

Resistances of Literature: Strategies of Narrative Affiliation in Etel Adnan's *Sitt Marie Rose*

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In an interview conducted in 1983, shortly after the publication in English of her novel *Sitt Marie Rose*, the Lebanese American artist and writer Etel Adnan addressed the role of women in war: "I would like women not to stay out of wars, but to be anti-war. . . . I as a woman choose not to participate in war, but I am also not a person who will surrender" ("Tribal Mentality"). Published in Paris in 1977, two years after the onset of the Lebanese civil war, *Sitt Marie Rose* is based on a real event: the capture, torture, and death by dismemberment of a Christian Syrian-Lebanese woman who left her native community to work for Palestinian refugees. Written as a series of first person accounts of her trial and death, the novel constitutes an act of literary resistance to what Adnan identifies as the "tribal mentality" at the heart of the Lebanese civil war: "[t]he allegiance of an individual to his or her family, village, tribe or clan" ("Tribal Mentality"). In a different context, Edward Said names such exclusionary bonds of kinship ties of filiation, describing them as "the closed and tightly knit family structure that secures generational hierarchical relationships to one another" ("Secular Criticism" 21)—ties that, in Said's analysis, are mapped out onto the "embattled identities" of postcolonial nationalism (Interview 232). Distinct from these are what he names ties of affiliation, "by which men and women can create social bonds between each other that would substitute for those ties that connect members of the same family across generations" ("Secular Criticism" 17). This article will explore the ways in which Adnan's novel articulates a specifically gendered critique of filiation through its affiliation with a figure of otherness: the Palestinian refugee.

One of the first writers to represent the Lebanese civil war in her work, Adnan is best known for her only novel, *Sitt Marie Rose*.¹ A prolific writer, she also authored several book-length poems on the war and created artworks that capture the ineffable nature of this traumatic event.²

¹ According to Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Sitt Marie Rose* was the first novel to be published about the Lebanese civil war (201). Miriam Cooke has written extensively about Adnan in her work on the "Beirut Decentrists," an expression she coined to speak of women who wrote about the war. Other authors included in her study are Hanan al-Shaykh, Emily Nasrallah, Claire Gebeyli, Ghadda al-Samman, and Daisy al-Amir.

² Originally published in French, *Jebu* and *The Beirut-Hell Express* presciently anticipated the violence that erupted in 1975. *The Arab Apocalypse*, published in French

If her novel has received more critical attention than her other works, it is perhaps because of the importance accorded to the testimonial form in the aftermath of the civil war. Indeed, most critics have read this novel as both a memoir and a personal indictment of the war.³ Adnan's own statements seem to concur with this assessment. Shocked by the event of Marie-Rose Boulos' death, she explicitly wrote *Sitt Marie Rose* as an act of resistance. Yet she also insisted that her book was "a fiction based on reality" ("To Write"). What are the specifically literary aspects of this form of resistance?

Barbara Harlow begins to attend to the question of literary resistance in her seminal study of "resistance literature," a term she borrows from the Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani to analyze the literature of Third World liberation movements. Borrowing Said's terms, Harlow argues that *Sitt Marie Rose* contributes to "the passage from genealogical or hereditary ties of filiation to bonds of affiliation" (116), citing Marie-Rose's transgressions of race, class, and gender codes and her affiliation with the enemy other. While this is a compelling reading, it fails to heed Said's main point, which is that affiliation risks reproducing filiative ties. For him, the task of the critic is "to show how affiliation sometimes reproduces filiation, sometimes makes its own forms" ("Secular Criticism" 24). Reinvestigating Said's concepts of filiation and affiliation, I would like to explore the specifically literary unworking of filiation in the novel, linking it to the project of resistance articulated by Adnan. Through a close reading of *Sitt Marie Rose*, I propose to show how the novel problematizes the very notion of resistance, and with it, the risk of creating filiative ties through acts of affiliation. How can one resist without deploying the language of opposition, struggle, and enmity that forms the conceptual arsenal of war? How can one form a collective "we" of resistance without creating an opposite "them"? To what extent does literature resist the very discourse of war that distinguishes between friend and enemy camps? Beyond the mere refusal of war, *Sitt Marie Rose* points to ways of conceiving conflict otherwise, not as a struggle of arms but as a contest for speech. The novel gestures toward a forum where the political

after the onset of the war, addresses the problematic nature of representing a traumatic event through the use of signs and drawings. Recently Adnan has also published a collection of essays on war, *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country*. Interestingly, her war-related artworks often combine word and image. Thus, a work entitled *Zikr*, created after the 1976 massacre in the Palestinian camp of Tell al-Zaater, takes the form of a folding book in which the name of God is repeated in the manner of the eponymous Sufi ritual. There are very few analyses of Adnan's artwork. A rare exception is Simone Fattal's contribution to *Etel Adnan*, an excellent collection of essays on Adnan's lesser-known works.

