this paper and for her subsequent encouragement and advice.

complicit in the dialectic between oppressed and oppressor. Essentially, defiance is an act that experiments with the possibilities of transcending the multiplicity of force relations that constitute the field wherein resistance contends with a police order. The paper will not evaluate whether defiant acts are successful in this endeavour. It aims to reveal the distinctive choreography at work by drawing on theoretical innovations arising from recent feminist, post-phenomenological and post-materialist theories of resistance and power to explore exemplar expressions of defiant behaviour. In so doing, the paper reveals an idiosyncratic ontology of resistance that has been subsumed within and historically occluded by scholarship that focuses on predominant modes of being resistant.

Defiance will be treated by this study to be a performative mode of resistance that signifies a will to break all authority, to sunder the relationship between master and slave entirely; and to establish oneself as a counterargument to the very dichotomy of a power relationship. It is not merely to *say* No, as Camus (1971) postulates. Rather, it means to act No, to represent No or to embody No. Defiance, the paper argues, is generally a silent and spontaneous mode of resistance performed by an individual. Usually without words, but utilising the body and its surrounding space, defiance rejects authority outright. It is the performative wordlessness of defiance that incites the paper to examine historically momentous acts of defiance from the aesthetic perspectives of sculpture or dance, rather than as political drama. Three women tying themselves to a primeval oak tree is a mode of resistance. It is premeditated and usually accompanied by chants or slogans. A group of people holding signs at the edge of the field might be another. The defiant act in that context would be one woman standing in front of the digger, completely alone and vulnerable. She wouldn't need to say a word. Or perhaps wouldn't be able to. She would be like a statue. Her image would be potentially iconic, reproducible and ultimately open to contesting interpretation. Her action would come across as impetuous and her body would be strategically positioned so that its relationship to the space around her (rather than the endangered tree) should become the political site of contestation. Importantly, therefore, it is proposed that defiance has a different relationship to space than more general acts of resistance. The aim of a defiant act is to draw all politics into the spatial orbit of the protesting body. Defiance, I forward, is a specific political aesthetic where spatial biopolitics meets a resistant standing, silent, de-individuated and vulnerable body.

Defiance will be therefore treated as a material or bodily performative phenomenon, one that remains radically open and that constitutes a peculiarly aesthetic and spatial mode of resistance. With this perspective the paper examines highly affective acts of defiance through the medium of sculpture, specifically through the logic undergirding the British artist Antony Gidden's Standing

Figures. Standing, as we shall see, is encoded in any act of defiance. Gidden's work radiates relational power, demonstrating the mode of political connectivity that is axiomatic to the materialist logic of defiance and its quite specific posture of *stasis*. To demonstrate an affective gesture of resistant defiance the paper will use Gidden's work to uncover the ontology of refusal performed by the artist and protestor, *#duranadam*, the standing protestor in Taksim Square, Istanbul in 2013.

Is Resistance Always Defiant?

Asking if resistance is always defiant goes to the kernel of the difference to which this paper seeks to draw attention. The proposed answer is no – resistance is not always defiant. Yet, it is not the aim of the paper to define defiance, or to create a taxonomy of resistance activities. Attempts have been made in the past to construct typologies of resistance. Bell (1973:63,) for instance, attempted this by isolating the means, participation, organisation and goals of targets of resistant behaviour. Very much in the language of rational goal-oriented behaviour, Bell sought to evaluate the success of the strategy utilised by resistants and revolutionaries with their political aims. Katz (2004) has also attempted a taxonomy where she distinguishes between resistance that aims to produce emancipatory change and more every day acts of 'reworking', which seek to reform power relations. This paper instead seeks to observe a formation of resistant behaviour that is not necessarily goal-oriented but that embodies a refusal that is not quotidian and relatively private but is publicly performed. It argues that, notwithstanding the many forms and the multitude of settings in which they occur, that acts of defiance are a distinctive mode of being resistant in which the aim is not victory over the oppressor. Rather, defiance, seeks to enact through a singular expression of human refusal, a universal questioning of a particular police order.

Take two children, for instance, subjected to the same stern cultural norm. The example may seem banal but imagine a typical parental situation where two children are told that they must wear a particular outfit if they want to attend a birthday party. One child might find ways to subvert the norm, to ignore it or to adopt it most superficially, while another might simply refuse outright to comply. We can say that the first child is being resistant, the second is being defiant. By rejecting the norm openly the second child will be seen to be defying the authority of her parent. They will be called naughty and perhaps even be punished. Vulnerable, the child stands stubbornly with her arms crossed to demonstrate that she will not move. She refuses the outfit and demonstrates a will to sacrifice her attendance at the party. Acting defiantly the child has questioned the norm publicly and

has exposed the power that is working to shape her. The resistant child, on the other hand, seeks to evade exposure. Her dissatisfaction is expressed through listlessness, disobedience, subterfuge, guerrilla tactics and possibly negotiation. Perhaps she agrees to the outfit but secretly brings her denim jeans to change into once she is at the party. Or maybe she spills chocolate syrup on the dress prior to departure. Or she negotiates to wear a different outfit, one that is a different colour. The point is that she challenges power in a fluid, rational and strategic manner. This is not to say we should naively equate defiance with the body and resistance with the calculating mind, but it does indicate a difference that is rarely identified in the literature on resistance.

