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Rethinking Community in Dionne Brand's What We All Long For, Ahdaf Soueif's The Map of Love, Michael Ondaatje's Anil's Ghost and Joseph Boyden's Three Day Road and Through Black Spruce

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Cette thèse intitulée:

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Résumé de synthèse

Dans cette thèse, j'ai étudié les alternatives aux communautés normatives proposées dans les romans suivants: *What We All Long For* de Dionne Brand, *The Map of Love* d'Ahdaf Soueif, *Anil's Gho*st de Michael Ondaatje aini que *Three Day Road* et *Through Black Spruce* de Joseph Boyden. En utilisant un nombre de termes clés (les aspirations, la traduction (culturelle) subversive, la guérison, l'autodétermination), j'ai examiné la critiques des communautés normatives aussi bien que la configuration des communautés alternatives développées dans les œuvres cités ci-haut.

L'étude de trois romans diasporiques et deux romans amérindiens m'a permis d'établir un «dialogue» entre deux visions du monde ainsi qu'entre deux approches aux crises des communautés normatives. En effet, la conception d'une communauté alternative présentée dans le roman de Boyden souligne le rôle important que joue la famille dans la conception d'une société postcolonial alternative. Les communautés alternatives dans les romans diasporiques, en revanche, sont basées sur des alliances au-delà des différences nationales, culturelles, religieuses et ethniques.

Le premier chapitre a traité la communauté affective proposée comme alternative à la communauté multiculturelle canadienne. Le deuxième chapitre a traité la communauté alternative et la mezzaterra, l'espace du quel cette communauté ressort, dans *The Map of Love* de Soueif. Dans le troisième chapitre, j'ai exploré la relation entre la guérison, le toucher et l'émergence d'une communauté alternative dans *Anil's Ghost* d'Ondaatje. Dans le dernier chapitre, j'ai analysé la façon dont l'affirmation de l'autonomie juridique et la narration porrait contribuer à la découverte de la vision qui guide la communauté Cri dépeint, dans les romans de Boyden, dans sa tentative de construire une communauté alternative postcoloniale.

Mots clés: Communautés alternatives, traduction (culturelle) subversive, affect, communautés normatives en crise, multiculturalisme et guérison

Abstract

This dissertation studies alternatives to communities in crisis proposed in Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*, Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*, Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce*. Using a number of keywords (longing, subversive (cultural) translation, healing, touch and self-determination), I examine each novel's contestation of a normative, oppressive configuration of community as well as the alternative community it proposes.

Juxtaposing three diasporic novels and two Indigenous (Canadian) texts, I establish a dialogue between different worldviews and the ways they read and respond to communal crises. Unlike the alternative conceptions of community presented in the diasporic novels under consideration, the alternative conception proposed in Boyden's novels stresses the importance of strong families to the building of an alternative postcolonial society. The diasporic texts, however, do not align their alternative communities with the traditional family as a unit of social organization and trope. These alternative communities evolve around affiliation rather than filiation. They build solidarities with the other beyond national, cultural, religious and ethnic lines of division.

The first chapter studies an alternative to Canadian multiculturalism in Brand's *What We All Long For*. The second chapter examines the alternative community and the mezzaterra from which it emerges in Soueif's *The Map of Love*. The third chapter explores the tightly-knit relation between healing, touch and the emergence of an alternative community in Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*. The last chapter studies the contribution of legal autonomy and storytelling to discovering the vision that guides the Cree community portrayed in Boyden's novels in its attempt to build an alternative postcolonial community.

Keywords: Alternative communities, subversive (cultural) translation, affect, normative communities in crisis, multiculturalism and healing

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Table of contents

Introduction. Constituting Alternatives to Communities in Crisis through Affect, Translation, Friendship and Healing 1

I. The failure of National Communities 12

II. Rethinking Community 19

III. Affect and the Rethinking of Community 32

IV. Alternative Communities and Anderson's Modular National Model 39

V. Alternative communities and alternative humanism 42

VI. Alternative Communities, Alternative Spaces 45

VII. Alternative Communities and Subversive Translation 46

VIII. Methodology 49

IX. Chapter Outline 51

Chapter I: The Alternative Affective Community in Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For* 54