³ Barbara Harlow, one of the first critics to analyze *Sitt Marie Rose*, calls it a memoir, even as she acknowledges Adnan's decision to call it a novel (111). The tendency to lend this text the status of testimony is best exemplified in the reading of writer and critic Evelyne Accad, which is based on the premise that the author, narrator, and protagonist constitute one and the same voice.

can emerge other than in the warring binaries of friendship and enmity—a trap it eludes, I will argue, via narrative representation.

Sitt Marie Rose reenacts the trial and execution of a woman who defies the laws of war to cross the Green Line dividing Beirut into Christian East and Muslim West. The eponymous protagonist is symbolically and literally caught in the in-between borderland of the city. She lives in a Palestinian refugee camp in the West with her three children and her Palestinian lover. An activist for Palestinian refugees, she directs a school for the deaf-mute in her former Christian quarter in the East. In spite of the war that breaks out on April 13, 1975, she continues to go back and forth between the two halves of the divided city, in accordance with the multiple ties that bind her to different communities. This shuttling between friend and enemy camps, however, does not conform to the imperatives of war. Ironically, Marie-Rose is kidnapped in her former neighborhood during a cease-fire, and is killed in haste immediately after the end of the truce. Her body remains suspended in an interim space even in captivity—a captivity she prolongs by resisting the demands of the militiamen, who want her to repent and come back into the fold. Marie-Rose refuses to choose between the two camps, remaining in the liminal space between friends and enemies, self and other, *oikos* and *xenos*.

The novel is divided into two unequal parts. The first, Time I, sets the stage for Marie-Rose's trial and execution. The opening pages depict an allegorical city internally divided along religious, national, ethnic, and economic lines. Christians and Muslims, rich and poor, Palestinians and Lebanese live in precarious balance in a city that stands on the brink of destruction. The war accentuates these divisions, reducing the myriad complexities of life into binary fractures schematically articulated around the Green Line. The narrator, an unnamed Christian woman who both participates in and refuses these divisions, progressively disaffiliates herself from her Christian milieu: her friend Mounir, who wants her to write the script for an orientalist film on the Syrian desert, and his acolytes, Tony and Fouad, who, along with the priest Bouna Lias, their moral guarantor, play the role of Marie-Rose's executioners in the second part of the novel. Time I ends with the narrator's abrupt rejection of the senseless count of the dead in the papers. Disgusted with this anonymous tally, she calls Mounir to tell him she no longer wants to participate in his film. The violent transition between the tableau of a divided city and the trial and execution of Marie-Rose signals a breaking point in the narrative. Rejecting the orientalist narratives of the postcolonial elite and the anonymous count of the dead, the narrator turns to the voice of the uncounted, and to the story of a single victim of the war. The second part of the novel—Time II—can be seen as a narrative act of affiliation with a woman who has radically broken with her camp, and an attempt to resist the war through literary representation.

Time II is divided into three acts, each subdivided into seven narratives: that of Marie-Rose's deaf-mute pupils, followed by those of Marie-Rose, Mounir, Tony, Fouad, Bouna Lias, and the narrator. The only

link between the two parts consists in the continued presence of the militiamen and of the female narrator, who is not physically present but surveys the scene and comments on the characters' actions. If Beirut was the stage for the first part, the second takes place entirely in the classroom where Marie-Rose normally teaches, which becomes the courtroom for her trial and the site of her execution. A microcosm of the warring city, itself a metonym for the divided nation, the classroom is depicted as a battleground, "a terrain closed in on all sides where it is absolutely essential that someone dies" (Adnan, *SMR* 84). The novel thus frames the Lebanese civil war within a doubly domestic setting: it begins in the luxurious home of Mounir, where he is entertaining a circle of women, and ends in the *huis clos* of an execution chamber, with the trial of a national traitor. The fragmented account of this event becomes a narrative trial of the civil war itself, undertaken through the plurivocal portrait of Marie-Rose.