In part, the study emerges from the observation that is common to see the words resistance and defiance used interchangeably by popular and by academic authors. The paper takes issue with the way two words with very different genealogies are routinely entangled in a problematic manner. Generally, while a difference is alluded to, defiance is nevertheless used as a synonym for an act or an attitude of resistant behaviour. A typical example can be seen in a recent study of resistant attitudes to male circumcision in West Africa, which was defined by a 'narrative of defiance'(Parkhurst, Chilongozi and Hutchinson 2015:18). This narrative of defiance is indistinguishable from a narrative of refusal or a narrative of rebellion or a narrative of passive resistance. Defiance can also be found describing a form of resistance that constitutes a subversive public gesture, one that exposes certain structural inequalities – such as in a study of women breaking gender norms in gyms in Israel, where defiance was attributed to women who ostentatiously demonstrated muscular strength or made grunting sounds when training (Lev and Herzog 2017).Another discernible tendency is for authors to use the word resistance as sort of collective noun for countless acts of 'everyday defiance' (see for instance Carr, Sanders and Willmot 2014). This occurs where defiance is described as quotidian, a recurring note in a pattern of anti-authoritarian events that blurs any distinction between a series of deviant activities, their aims, strategies and contexts. Framing defiance as constituting minor forms of everyday resistance is also seen in a study of classroom resistance by MacFarland (2001). In MacFarland's study defiance takes the form of active resistance that, while expressive, is demoted as a sort of anti-resistance: it denotes disruptive behaviour. In this sense, defiance is utilised by authors seeking a vague signifier for when an encounter becomes more confrontational, and when authority is openly challenged. For MacFarland (2001;613),'The social process generating student defiance in classrooms is similar to the social processes generating factory strikes', changes in 'worker productivity, collective protests, social movement recruitment and political change'. Implicit to this broad understanding, defiance is used to include resistant activities that are framed as negative forms of active social protest; defiance is thus treated as any type resistance manifesting in non-conformist behaviour. While

defiance ought to remain an open category of resistance, a problem arises when it is used uncritically, as seen with these examples, to become a synonym for challenges to authority. The primary observation made by this paper is that defiance is not simply a challenge; it is a particular strategy by which authority is openly denied.

Very few studies admit this important distinction. Howard Caygill (2013) comes close in a study he titles 'On Resistance: a philosophy of defiance'. The title betrays Caygill's tendency throughout the study to conflate resistance and defiance as his approach insists that resistant subjectivity inhabits what he calls 'the defiant life' (2013:208). But while Caygill does not explicitly recognize that acts of defiance might be ontologically distinct within the political aesthetics of resistance, his study does open the critical possibility to explore defiance as a strategy of resistance, as an alternative mode of force. For with Caygill resistance is bivalent and plural – a range of capacities situated within police postures of total spatial domination and within Clausewitzian defensive strategies of defiant rebellion. Defiance is a formation of resistance that is the reciprocal opponent to a formation of resistance he refers to as domination. As reciprocals, he argues, 'domination and defiance are engaged in a perpetual struggle in which resistance can never rest' (2013:208).This paper draws on Caygill's assertions in many respects but contends that defiant acts are not reciprocal in the Clausewitzian logic of resistance. Rather, defiant acts seek to end the relationship between domination and the resistive, to sunder political reciprocity.

A writer who draws a sharp and ultimately dogmatic distinction between resistance and defiance is Peter Sloterdijk. In an almost casual allusion, Sloterdijk has observed that resistance is a form of political protest that derives from western forms of revolution. Without taking into account Caygill's account of contemporary resistance emanating from the Napoleonic wars, Sloterdijk argues that the French resistance movement in World War Two has formed the basis of western political protest. Defiance, he claims, derives from eastern cultures (2013:249). It's an interesting distinction that he unfortunately does not tease out. A greater insistence that resistant activities are not equivocal to defiant ones is found in Reece Jones' (2012) examination of actions that subvert sovereign authority on the border between India and Bangladesh. Jones finds that 'every action in defiance of the state or the border guards should not be understood as resistance' (2012: 697). Resistance for Jones is generated by an 'active contestation that attempts to produce emancipatory change'. Interestingly, Jones's study identifies a range of 'other quotidian activities that are in relation to power but not overtly contesting it' (2012: 687). In his description of 'spaces of refusal' - activities of non-compliance where state power is ignored, evaded or transgressed – one can immediately detect

strong traces of ontological defiance within his understanding that resistance is a heterogeneous activity.

To further explore a philosophy of defiant resistance, it will be examined through the post materialist political aesthetics of body and space. Thus, the analysis will be drawn from an assumption that materialist and idealist epistemologies diverge dramatically when it comes to the politics of the human body. The idealist position is classically demonstrated in religious uses of the body. Religions universally treat the human body as a symbol, as a container or a husk for the soul which will be eventually discarded. Spirituality is a drive that denigrates the body, that treats it as something disposable and ephemeral. Hence the biopolitical practices we associate with religious values include bowing, kneeling and lying prostrate. The body is always a means to an out-of-body experience. It is for this reason that martyrdom is indissolubly associated with religious practices. Moreover, as Dillon and Reid (2009) and Michelsen (2013) have pointed out, the biopolitics of liberalism that utilizes human behaviour to reproduce modern subjectivity can be traced to this idealist perspective.

Certainly, it can be argued that the strategy of passive resistance retains an idealist and religious ontology within its political conceptualization of the body. Contending this we find aesthetic forms of defiance and resistance which conceive the body along radically antithetical terms. Being defiant, for a materialist phenomenologist, the body stands and draws upon its own physicality. The body is ends, never means. In acts of resistance and defiance the human form is not understood to be a container, but is *being* contained in space. Agency is therefore shifted from mind or soul to the body in a way that raises its ontological stake. Under the terms of a materialist existence human consciousness is not ascendant but is thrown amongst other things and participates in complex sets of power relations.

That artifacts possess an intrinsic resistant subjectivity provides insight into acts of defiance. Any claim that objects made by humans can exceed the purposes of human in myriad ways and forms is undergirded by a post-materialist analysis that traces political reverberations in the agency of the nonhuman. A work of art, for instance, escapes the dexterity and genius of the artist in ways she can never imagine. This is evidenced by examining how a piece of public sculpture enters a space and transforms it. Jane Bennett (2010: xii) drawing on a tradition of thinking that moves from Spinoza, through Nietzsche, Bergson, Adorno and Deleuze and Guattari, makes the point that 'organic and inorganic bodies, natural and cultural objects *all* are affective'. Intrinsically cultural forms, according to Bennett carry a 'resistance force' (2010: 1) and are capable of disrupting a police order. As we shall see, this key insight inhabits the activities of any defiant activity.