Introduction 55

I. The manifestation of Affect in Brand's *What We All Long For* 59

II. The Novel's Criticism of Multiculturalism 60

III. The Alternative Community in *What We All Long For*. 67

III.i. The Alternative Micro-Community of Friends 67

III.ii. Oku's Cooking and the Unity of the Third Force 68

III. iii. Tuyen's Lubaio and the Alternative Community 71

Chapter II: Mezzaterran Community, Politics of Friendship and Transgressive

Translation in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* 82

I. Normative Attitudes towards the Other 85

I.i. Conservative Translation and Normative Attitudes towards the Other 87

I.ii. Arts and the Domesticating Attitude toward the Other 93

I.iii The Hegemonic Discourse and its Attitude toward the Other 95

II. The Emergence of an Alternative Community in the *Map* of Love 100

II.i. Responding Ethically to the Affective Interpellation of the Other 100

II.ii. Space and the Alternative Community 101

II.iii. The Fictional Space of *Map* as a Mezzaterra 105

II.iv. *The Map of Love*: A Linguistic Mezzaterra 106

III. Mezzaterrans and Epicurean friendships 108

IV. Cultural Translation 116

V. Translation and justice 121

VI. Troping the Alternative Community

Chapter III: Healing, Touch and Being-in-Common in *Anil's Ghost* 126

Introduction 127

I. Manifestations of the alternative community 129

II. Hospitals: The Alternative Community and Space 145

III. The Alternative Community and the Absence of Hierarchies 152

IV. Touch: An Alternative Medium of Communication 154

V. Ananda's Reconstruction Project 160

VII. The Alternative Community and Sinhala Buddhism 165

VIII. Anil's International, Non-Governmental Quest for Justice and *Anil's Ghost* as a Ghost Story 167

Conclusion 172

Chapter IV: The Alternative Postcolonial Indigenous Society in Joseph Boyden's *Through Black Spruce* and *Three Day Road* 174

I. Reading Boyden from a Non-Native Perspective 175

II. Structures of dependence 179

III. The Alternative Community

III.i. The Alternative Community and Collective Agency 188

III.ii. Windigo Killing and the Struggle for Sovereignty 191

III.iii. Storytelling and Communal Healing 194

III.iv. Legal and Artistic Ledger Drawing 197

III.v. The Alternative Community and Linguistic Resistance 206

Conclusion 208

Works Cited 211

Constituting Alternatives to Communities in Crisis through Affect, Translation, Friendship and Healing

When the national community imagined by those in power is no longer embraced by the vast majority of a people, a crisis of community settles in. Although the era of globalization is marked by this problem of communal crises resulting from the end of nationalism as a project of nation building (Gerard Delanty), the nation has long been in crisis. Philosophical, sociological and political studies of the configurations of these crises have appeared since the 1930's. The works of Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot and later Jean-Luc Nancy are examples of these studies. The new element characterizing the crises of community in a global world is the political vacuum ensuing from the severance between nation and state, between hegemonic imaginings of national communities and counter-hegemonic dreams of other configurations of the national community. The current crises of community have been preoccupying scholars from a variety of disciplines. Among these are Gerard Delanty[1], Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri[2] along with Diana Brydon, William Coleman and the group of scholars who contributed to *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives and Global Contexts*.

Before analysing the alternative conceptions of community that were proposed in the inter-war period, a definition of two key terms—normative and alternative communities—is in order. Normative communities are hegemonic or

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[1] Examining the crisis of the nation state, Delanty concludes that: «Nationalism in its most recent forms no longer tries to include by assimilation as much of the population as possible. The age of nation-state building is over, as are early nationalist projects to create culturally homogeneous populations (97)." He locates the alternative in the discursive space of the city. Highlighting the potentials of this space, he says: "I believe that it is possible to see cities in terms of 'discursive space' [...] In my view, the notion of discursive space is more fruitful than the space of flows since it captures the connection between communication and action. Discursive space is the space of civic communication; it is the space of democracy and citizenship (102)."

[2] Hardt and Negri theorize a communal alternative to come in *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. As Hardt and Negri contend at the beginning of their aforementioned book: "The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or single identity—different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labor; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires" (xiv).

official imaginings of community that contribute to guaranteeing the maintenance of the status quo. The thesis concentrates mainly on national normative communities in crisis. These crises are caused by a number of reasons ranging from exclusionary imaginings of the nation (Ondaatje, Brand and Soueif), limited conceptions of solidarity, alliances and friendships to the on-going Canadian colonization of Indigenous lands and minds.