The narrative circles around the titular character, formally mimicking the multiple affiliations that lead her to contravene the unwritten rules of war. In traversing a divided Beirut from Christian East to Muslim West and back again, Marie-Rose marks a tear in the fabric of the community, one that threatens the precarious hierarchies governing the nation. Her transgression of religious, gender and ethnic lines—as a Christian, a woman, and a Lebanese who is sexually and politically involved with the Palestinians—subverts the dichotomy of self and other. Her act is a betrayal not only of the group she belongs to by birth, but also of the sacrosanct demarcation between friend and enemy, and of the division of the city according to ethnic, religious, and national lines. Marie-Rose does not hold her place, be it religious, national, ethnic, or sexual. Nor does she simply stay out of war: she leaves the home of her Christian neighborhood, but also the hearth of the domestic *oikos*. Married at twenty to a man who would rather she remain in the household, she attends university, devotes herself to social activism, and founds an association for Palestinian refugees, rejecting the filiative ties of community and kinship to embrace the cause of social justice on both sides of the line dividing Beirut. This political border-crossing occurs through a transgression of domestic, i.e. gendered, borders, those defining the private sphere of the home as feminine, and the public sphere of the political as masculine. Marie-Rose will not surrender to the domestic laws that would confine her to the role of a Christian mother and wife, but actively resists them in her multiple transgressions of the domestic and political space of the nation.

Paradoxically, the civil war itself shores up the limits of the distinction between the masculine world of combat and the feminine domain of home. Many critics have noted the unexpected effects of the Lebanese civil war on the lives of women. Forced to take sides in a war that did not recognize neutrality—you are either with us or against us—and made no distinction between home and battlefield, women became partisans, providing soldiers with food, shelter, and services, but also

taking arms alongside them (Shehadeh 66). The gendered distinction between the public domain of men and the private sphere of women collapsed under the pressures of generalized civil war, paradoxically affording women the chance to break out of the bonds of domesticity. Marie-Rose plays on this undoing of gendered binaries while taking up a different site of resistance: the transgression of the borders set up by war—those separating “us” from “them,” kinfolk from strangers, self from other, *oikos* from *xenos*. For her executioners, though, who are the guardians of the home of the nation, she is a woman who has gotten “mixed up in war,” and what is more, she is on the wrong side.

Marie-Rose’s inappropriate involvement in the war is cast in the language of sexual promiscuity, underscoring the tie between domestic—that is, national—affairs and biopolitics: “When whores like this get mixed up in war, now that’s something to get disgusted about,” says Tony, who explains that he would have killed his sister if she had dared to have a Palestinian for a “friend” (Adnan, *SMR* 60), in both political and sexual senses of the term: as an ally and as a lover. Marie-Rose’s transgression of domestic borders is also sexual: by sleeping with the so-called enemy, she subverts the laws of endogamy that make the regulated exchange of female bodies a condition for the integrity of home and for the foreignness of the other. In this view, Marie-Rose must keep to her role as genitor of the Christian clan and provide nourishment and care for her own. Her choice of a partner, however, breaks out of the endogamous sexual order that protects and perpetuates the tribe. During the first night she spent with her Palestinian lover, “he never once said ‘You are my wife,’ or ‘You are the mother of my children’ . . . [but] ‘I think I love you’” (72). Love is not the bind that legitimates the reproduction of the clan, but a non-coercive tie of affiliation, one that makes possible a collective resistance to filiative ties: “when a man and a woman find each other in the silence of the night,” says Marie-Rose, “it’s the beginning of the end of the tribe’s power, and death itself becomes a challenge to the ascendancy of the group” (55). As we will see, Marie-Rose will articulate this conception of affiliative love through the Christian figure of the stranger, undercutting the militiamen’s claims to speak in the name of the Christian faith from within the same set of references.

Tied to Marie-Rose by the memory of his adolescent love for her, Mounir attempts to win her back into the camp of the Christians. His desire for her is rooted in a racially constructed ego-image, one that looks to Europe rather than to the so-called Arab world: “I believed she was worthy of me because she had blue eyes” (Adnan, *SMR* 34), he explains, recalling that his first compliment to her was that she didn’t look like an Arab. During the two days of her captivity, he tries to convince Marie-Rose that she was wrong to “[go] over to the enemy” (54)—that is, to the Palestinians, construed as Arabs and Muslims—delaying the moment of her death because, he says, “we’re all Christians here” (56). Faced with her intransigent refusal to repent, his last remark to her is “[y]ou have your children. At least you could think of them” (88). To shed Christian

Lebanese blood, and by implication to lose actual and potential Christian Lebanese children, is a frightening prospect for the childless Mounir. The priest Bouna Lias, too, wants to recover Marie-Rose's allegiance. His attempts to reconvert her to "the aromas of baking bread and of the mountains" constitute an effort to strengthen the life force of the Christian party (64). "If you were a Moslem," he tells her, "they would have shot you at the first roadblock. But you're Christian, and I would like it if we could still save your life" (63). Her trial is prolonged in an attempt to recuperate a life that bears the possibility of multiplying the Christian race.