The paper focuses on two examples of radically open, non-symbolic bodies, both of which, to differing lengths, are thrown into space when they defy hegemonic biopolitical power relations. These body forms are aesthetic and mute. Both involve single standing figures. The first form emanates from Antony Gormley, the British phenomenologist sculptor who recreates 'melancholic lead' moulds of his standing body and locates them in wide open spaces. 'My work', he writes, 'tries to create a place of feeling, which is in contrast to objective rationalism' (cited by Birnbaum 1996: 136). Deeply immersed in the material affect produced by reproducing the human form as a material in space, Gormley's sculpture aims to challenge the dominating myth that the human mind is separate from its surrounding body. The second form under scrutiny is that created by the performance artist, #*duranadam*, who turned his body into the standing man protester in Taksim Square, Istanbul. Contextualising his performance, Butler and Athanasiou (2013: 150-151) have remarked on the uniqueness of the, 'very ordinary and rather undramatic practice of standing'; that 'the very practice of *stasis* creates both a space of reflection and a space for revolt, but also an affective comportment of standing and standpoint'.

Antony Gormley 'Performing *Stasis*' [2]

By standing silently alone, yet being together with a complex ensemble of things and humans, and by performing *stasis*, or as Antony Gormley would insist, 'moving stillness', the sculptured standing form allows us to explore the aesthetics of resistance, while simultaneously feeling for a difference in affectation. Indicatively, the verb 'to resist' is semantically and practically derivative of the act of standing. Antony Gormley is a British artist whose sculpture has focused upon the relationship between the standing body and its capacity to reconstitute the meaning of its surrounding space. A sculptor who creates standing figures, Gormley connects human standing to the transformation of space into place.

Standing is traceable to the Old English word *standan*; "occupy a place; stand firm; congeal; stay, continue, abide; be valid, be, exist, take place; oppose, resist attack; stand up, be on one's feet; consist, amount to".[3] Intrinsic to its meaning is the idea of place, defence, contestation and being. Place, for Tuan (1977) differs from space as it is endowed with experience by it being encountered as a totality, 'that is through all our senses as well as with the active and reflective mind' (1977:18). He

[2] Stasis from Greek στάσις "a standing still"

[3] http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=stand&searchmode=none

refers to place as a centre of meaning, as an object in which one can dwell. Place and being are therefore semantically intertwined in our historical notion of standing. Consequently, the sense that 'to stand' is 'to exist' or 'to be', is traceable back to the thirteenth century. Records of the word being used to 'encounter without flinching' are available from 1590. Moreover, the root '*sta'*, is further bound with the physicality of place and home in the Persian –*stan,* which refers to 'country', or literally 'where one stands'; Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan etc.[4]Willfully standing still is consequently an act of claiming space, of transforming space into place, of being-in-space. A stand is where a thing dwells, where a church stands, for instance. And in military parlance a stand is taken where the army awaits the onset of the enemy, where it keeps its ground without budging. Resistance is the activity of holding something back, of oppositional force and is constituted from the old French verbs *resistĕre*, or *stop (re and sistĕre)* and a reduplication of *stare*, to stand.[5] We use the word in everyday language when we stand our ground, stand for or stand by, stand before or take a stand. We stand under a cause, stand with its advocates, stand apart or stand forth boldly as a declarative act. It is in the way resistance is deemed to be an activity in space where people stand together that we gain vital entry to the aesthetic insights on defiant resistance and the power of Gormley's art to shift our perception of space.

So, rather than signalling Antony Gormley as a resistance artist, I intend to explore his comprehension of space to further our understanding of the sort of defiant resistance embodied by #*duranadam*. Through this undertaking, I wish to explore practices of defiance as a genre of resistance, as an aesthetic sort of resistance, if you will, and to ask what it means to stand at defiance. Gormley's art brings to the living etymology of standing the invisible dynamics of interconnectivity that is inherent to any philosophy of resistance. The premise of his work would seem to be based on a relational theory of bodily power best encapsulated by Hannah Arendt, who understood power as something circulatory, as something that exists between things. 'Power' she wrote, 'is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only as long as that group keep together' (1970:44). Power is not a thing that can be hoarded, like gold or wealth, in this formulation. It's a phenomenon inherently dynamic, intersubjective and specific to a place in time. Power is that productive relationship that occurs between bodies. It is this circulatory power that Foucault's understanding rests upon – power as a fluidity and plurality, constantly generating and regenerating, gathering and dispersing, shaping and reshaping. Using an analogy of electricity production, Baumann (2011:1) demonstrates how resistance is built into circuits of power;

[4]http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=stet&allowed_in_frame=0

[5]*Oxford English Dictionary* 2nd edition vol. xiii, pp. 716-719

> The workability and endurance of the whole circuit – and therefore the power it can absorb and the amount of work it can do – cannot be greater than the power of resistance of its fuse.

In this analogy resistance is never external to power. William Connolly's (1988:146) reading of Nietszche would seem to concur, observing that, 'the presumptions of resistance and power engender each other; neither functions until it is called into being by the other.' Catherine Mills, drawing on Foucault explains that power is a 'name that designates the concatenated effect of a "moving substrate of force relations" (2003:254). She point out that for Foucault resistance is not simply opposed to power, but instead derives from it and reinstates its conditions in the very moment of subversion' (Mills 2003:261). It is not difficult to perceive that through his aim to reactivate space and to imagine alternative ways of being human in space, Gormley's sculpture recreates material relations of power. It is not until we place his sculptures within the context of a protestor such as #duranadam, however, that we see the immanent possibility for standing bodies to break away from the circuit of power, to transcend the 'mulitiplicity of force relations'(Foucault 1981: 93).

