

Forms of Belonging and the Ethics of Betrayal in Etel Adnan's *Sitt Marie Rose*

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This paper examines how Etel Adnan's novel *Sitt Marie Rose* challenges the biopolitical implications of belonging to the nation via the circumstances of natality. Giorgio Agamben argues that the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen (1789) was a key moment at which "natality" itself became a principle of belonging, which, through the fact of birth, defined the "inalienable" right of man (Agamben 1995). The fact that it is through birth (through territorial belonging and/or sanguinity) that one belongs to the nation, for Agamben, turns the very notion of belonging itself into a biopolitical issue. In this paper, I explore how the deliberate choice to renounce such biopolitical definitions of belonging, and the conscious decision to seek other forms of political affiliations, play out within extremely violent situations. In *Sitt Marie Rose*, the eponymous character undermines this claim to belonging by virtue of natality through her ethical act of betrayal. By deliberately crossing the green line that separates the Christians and the Arabs in Beirut, she transgresses the rule of what the Nazis once called, as Agamben shows, "*blut und bloten*" (blood and soil) that is at the heart of the fascist thought. In doing so, she forges a new ethic of betrayal by staking her intellectual allegiances within the Palestinian cause, and by declaring her sexual independence through her romantic involvement with her Palestinian lover. The novel dramatizes the profundity of this betrayal in a medieval inquisition-style interrogation that determines the multi-narrator fictional form of the novel. In my paper, I argue that the novel points to the complexities involved in choosing political forms of belonging that are not determined by the pure fact of bare-life, and that such natality-driven forms of political belonging can be challenged through other models of political solidarity, offering a counterpoint to the hegemonic manifestations of biopower.

Keywords: biopower, betrayal, natality, violence, fascism