In crossing the lines, real and imagined, that divide the national community, and in stepping out of the sphere reserved to women, Marie-Rose's subversion of domesticity (of gender and ethnic-religious identity) points to the intrinsically domestic, i.e. internal nature of the Lebanese conflict. The warring parties rely on a naturalized conception of family to justify and consolidate their war, which is paradoxically waged against members of a larger community also modeled on a familial analogy: the nation. The Arabic expression for civil war in its current usage retains both these meanings: *harb ahaliyya*, etymologically a war (*harb*) between kinsmen (*ahal*), writ large to refer to the social body of the nation as a whole. But civil war is also filiative in another sense: it constitutes the claim of one sovereign group to rule and represent the nation. This nation, in turn, becomes the object of a family feud, each clan claiming it as its proper home. Adnan's novel emphasizes the correlation between national and kinship modes of belonging, gesturing toward a critique of what Said calls "embattled identities" (Interview 232). It is to the relationship between the domestic (construed along religious-ethnic lines) and the national that I now turn.

In his seminal essay "Secular Criticism," Said warns against the dangers of reproducing filiative ties in the affiliative domain of culture: of creating "a kind of compensatory order that . . . is also a new system" (19), one that takes on the naturalized guise of a biological order. Said later returns to the question of filiation in relation to Third World nationalism, and in particular, to the cooptation of colonial identities in anti- and postcolonial contexts. The Lebanese civil war can be seen as an extreme example of what Said calls "[the] fight around the slogans provided by nationalist, religious or cultural identity" through the invention of a shared mythological past "going back to the crusades . . . the Phoenician period or . . . the Hellenistic period" (Interview 232)—examples Marie-Rose and the narrator deconstruct in their critique of the Christian militias' self-legitimizing discourse.

The filiative logic that lies at the heart of the enterprise of war, a logic already present in softer forms of nationalism, corresponds, in Said's reading, to the "submerged feelings of identity, of tribal solidarity" (232) that he associates with religious sentiment, in the doctrinaire, exclusionary, and ideological senses of the term. Bruce Robbins first comments upon this connection between religion and nationalism, noting

that “the most crucial meaning of *secular*, in [Said’s] usage, is as an opposing term not to *religion* but to *nationalism*” (117, original emphasis). Though I agree with Gil Anidjar that Said’s use of the term *secular* remains problematic despite this nuance, the imbrication of religious and national ties in the context of the Lebanese civil war clarifies, and I will argue, historicizes, Said’s attachment to the term.⁴ In light of his critique of “embattled identities,” secular criticism can be interpreted as a form of resistance to the filiative logic of nationalism, brought to its extreme conclusion in the case of postcolonial civil conflicts. Taking his cue from Robbins, Aamir Mufti expands on this idea, envisioning secular criticism within the broader perspective of minority thought. According to Mufti, “*secular* implies for Said a critique of nationalism as an ideology of hearth and home. . . . [It] seeks continually to make it perceptible that the experience of being at home can only be produced by rendering some other homeless” (107, original emphasis).

Notwithstanding Said’s problematic use of the terms *secular* and *religious*, it is useful to think through the imbrication of religion (or what is defined as such) and nationalism in the context of the Lebanese civil war, especially because the filiative communities that claimed a part in the nation were defined along religious lines partly derived from colonial classifications: the Christian, Shia, Sunni, and Druze Lebanese, as well as Syrian immigrants and Palestinian refugees, who were labeled as Muslims whatever their religion may have been. In the divided city of Beirut, religion was conflated with nationality, ethnicity, and political affiliation. In Tony’s Manichean language, “[Marie-Rose is] a Christian and she went over to the Moslem camp. She’s Lebanese and she went over to the Palestinian camp” (Adnan, *SMR* 36), while Fouad hurls accusations at those who “want to be Palestinians, leftists, Moslems” (61). The very presence of a priest at Marie-Rose’s trial and the militiamen’s constant reference to their Crusade against Islam—a trope largely inherited from colonial discourse—underscores the role religion plays in their struggle for the nation. The novel explicitly links this combative use of religion to the history of French colonialism in Lebanon, recalling the religious indoctrination of the militiamen in Catholic schools, where they reenacted the Crusades under the supervision of French priests. It is no accident that the same Mounir who fell in love with Marie-Rose for her blue eyes and Western ways feels compelled to eliminate her as soon as she compromises his self-orientalizing identity: he has internalized the spirit of the Crusades instilled in the “protected” Christian minorities of the Levant through colonial hegemony. In this he reproduces colonial structures of filiation, whereby the Muslim, recast as Palestinian, figures