Thus the first thing we must understand about Gormley's sculptures is that they are public art. They are places in open spaces. Due to the technique by which he casts moulds of his own body in lead and places them into public space, Gormley is often categorised as an anthropomorphic artist (Lawless 2009: 144). I disagree with this interpretation and argue that Gormley is not as enchanted with reproducing human subjectivity as he is determined to challenge the notion that the body is a sovereign container separate from its environment. His work challenges the distinction between outside and inside. He is thus an artist challenging human exceptionalism rather than one celebrating it. Describing his work Gormley says, 'I think you could identify my project as a whole as a return to the body not as object but as place' (cited by Levinson 2001:1). As Knappet (2002: 112-113) argues, technically Gormley's sculptures are not direct mouldings of the human body proper but, 'from the outer surfaces of body plaster-casts'. They are thus 'de-individuating' for Knappet; 'even though the individual body is the starting point, a kind of collective figure is the result'. Moreover, Gormley is insistent that his sculptures are not simply standing still, that they are in fact 'moving still', that they are things in relation to other things that constitute and reconstitute space. Basically an installation piece, these sculptures ought to be removed after a short period of time.[6] In a revealing comment at an interview with a journalist a number of years ago he likened his himself to a dancer (Wullschlager 2010). The standing forms he produces are therefore more like

[6] In practice however an affinity between the sculptures and local residents means that the works often acquire a permanent status, losing their potency to disrupt space and instead become institutions reifying space.

performance sculptures, things thrown into the heterogeneous flow of relations that constitute that space. Sculpture, he has observed, 'is a thing amongst other things and a picture of something; an embodiment of our sense of internal space, and an occupation of space' (Gormley 2007: 1513). Gormley often uses the word amplification in relation to his art - 'I want the work to activate the space around it and engender a psycho-physical response, allowing those in its field of influence to be more aware of their bodies and surroundings' (cited by Birnbaum 1997: 136).

Birnbaum, who senses keenly in Gormley an extension of the phenomenology of Heidegger, has observed that the sculpture takes up his understanding of existence as of 'belonging-together'; that man is being-in-space:

> One sometimes gets the impression that the human figure is but an effect of external forces capable of different constellations. From such a perspective, man would appear not as a self-sufficient centre, but rather as a result of forces more original than human subjectivity
>
> (Birnbaum 1997: 139)

Figure One: A Gormley 'ANOTHER PLACE' 1997

We can only presume then that Gormley understands the space his art occupies in terms of the heterogeneous assemblage of things that constitute it: each exuding vital materiality whose being together is temporally fixed but circulating in a flux of meaning and power. It is this conceptualization of space that Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz first identified in the seventeenth century. He argued that space is a term we use for the relations between things: 'nothing more than a structure of relations, of sort' (cited by Harvey 1997: 252). This is the understanding of scholars such as Doreen Massey (1991: 28) who argue against fixed absolute Euclidean conceptions of space – 'places' she writes, are articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings'. As

Murdoch (1998: 360) explained, 'materials solidify social relations and allow these relations to endure through space and time'. Needless to say, an artist like Gormley, intent on disrupting the embranglement of relations that constitute a space by placing a de-individuated standing human form into a space, is aware that, 'the network does not emerge as a simple aggregate of these gathered space-time trajectories; rather all are modified as they enter new and complex interrelationships within the network' (Murdoch 1998: 361). Previous circulations of power that flow through these networks are disrupted as space is rearranged, questioned, established anew. It is in this indeterminable process that affect emerges, and the unpredictable force of new relations establishes new social imaginaries of space. That Gormley's standing figures exude the rudiments of a form of resistance that is distinguishably defiant becomes evident when we examine the actions of #duranadam in Taksim Square in 2013.

Defiant as #duranadam (the standing man)

One need only look cursorily at the etymology of defiance to see that it emanates from a quite different set of meanings and practices than does resistance. The verb 'to defy' has been traced to the 14th century where it was used to 'recounce one's allegiance or amity' and later 'to challenge'. Its meaning was supplemented by the Old French word '*defier*' which was used to describe someone renouncing a belief or repudiating a vow. In Latin, it most decidedly came to mean, 'to renounce one's faith'.[7]The Oxford English Dictionary detects in the word a sense of distrust in the sense that its usage denotes a lack of fidelity, a want of confidence in a given order.[8]Defiance therefore constitutes an event, a disruption in time and space in which someone breaks away from a relationship or a belief held profoundly. It would appear to evoke what Camus termed a 'metaphysical rebellion'.

> Metaphysical rebellion is the means by which a man protests his condition and against the whole of creation. It is metaphysical because it disputes the ends of man and of creation.

According to Camus, this rebellion is affirmative in spirit because the 'rebel defies more than he denies', (1971:29). If however it is accepted that defiance implies renunciation, then the claim that metaphysical rebellion is wholly affirmative loses traction. As an act of repudiation, defiance might perhaps also be understood as a negation, as denial. It is therefore as valid to describe defiance in

[7]http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=defy

[8]*Oxford English Dictionary* 2nd Edition, vol. IV.

terms of the negative ontology encapsulated by what Herbert Marcuse's called 'the 'Great Refusal' (Marcuse 1991). Marcuse argued for the 'great refusal', safeguarding against the risk that 'in a repressive society, even progressive movements threaten to turn into their opposite to the degree to which they accept the rules of the game' (Marcuse 1991: 97). Garland's (2013:376) interpretation of a 'politics of refusal', 'an active form of a radically different mode-of- being and mode-of -doing', locates the Great Refusal with Caygill (above) as a 'process of historical rupture', a resistant subjectivity. The distinctive interpretation in this paper is drawn from the observation that a refusal only occurs once. To refuse is to end the conversation, to nullify the negotiation, to negate, to break from the circuit. If refusal is a process then it is obviously not being done right. Defiance certainly embodies the negativity of Marcuse's Great Refusal, in that it seeks to reveal the potential alternatives through renunciation – to paraphrase Camus' words above, the defiant rebel denies the very thing he defies. And yet, defiance, as witnessed through the work of Gormley, also embodies the potential of becoming anew. Thus, it seems common sense to question the dichotomy between affirmative and negative modes of being-defiant, and instead treat defiance in terms of the aesthetic ontology of creativity. To deny is to create and this, I argue, is both affirmative and negative.