⁴ In his provocative essay “Secularism,” Anidjar argues that Said’s use of the epithet *secular*, like that current in contemporary Western discourse, serves to recast Christian theologico-political concepts in supposedly non-religious terms. As Anidjar and others have shown, the binary opposition religion/secularism itself is the product of Christian European political philosophy.

as the enemy outsider. In Adnan's account, the embattled and authenticating religious discourse that subtends the Christian militias' postcolonial nationalism is a direct byproduct of colonialism.⁵

Religion, construed as a naturalized filiative tie, becomes the legitimating factor in claiming the nation as the exclusive home of one group: an "embattled identity" whose sole ambition is to submerge and drive out all others. The allegorical city of Beirut, the city-state and polis that stands in for the nation, becomes the object of this contest for domination. In Mounir's imperial vision, the civil war is a war of conquest, based on the unshakeable opposition between two camps defined according to religious belonging. Any individual who resists such a definition becomes an enemy and must be eliminated:

We will get our enemies. This town has no escape route. On one side there's the sea, and we control the east. We will advance westward with a vast circular movement. We'll empty the pockets of resistance, one after the other. Then we'll bomb the airport south of the city, and the circle will be closed. After three days of intensive bombardment, they'll all be taken: imprudent friends living on the other side, enemies, self-proclaimed neutrals, all of them. It will be clean and definitive. There will be a victor and a vanquished, and we'll be able to talk, to reconstruct the country from a new base. (Adnan, *SMR* 33, translation modified)

Ultimately, however, it is not Marie-Rose's departure from the Christian quarter, but her presence in her former neighborhood that provokes her capture and death. By claiming the right to exist in both camps and to have ties to both communities, Marie-Rose disrupts the illusion of propriety that guards the border between self and other. Her death is the propitiatory act by which the group must be cleansed of heterogeneity. The militiamen kill Marie-Rose before her pupils as a warning against disobedience. Yet the act that annihilates her simultaneously reveals the precariousness of such a sacrifice. A punishment meted out for high treason at the time of the Crusades, which her captors are so fond of invoking, the ordeal of her death is also an allegory for the dismemberment of the nation, and for the internal divisions that her transgression reveals as simultaneously fatal and fantasmagorical.⁶

⁵ Adnan has discussed the role of French religious schooling in forming ethno-religious identities in Lebanon in several texts and interviews in which she describes her own eccentric position vis-à-vis Lebanese national identity (for example, "Tribal Mentality," "Conversation," "To Write"). Having grown up in Beirut hearing her Syrian Muslim father and Greek Christian mother speaking Turkish, Adnan learned French in school and began writing in French in Beirut and then in Paris. After moving to the United States, she turned to "painting in Arabic" and writing in English ("To Write"). Adnan can thus be seen as embodying the critical distance necessary to achieve non-filiative affiliation, comparable in this sense to the exilic figure of Erich Auerbach in Said's work (Mufti 97).

⁶ Thomas Foster makes a similar point specifically in relation to gender: "Sitt Marie-Rose's dismemberment reveals what can happen when that ideological framework [of the nation-state as a feminine, interior space] breaks down and the internal contradictions fissuring home and land . . . emerge" (67).

Marie-Rose's death paradoxically foils Mounir's ambitions, revealing that things are not as simple as he imagines them to be. Her transgression of domestic lines—those that distinguish between friend and enemy camps, and between private and public spheres—exposes the fallacy in his conflation between “country” and “clan.” The narrator reports this telling lexical slippage in free indirect discourse, as if to further blur the lines between self and other:

In this country there were too many factions, too many currents of ideas, too many individual cases for one theory to contain. Like the presence of this woman, taken at random at a roadblock, who should, according to the norms, be a part of his clan, his flesh and blood. He wanted to construct a country where this sort of problem could not exist. But the problem came before the ideal country Mounir wanted to build. He would have to fight the dissident Christians to save the real Christians. His head spun.
(75)