The exemplar act of refusal through which we can best explore defiant resistance occurred towards the end of the largest protest movement in Turkey's history. It was enacted by Erdem Gündüz,who:

> Stood silently in the middle of Taksim square for eight hours on 17th July. He did not utter any slogans, carried no indication as to why he was standing and refused to talk either to the police or to journalists. This one 'standing man' (as he was later dubbed by the resistance) sufficed for thousands of others standing in public squares, thus initiating a new form of protest
>
> (Gambetti 2014:96-97).

His defiance needs to be placed into the violent and frightening context in which it occurred. It has been estimated that in June 2013 over 2.15 million people participated in a movement against a series of policies enacted by theTurkish AKP (Justice and Development Party) government. Dissatisfaction stemmed from legislation and policies that sought to privatise Turkey's national and natural parks, protected area and wetlands, which, together with the increasing use of conservative religious discourse, an ardent neoliberal urban renewal agenda and a sense that democratic accountability was being deliberately diminished, led to a massive national protest (Gürcan and Peker 2015:65). It has been estimated that 12.1% of Turkey's over 18 population were involved in protests in 79 cities (Gürcan and Peker 2015:8).

The physical origin of the protest movement was in Gezi Park in Istanbul where on 31st May 2013 a small group had gathered to protest the construction of a shopping centre that was to be co-located in a reconstructed replica of a military barracks destroyed sixty years previously. The group comprised environmentalists and local inhabitants seeking to preserve the green area in Gezi Park where the development was set to occur. The initial protest, having been met with considerable violence by police, swiftly escalated into a more general protest on Taksim Square, which incorporated mainly young middle class professionals and university students unhappy with the policies of the Turkish government, led by Prime Minister Tayypip Erdogan. As Gökay and Shain (2013: 58) have pointed out, the location of the protest revealed much about the tensions that were emerging from the neoliberal-driven urbanizing impetus behind the rapid changes to public space in Istanbul. The protests, they observe, were;

> first and foremost a response to the ruling regime's grandiose neoliberal projects of urban transformation, gentrifying schemes, with the aim of creating high-tech malls, skyscrapers and expensive giant high-tech stadiums
>
> (Gökay and Shain 2013: 66)

The violent reaction of the police recruited 'socialists, anarchists, ecologists, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals, nationalists, Kemalists, apolitical folk and even some voters of the AKP[9]' (Őncü 2013) and generalized the resistance across political cleavages and in cities throughout the country. By early June protests had spread to 78 cities while solidarity rallies were occurring in Athens, New York, London, Buenos Aires, Tokyo and Beijing. Police had been using violent measures since 31st May, killing, injuring and drawing on exceptional detention methods and torture to manage the protest. Reaction to the protest had been extremely violent. Over the two weeks seven protesters had been killed, 7500 injured, 106 had suffered severe head trauma, eleven people had lost an eye and hundreds had been detained and tortured (Őncü 2013; Gürcan and Peker 2015:8). Threatening to escalate the violence, on 13th June, the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan issued a 'final warning', demanding an end to the occupation of Gezi Park. On the evening of 15th June 2013, riot police units entered Taksim Square, which was by now occupied by thousands of protesters, to clear it with water cannon and tear gas. Within a half an hour they had largely accomplished their task. The square was evacuated. It was onto this emptying charred battlefield that Erdem Gündüz, a dancer and choreographer walked at six o'clock on Monday evening, 17th June. The government had

[9] *AdaletveKalkinmaPartisi* (AKP)– The Islamist Justice and Development Party - the AKP, at the time held a two-thirds majority in the Turkish parliament and had been in power since 2002.

just issued a ban on demonstrations, referring to the protesters as 'terrorists' (Kazim 2013). Police, in the meantime, had commenced a series of raids on offices and homes of the Socialist Party of the Oppressed and on a number media organisations critical of the government.

Erdem Gündüz walked into the centre of the square, now tightly controlled by the security forces, and, with his hands deep in his pockets, he began to stand. For approximately eight hours the performance artist stood motionless, facing an epic sized banner of Kemal Ataturk and two Turkish flags which had been draped over the Ataturk Cultural Centre. News of his stance quickly spread through social media under the hashtag *#duranadam* (standing man). Within a few hours a standing woman appeared in Kizilay Square, in Ankara, on the spot where a protester had recently been shot dead. By Tuesday there were several hundred people standing. Standers were also seen at other sites in Turkey, on spaces where individuals critical of the state had been killed in the past. A journalist from CNN referred to the phenomenon as a 'hushed tableau' (Tuysuz, Penhaul and Lee 2013).

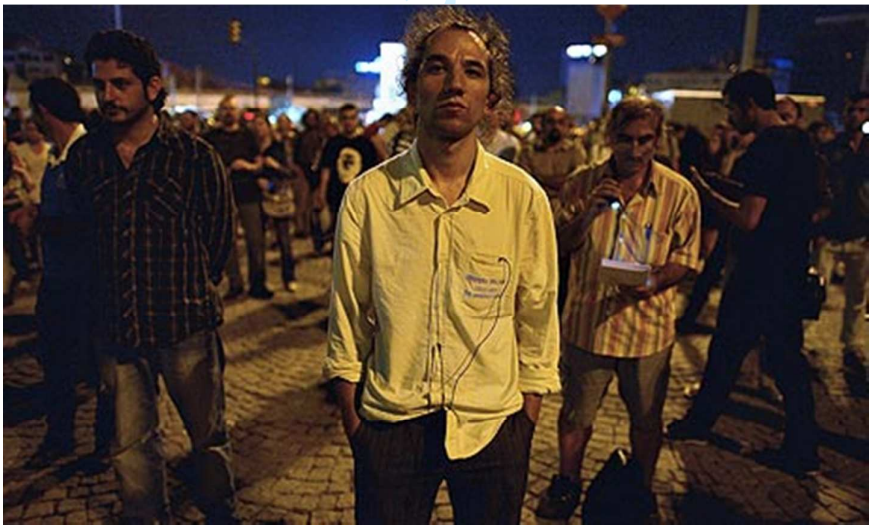

Figure Two *#duranadam* ,Taksim Square, Istanbul, 2013.

Certainly the standing man and his network of fellow standers were a tableau. But it is incorrect to use the adverb 'hushed', as though the silence of the gesture was commanded. On the contrary, the silence of *#duranadam* was as purposeful as the motionless act of standing. It constituted the most political aspect of the performance. Terming it a 'feat of defiance' a columnist in the British newspaper, The Guardian, described him as 'Silent, stubborn and dignified' (Seymour 2013). Descriptions of the standing man resembled art reviews and aptly so, I would argue. The standing man was an aesthetic performance. In a rare interview afterwards, Erdem Gündüz, would say, 'I'm

not the type to talk about politics, I'm an artist. I prefer to talk about dance' (cited by Kazim 2013). Silence was the point. Gündüz wished to let his body communicate. Even in his most political statements after the performance he underlined his motivations as emanating from a concern with political and moral controls being exercised on the body and an emphasis on the biopoliticization of public space;

> As a dancer I am concerned with physicality. What am I supposed to think when a theologian says publically that pregnant women should no longer show themselves in public because the sight of them is unsavoury?
>
> (cited by Kazim 2013)

Other reports that referred to the gesture as 'passive defiance' seems closer to what *#duranadam* demonstrates (Mohamed 2013). One commentator has referred to it as a 'display of peaceful defiance' (Sofos 2014: 136).

It is no doubt revealing that legal experts were bemused by the loophole in the law caused by a single silent man standing (Wiltshire 2013). Even the Turkish government had to admit #*duranadam* was doing nothing wrong – in a statement the Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc approved of the mode of protest. The act of standing surpassed the imagination of the legal code, which was designed to expedite movement. It surpassed the imagination of a political class which sent police to search his rucksack – in the vain hope to find drugs or incriminating literature, one assumes. The Union of Turkish Bar Associations and the Ministry of Interior agreed that, 'if a person does not block the traffic and does not break the public order, he can stand. The police cannot intervene'.[10] It is interesting to note that once enough 'standing men and women' had gathered on Taksim Square, police felt emboldened enough to arrest them for preventing circulation. In any event, Arinc and his government were underestimating an action that would eventually reactivate and reunite a scattered and frightened opposition force. By Wednesday the crowds had returned to Taksim Square. Within weeks the government would capitulate.

The protest by #*duranadam* also captured the imagination of the German M100 Award jury, who awarded him a human rights award. In addition, the Dutch member of the European parliament, MarietjeSchaake, nominated 'Standing Man' for the EU Sakharov-Prize, again for human rights.[11] I would observe that the freedom of expression and movement protected by human rights is not of the same sort that Erdem Gündüz was championing. Afterall, here was a man whose performance

[10] cited on *Huriyet Daily News,* Istanbul, June 18th 2013 at http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com

[11] http://www.marietjeschaake.eu posted 29th August 2013.

featured a silent, unmoving human figure. Moreover the standing man is a de-individuated human. It is not a symbol of individual human rights. Foregrounding his body as the medium, the standing man publically discarded the recognition of his identity or rights. 'I am nothing but the idea is important' Gündüz insisted, when interviewed (cited by Kjuka 2013). I would argue that the reports that described #*duranadam* as evidence of the power of an individual seek to appropriate the event. In an otherwise accurate account which identifies #*duranadam* as a 'code of mass movement', reporter Salutin (2013) for example argues that the standing man is 'uniquely individual', 'totally alone and self-sufficient'. He thus observes that this is the weakness of the strategy. Firstly, to say he was alone is incorrect. But secondly, this so-called weakness, the bodily vulnerability of one person refusing, exposes a liberal frame of comprehension. On the contrary this vulnerability constitutes the very ontology of defiance.

Defiant Vulnerability

To defy is to expose oneself to material force, to invite physical injury. The moral argument forwards that rendering oneself so exposed is to create a physical demand for the oppressor to recognise the integrity of the body and to thereby acknowledge its responsibility to protect the universal fragility of the human. Ferrarse (2016:227), commenting on Butler's (1996) work where this argument has been more fully developed, refers to the experience of exposure as an ethical appeal to the other to recognise rather than destroy. Notwithstanding the relevance of this proposition for other forms of resistance, the description of Gündüz's performance on Taksim Square seems to indicate less a plea for mutual recognition and more a public refusal to be complicit in any way with the actions of the other. It is, as I have said above, an act of apostasy, a public exhibition which demonstrates the sundering of the social contract, which through a creative demonstration of equality, negates the possibility of power relations that currently exist. Ferrarese (2016:234) draws from Arendt (1993) to underline the public nature of resistance to conclude that by 'entering the space of appearance, human beings gain full access to phenomenality'. In the standing man, the fundamental asymmetric structure of the current spatial order is revealed as and simultaneously refused. Defiant vulnerability is therefore not, as with passive resistance, an invitation to absorb a slap on the face and turn the other cheek. Nor is it the same use of vulnerability as seen in the hunger striker, who also uses his or her body to disrupt and expose dominant governance practices, as Zevnik (2015) describes. The hunger strike is ultimately a form of negotiation. Promising to eat in return for political, legal or cultural recognition, the hunger striker is

not defiant in the sense being outlined here. Defiance is to use physical exposure to transcend the circuit of power, to reveal the operation of biopoitics, if only for a short period of time.