The sweeping motion of conquest that characterizes the previous passage finds its rhetorical equivalent in this excerpt. But here the clear-cut victory imagined by Mounir stumbles upon the aberrance of Marie-Rose. She is one of the “imprudent friends living on the other side,” a case that does not fit the theory, an exception to the rule. Marie-Rose's persistent refusal to conform to the norms of the clan drives Mounir to the conclusion drawn by Tony and Fouad from the very beginning. In their eyes, a friend living on the other side is a traitor, and deserves to be killed as such. The only rules of the game consist in an economy of inclusion and exclusion that defines what is proper to home and what falls outside of its domain. Marie-Rose's transgression of these rules, however, unsettles the very notion of home, revealing the oppressive structures of filiative politics and forcing the militiamen to acknowledge that their war is not a war of conquest, but a civil war: they have to kill some of their own flesh and blood in order to create a nation of obedient kinsmen.

The tautological structure of filiative violence is echoed in the formal features of the text, which abounds in images of circularity and enclosure. When the war breaks out in Time I, the narrator describes the city in a series of stifling images: “[s]pace shrinks,” “[t]he mechanism of time is out of order,” and “it seems like the infernal circle will never cease turning” but rather leads to a rapid succession of “cycles of terror” (14-18). The very structure of the novel reinforces this impression of entrapment and repetition. Time I is truncated by the eruption of the war, which ultimately suspends the narrative altogether. The “reports of sadism” in the papers (15)—the anonymous tallying up of the dead—bring the novel to a crisis-point, leading without transition to Time II and to the trial and execution of Marie-Rose. The syncopated rhythm of the first part takes narrative form in the second, which pieces together fragments of Marie-Rose's story through seven competing voices. Yet even the militiamen fail to assert a monolithic identity. Marie-Rose's voice interrupts their thoughts and words to claim not only her own voice, but also that of their purported enemy. Infiltrating her captors' discourse

through dialogue and free indirect discourse, Marie-Rose becomes an advocate for the guest, the stranger, and the enemy, emblemized in the figure of the Palestinian refugee.

Mufti has compared two related figures of exile in Said's thought: the Palestinian and the Jew. Taking his cue from Said's citation of Hannah Arendt in *The Question of Palestine*, Mufti elaborates on the conclusion of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which suggests that the Palestinians relay the Jews as the stateless par excellence, and as the constitutive other necessary to define the home of the nation (Mufti 122). In the words of Mounir, "[the Palestinians] are, and always will be, foreigners [étrangers]" (Adnan, *SMR* 88, translation modified). For Mufti, "the figure of the disenfranchised Palestinian, repeatedly brutalized with international impunity, holds up a mirror to sovereignty itself, revealing to us its limited, formal, and ultimately farcical nature" (123). In the context of the Lebanese civil war, this figure of enmity also marks the coincidence of religious, national, and ethnic lines: the Palestinian is the other against which the Christian Lebanese define the sphere of home and self.

In the economy of Adnan's text, the figure of the Palestinian represents a way out of filiation. In Marie-Rose's view, "the wandering of the Palestinian is no longer that of a nomad carrying his tribe in himself, but that of a man, alone, uprooted, pursued" (Adnan, *SMR* 57). Marie-Rose's resistance to the tautological arguments of her captors marks her total disidentification with the party that claims to represent her, and her affiliation with those for whom she will claim a part in the nation. Mounir's contention that the militiamen represent "the will of the people" falls apart before Marie-Rose's defiance (59): they do not represent her or those Christians who, like her, have joined the Palestinian cause.⁷

Marie-Rose's transgressive act of affiliation reveals the militiamen's purported public enemy—the Palestinian, and, metonymically, Islam—to be a private, that is, a domestic one.⁸ Labeled perpetual guests, the Palestinians are kept on the margins of the *polis*, while the Lebanese reaffirm their right to full citizenship. By embracing what Jacques Rancière calls "the cause of the other," Marie-Rose exposes the gap between their political status and that of her own clan, giving up her privileged position to adopt the second-class status of the Palestinians. By relinquishing the warmth of her community—"It's cold in the camps," Marie-Rose tells Bouna Lias, "and I prefer it" (64)—she exposes herself to the risk of becoming a hostage of the exclusionary nation. Like the *hostis*, etymologically a guest and a stranger, but also, like the Palestinian, a public enemy, Marie-Rose becomes an enemy of the nation. Her capture,

⁷ I borrow the term *disidentification* from the philosopher Jacques Rancière, and in particular from his discussion of French opposition to the Algerian war in the final pages of *La mésentente* and in "The Cause of the Other." For Rancière, French citizens' disidentification with a state that claimed to act in their name revealed French nationality to be non-self-identical.

⁸ On the figuration of Islam as political (that is, public) enemy in modern European thought, see Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab*.

detention, and execution are the logical conclusion of her affiliation with the cause of the enemy other.

This narrative of resistance is supplemented, and to an extent complicated, by the formal aspects of the novel. Here I would like to return to the question of literary resistance raised at the outset of this paper. If Harlow is right to focus on the importance of Marie-Rose's act of affiliation, she fails to see that the novel also stages a productive tension between filiation and affiliation. Indeed, as Said has shown, ties of affiliation are not free from the risk of contamination by filiative structures. Said initially opposed these terms in order to warn against the "transfer of legitimacy from filiation to affiliation" in the context of cultural authority ("Secular Criticism" 24). "Affiliation then becomes in effect a literal form of *re-presentation*, by which what is ours is good . . . and what is not ours in this ultimately provincial sense is simply left out" (21-22, original emphasis). In the larger scope of his arguments against nationalism, secular criticism is aimed at the reproduction of filiative ties in affiliative formations, where a given affiliative group, naturalized along filiative lines, patrols the borders of a self-defined nation to keep out those who do not conform to the rules of membership. What is to prevent a new affiliative formation, then, from constituting itself as yet another exclusionary group, where "what is ours is good and what is not ours is simply left out"—or worse, destroyed? The all-or-nothing, binary logic of war can be seen as the perverse end-point of community—of any group that claims to share a common good at the expense of its non-members.

The question of resistance, and the combative discourse it mobilizes, becomes a pressing issue in the context of the Lebanese civil war, which is cast in the militiamen's discourse as a contest to define the nation through the exclusion of groups perceived as foreign. The taking of sides in the war through an act of affiliation risks perpetuating the sedimentation of camps. How can Marie-Rose combat the filiative ties of war without creating an enemy? In staging the tension between the possibility of resistance and an antagonistic discourse of war, Adnan points to the dangers of forming a new compensatory order that would reproduce nationalist economies of inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, she does so through narrative strategies that supplement, and to a certain extent problematize, the narrative of resistance embodied by Marie-Rose. In this sense, she allows us to see how affiliation might eschew reproducing filiation and instead "[make] its own forms" (Said, "Secular Criticism" 24).

The tension between filiation and affiliation is crystallized in the collective voice of the deaf-mute children. Unwilling witnesses to Marie-Rose's execution, they are in solidarity with her against the militiamen, yet yearn to participate in a war in which they have no place. Figures of subalternity, they have a collective voice but are not heard; they dream of being "a part of things like clouds are a part of the sky" (Adnan, *SMR* 45), but they do not count in the exclusive logic of the group. Marie-Rose's children, too, take sides in a war of reprisals and vengeance: they want to

grow up so that they can fight their enemies. The tragic nature of the predicament of these children—who are victims of war, yet represent the future of the nation—lies in the double bind of community. How can they formulate a collective “we” without identifying an opposite “them”? How can they be represented—or represent themselves—without legitimating an economy of inclusion and exclusion?⁹

Though Marie-Rose refuses the filiative structures of civil war, this question applies to her act of resistance also. How can she affiliate herself with the cause of the Palestinians without engendering new filiative ties, an exclusive brotherhood that would entail an alternative system of friendship and enmity? Advocating a love of the stranger over the love of self that characterizes a nation modeled on sectarian clans, Marie-Rose fashions a new collectivity of resistance for those that fall outside of the familial paradigm, paradoxically describing the Palestinians as “[her] own” (31): “[The Palestinians] belong to the same ancestral heritage the Christian party does,” she explains to Mounir. “They’re really our brothers” (54). Her militancy for the Palestinians can thus be seen as partaking in a new filiative system. Marie-Rose herself claims to “*belong to the Palestinian Resistance*” (38, my emphasis), adopting the language of kinship that she denounced amongst the Christian militiamen. To what extent, then, do her transgressive actions constitute a new binary opposition between one clan and the other, where friends and enemies simply trade places?