By embodying a material, physical iteration of No, but by not speaking, the defiant is also willingly exposed to a form of what Butler has called 'linguisitic vulnerability' (1996:4). The very meaning of the act is as exposed as the act itself. The standing body admits no cause and is thus more radically open to interpretation than are other modes of resistance. Take #duranadam, for instance. We saw above how the government interpreted his actions as a legitimate protest; how Kemalists observed that he was facing the Atarturk monument and therefore saluting the secular Turkish state; how environmentalists believed he was making a statement about the sanctity of public space; and European liberals perceived his stance as somebody upholding individual human rights. Even this research article, albeit with more evidence, is interpreting #duranadam as the embodiment a form of resistance that is defiant.

If we look back to another iconic event of defiance that occurred on Tiananmen Square in 1989 we see a similar political space being opened by the gestures of the 'tankman'. The events in Beijing, where a multiplicity of protest groups were engaging in a carnival of resistance laying claim to public space (Hershkovitz 1993; Lee 2011), were remarkably similar to those in Istanbul in 2013.[12] Here amidst a larger complex resistance movement (centred in a square but by certainly not confined by it) that had been violently subdued the image emerged of one lone individual standing in front of a tank. The photograph, captured by the photojournalists Arthur Tsang Hin Wah, Jeff Widener and Stuart Franklin [13] on 5th June with a telescopic lens from a hotel balcony a mile from the event, capture an anonymous individual standing up to a T59 tank. In the background there is a burnt out bus and behind the tank await a procession of similar tanks. The man appears to be refusing to allow the tank to move. Waving a jacket and a bag of groceries the man defies the tanks for minutes before being taken by a security agent. It has been observed that the image became so representative of the protest that it occluded countless courageous acts of resistance – such as the hunger strikers or the dance around the Goddess of Democracy (Sun 1997). More importantly, the action was appropriated by Western commentators as evidence of a liberal democratic movement in communist China. Obliviously, the tankman of Tiananmen Square became the reproducible iteration of liberal freedom placed on the front page of newspapers worldwide (including Liberation, the

[12] For a Reuters journalist first hand view see, http://www.earnshaw.com/tiananmen-story accessed 4/4/2018

[13] For an account by Franklin see, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/photography-blog/2014/jun/03/stuart-franklin-tiananmen-square-tank-man accessed 4/4/2018

International Herald Tribune, Life magazine and The New York Times) and, as one commentator recounts, 'The moment instantly became a symbol of the protests as well as a symbol against oppression worldwide — an anonymous act of defiance seared into our collective consciousnesses' (Witty 2009). Simultaneously, the tankman was interpreted by the Chinese authorities as 'evidence of it's army's non-violence' (Sun 1997:8).

The radical physical and metaphorical openness of #duranadam or tankman underline what Butler (2014:114) has described as the tendency in vulnerability to 'denote some dimension of what cannot be foreseen or predicted or controlled in advance'. By refusing to foreclose the message of their protest there is a discernible conscious refusal in defiant resistance to foreclose the openness of its medium, the body. Butler again observes this when she writes that 'vulnerability may be a function of openness, that is, of being open to a world that is not fully known or predictable. It is, she continues, 'to open the body onto the body of another, or a set of others, and that for this reason bodies are not self-enclosed kinds of entities' (2014: 115). What this tells us is that it is the affect produced by these events, not their *essence*, that defies and denies prevailing power relations. It is not the intention of the actants, but the politics of how they are interpreted – not the individual human, the subjective liberal self, but the anonymous body open and connected to all other bodies and things that encounter it. The aesthetics of defiant standing rests upon the assumption that the artist has no authority over the trajectory of his or her art; that things escape the power relationship between maker and made, artisan and product. Post-materialist political commentators are acutely aware of the possibilities that pertain to the ambivalent messages that emerge from works of art.

Citing Rancière (2004: 61), who pointed out that 'there is no criterion for establishing a correspondence between aesthetic virtue and political virtue', Roland Bleiker (2009) reminds us that the aesthetic is a form of openness that is antithetical to control, rationality and the repression of difference. The manner by which Debbie Lisle's examination of the way murals in Belfast exposed the hollowness of the 'two-communities thesis' driving a depoliticizing peace agenda is indicative. Lisle reveals how murals resisted this socio-technical imaginary and revealed the presence of 'complex and competing networks that function throughout the urban landscape of Belfast' (Lisle 2006: 28). Roland Barthes (1977; 17), discussing photography, also emphasized a distinction between a photograph's 'denoted message' and its 'connoted message'; the former providing us with an objective representation and the latter open to interpretation. Lisle (2011: 87) follows up this claim, arguing that photography is thus 'radically open.' She cites Campany (2003;126) who observed that 'It is not that a photograph naturally says a thousand words, rather that a thousand words can be said about it'. The emancipatory ethic of art is to surrender control over its

interpretation. This formulation is ultimately an aesthetic surrender to the power the artist possesses over his or her work of art. Thus the work of art and the artist separate when the artist walks away and the power she once held over the material dissipates. The object is infected by and infects a new set of power relations. Once this point has been accepted, it is safe to consider the corollary assumption: objects of art also escape the controlling relations of power that bind them to sovereign, or biopolitical power. That is to say, by exuding vital materiality, as Bennett calls it, an object potentially escapes the mathematical reductionist logic of modern governance, and technicality.

Caygill (2013:51) has recently reminded us that such an approach was foremost in the minds of the leading members of the Frankfurt School who sought to develop Georg Lukács' earlier work on

> non-conscious sites of resistance into a mediation upon aesthetic resistance, messianic/prophetic resistance, even the resistance of the concept – in short, a universe of resistances no longer tied to the discourses of consciousness and force.

Post-phenomenologists such as Jane Bennet or Diana Coole have pointed out that affect is not a process that emanates from the subconscious of the artist or the artisan. It emerges from the unique and complex set of power relations a thing enters when it is placed on a street, painted on a wall, or acted on a stage. It is a process that never stays still and is beyond the control of the human: according to Coole (2013: 456) ; 'this is agentic force without a narrative embedding'. Later she outlines the ethics of her ontological approach ;

> the materialist turn is an invitation to direct our attention once again to the material world; to plunge into its vibrant forms; to think afresh about the manifold ways human animals encounter, are affected by, respond to, destroy, rely upon and are generally imbricated with matter, and to assume a critical stance by exploring the dangerous ways matter is being reconfigured and distributed.
>
> (Coole 2013: 468)

An installation of spatial defiance, #duranadam's protest reverberates with the aesthetic vision embodied in Antony Gormley's standing figures. In the same manner as the physical and virtual world interacts with one solitary figure standing motionless on Taksim Square, it encounters standing sculptures in public places that disrupts, or perhaps, transcends their dominant experience of that space. It reconfigures the world around create a sense of shared place, alienates dominant perceptions and infuses anew the relational ensemble of human and non human actants that dwell

there. Thus the novel interpretations that are activated by the act of defiance; the sense of movement or *stasis* that occurs when a body opens up a relational space to radical possibilities; is what makes a wilful act of standing a specifically aesthetic and dynamic public refusal that is not prominent in other modes of resistance

Conclusion

Why is it important to identify defiance as a particular type of resistance? Primarily, it demonstrates that resistance is a heterogeneous set of human activities. Obviously, resistance is a contingent phenomenon – its meaning and practice changes according to the context. It follows that the root meaning of resistance, which has evolved around metaphors associated with standing, is an open ended and fluid term. It is used to describe a family of political practices, including; civil disobedience, mass movements, the occupation of public places, obstructionism, rioting, striking, passive resistance and so on. The paper demonstrates that the literature on resistance generally agrees that these strategies of resistance share a dialectical relationship with police power. They contest authority using the guerrilla tactics of asymmetrical warfare. There is however, a different species of resistance that is defiatory by nature. It derives from the Middle Ages in Europe and serves to announce a renunciation, a loss of faith. Thus contemporary manifestations of defiance emanate from a quite public, aesthetic, and somewhat metaphysical declarative act. Rather than entering into a conversation with authority (as with most forms of resistance) defiant resistance sunders the power relationship.

Defiance, undoubtedly, is a mode of resistance that is also contingent. Its meaning evolves and the practices it manifests emanate from the time and place it occurs. It is impossible to capture defiance. It is however feasible to sketch out a theory of defiance. The article focused upon a specific act of defiant resistance performed by an artist during the Taksim Square occupation in Istanbul. In order to unearth the rationality around this very affective piece of political art, I turned to a sculptor who has been performing similar work for decades. The standing man forms placed in public spaces by the sculptor Antony Gormley are iconic. They seek to amplify the relationality of the body to its environment. Their purpose is to disrupt and reconstitute an observer's perspective of their surroundings. Resonantly, the standing man of Taksim Square stood for over eight hours defying the biopolitics of public space in Istanbul. His act of resistance, when seen through the lens of Gormley's aesthetic vision and phenomenological outlook, shows an exemplar piece of defiance. Silently, by simply standing, he renounced his allegiance, altered perceptions of the space around him and

regenerated the wider resistance. Understanding the political aesthetics behind this stratagem is the first tentative step towards recognising what is distinctive about defiant resistance.

To begin with, the defiant protestor does not speak, or at least does not need to speak. Rather, the body thrown into space becomes the site of the political. As a tense and seemingly impetuous performance of refusal, defiance is resistance without futurity. Undergirded by a materialist epistemology, a defiant act manifests 'agentic force without narrative embedding' (Coole 2013;456). Embodying both the sense of place in the act of standing and the apostasy contained in the verb to defy, a defiant protestor exposes their body to become a catalyst for spatial transformation, a means to open the possibility for experiencing a place anew. Vulnerable semantically to ambivalent interpretation, and physically to police violence, as a de-individuated human, the defiant repudiates biopolitical power by amplifying a radically open, radically relational manifestation of *stasis*. It is this openness, this vulnerability, which constitutes the ontology of being defiant.

The purpose of the study is to challenge the uncritical use of the word defiant as an adverb to denote an act of resistance perceived to be courageous or risky. It finds that defiance is a secular phenomenon that occurs relatively unnoticed in the field of international political sociology. By identifying it as a particular mode of resistance, insight is provided to the relationship between politics and art. Moreover it raises important questions. Cognisant that the examples chosen in this study are male, we need to ask if defiance is a gendered practice. In addition, we need to ask how it presents in different cultures. How, for instance, does a wheelchair-bound disability rights activist perform defiance? Taking the ontology of bodily vulnerability as a base point, defiance surely manifests in a variety of forms. One only has to regard the protest by Rosa Parks in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, in terms of performative defiance. Also silent and bodily, also contesting police power over public space, instead of standing, Rosa Parks' defiance was marked by a *refusal* to stand. By unearthing defiance as a distinctive mode of resistance, the article ultimately finds that throughout history we will begin to find incalculable instances of materialist defiance performed by women and men whose actions will be revelatory to our understanding of political resistance.

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