If on one level the rhetoric employed by Marie-Rose does not break with the logic of filiation, her act of resistance ruptures the economy of war that determines her status as hostage. Marie-Rose refuses to consider the Palestinian as an enemy, but she also refuses to be considered one herself, undermining her captor’s efforts to relegate her to the other side of the equation. When Mounir accuses her of having betrayed her clan for the enemy, she responds with an ambiguous question—“What enemy?” (54)—that underscores the irony of her situation. A hostage of the Christian militiamen, she is most likely to consider that they, not the Palestinians, are her opponents. At the same time, however, she refuses to play her assigned role. Her rhetorical question echoes another: to her children, who justify their bellicose ambitions by saying that “God hates the enemy,” she asks, “where [is] God . . . and who is the enemy” (50)? Marie-Rose refuses to be a friend, a traitor, or, indeed, a hostage—etymologically, a guest, a stranger, and an enemy.

The novel ends with Marie-Rose’s final transgression of the domestic economy of war, one that will provoke the clansmen’s rage and ultimately lead to her death. Pressed to explain her muteness when Mounir informs her that the Palestinian camp is willing to give up eleven Christian

⁹ Majaj makes the compelling argument that *Sitt Marie Rose* is structured around the question of representation, both aesthetic and political. For Majaj, the form of the novel stages the problematic nature of speaking for the subaltern other, even as it seeks to resolve this dilemma through a proliferation of narrative voices.

prisoners in exchange for her life, she replies that she does not want to “serve as small change in one of [their] transactions” (87), before being informed that the only “deal” the Christian party will accept is that proposed by her Palestinian lover, who has offered to take her place as hostage. As he is a greater catch for the militiamen, the party has accepted. Her outraged refusal meets the wrath of her captors. With Bouna Lias’ blessing, they tear her to pieces.

Captured because she has subverted the endogamous laws of the clan by sleeping with the enemy, it is when Marie-Rose refuses to accept a substitute paradigm of filiation, on the other side of the friend-enemy divide and in the domain of war, not sex, that the rage of the clansmen explodes. Marie-Rose is killed for her sexual subversion of domesticity, and for her transgressions of the filiative economy of war. Her act of affiliation shows that, by waging war against the Palestinians, the Christian militiamen are committing fratricide. Yet if the Palestinian is a brother for Marie-Rose, it is in the non-filiative, non-coercive sense of what Derrida called “aneconomic friendship” (*Politiques de l’amitié* 178): an affiliative collectivity that escapes the exclusive logic of the count governing the domestic politics of clan and community.

The story of Marie-Rose gestures toward a non-filiative politics of affiliation, one that momentarily dies with Marie-Rose but continues to threaten the logic of war in the economy of the text. Her transgression of domestic, that is, national, gender, and sexual borders, is paralleled in the form of the novel, which foils the attempt to put it into a given camp, friend or enemy. In a sense, the question of how anti-war resistance can elude the binary logic of war, or of how affiliative ties can escape filiation, is resolved, if not politically, at least poetically, in the text itself. For the narrator, the “political adventure” does not reside in war, but in what she calls poetry: the imagination of new, unprecedented forms, the advent of an “impossible mutation,” an open and indeterminate break in the circles of oppression and repression that engender war (Adnan, *SMR* 76, translation modified). Accordingly, the generic indeterminacy of the text makes it impossible to lend it a definitive status. Alternatively lyrical, descriptive, narrative, didactic, and poetic, the text oscillates between different genres of speech and representation, frustrating any reader who might be looking for a final message. Furthermore, the plurality of voices, multiple focalizations, and narrative interruptions through dialogue and free indirect discourse foil the very possibility of identifying clearly defined sides. In *Sitt Marie Rose*, the victim and her executioners speak in the same space; even those who cannot speak have a voice.

In his remarks on the filiative nature of nationalism, Said defended what he called “the rather dense fabric of secular life, which can’t be herded under the rubric of national identity or can’t be made entirely to respond to this phony idea of a paranoid frontier separating ‘us’ from ‘them’” (Interview 233). *Sitt Marie Rose* can be read as an attempt to represent the “fabric” of life through narrative textuality. The novel does not finish with the triumph of one camp over the other, or with a new

compensatory order, but rather with the chaos of literature—an apocalyptic vision of the deaf-mute children dancing to the sounds of falling bombs around the dismembered body of Marie-Rose—leaving a remainder that cannot be counted, subsumed, or excised to fit the frame of a domesticated narrative. Adnan’s text gestures toward what, following the title of Derrida’s *Résistances de la psychanalyse*, we might call the resistances of literature, in the double genitive use of this phrase: literature resists, that is struggles against, war; but literature also resists, period—intransitively.

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