The different alternative conceptions of community proposed in the novels under study here emerge to challenge the limitations of the normative communities. They are not postnational. They make use of national institutions to forge truly inclusive and hospitable communities, communities that do not confine friendship or hospitality to the border of a nation, culture or ethnic group. Starting, in most cases, from these national institutions, the alternative communities aim not only at solving the problems of the normative communities in question, but also at radically changing those institutions in order to make them more democratic and just. The inclusiveness and hospitality of these alternative communities are a function of the alternative communities' rethinking of the relation between self and other. Indeed, instead of conceiving the subject as Cartesian and self-sufficient, these communities conceive of the subject as open to the other. What unites the alternative communities in the novels studied here is their concern for justice and commitment to ethically respond to the demands of particular historical moments. These concerns and demands unite people across the lines of cultural, linguistic, religious and national difference reinforced and guarded by normative communities.

Moreover, the counter-normative potential of alternative communities lies in the fact that they do not solidify around the demands of any particular historical moment or the interests of a particular group. The process of unworking at the heart

of these communities accounts for this. Unworking is a concept crucial to Jean-Luc Nancy's conception of an alternative community. Nancy calls his alternative community an inoperative community; a community that is not defined as a work with a teleology, horizon or agenda. This absence of a horizon, teleology and agenda prevents the alternative community from taking a permanent form. It also guarantees the end of a particular configuration of community once the demands that called it into existence are answered and clears the space for a new configuration of community that will answer other urgent demands. The alternative communities under study are similar to Nancy's conception of inoperative community. However, they diverge from it in the sense that the process of unworking and the act of leaning toward the other associated with them are marked historically, politically and culturally. They also diverge from it as they are driven by a political and ethical horizon that keeps on shifting and changing. This horizon gets nearer only to get further in response to the crises of the national community in question. Judging from the experience of characters belonging to the alternative communities studied here, the latter always run the risk of turning into normative communities themselves if the process of unworking stops, if the demands of one particular historical moment keep on guiding the alternative community even when other demands are claiming the attention of the people. Before delving into the crises faced by the communities depicted in the novels under study here, an examination of the reasons behind the dissatisfaction of a number of thinkers with the national community is in order.

The dissatisfaction with the normative conception of community[3] (at the national and international levels) has preoccupied scholars from a wide range of

[3] A normative community is a configuration of the communal conforming to the norms by which community is legally defined. A more detailed definition will be provided below.

disciplines since the inter-war period. [4] Georges Bataille[5] (sociologist) and Maurice Blanchot[6] (philosopher and literary critic) decry the failure of normative communities and their association with violence from the very moment of their inception. Jean-Luc Nancy, a French philosopher, responded to their work in the late 1980s; he proposed the inoperative community as an alternative way of thinking community. Although, as Christopher Fynsk[7] claims, Nancy's work cannot be translated into a political project, it helps us rethink the bases upon which concepts of potential alternative communities may endlessly engage with the process of their own reworking or unravelling, hence the title of Nancy's seminal work: *The Inoperative Community*. This endless reworking prevents the permanent solidification of communities around particular projects and teleologies. Central to his work and that of Blanchot is the importance of singularity[8]. Equally central to their work is the criticism of narcissism and solipsism, on the one hand, and the exclusion of the other ensuing from the notion of subjectivity, on the other hand. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt examined the political implications of his work as well as that of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to develop their own conception of an alternative community they call the multitude. Likewise, Alphonso Lingis[9] develops Nancy's and Bataille's[10] work to think community away from any predetermined communal identity.

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[4]This refers to the two world wars.
[5] Most of Georges Bataille's work appeared between the 1940 and the beginning of the 1960s.
[6] Maurice Blanchot's work which was produced between the 1940s and the 1980s responded insightfully to the works of Bataille and Jean-Luc Nancy.
[7] Christopher Fynsk is the translator of Nancy's *The Inoperative Community*.
[8] Singularity is a different conception of being. It is open to the other. Contrary to the conception of the Cartesian subject who is portrayed as self-sufficient and totally independent from the other, Nancy's conception of being does not precede being-with (the other). Being and being-with co-exist and depend on each other. An in-depth analysis is offered below.
[9] Lingis's alternative community is one that brings together people who have nothing in common. These community members do not even share a common language or nationality.
[10] Bataille's alternative conception of community is also known as the community of lovers. It is based on the openness of self to other as well as on ecstacy and sovereignty.

All of these works point out the limitations of normative communities[11] like the one examined by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. The distance the aforementioned philosophers take from normative communities can be explained by their assessment of the failure of these communities. Their failure stems from a Cartesian conception of the self, its relation to the other as well as the relation of the community to other communities. In contradistinction to this normative conception of self and community, their alternative conception of community acknowledges the fundamental relationality of being. The postmodern understanding of the relation between self and other, inherent to this alternative conception of community, yields a more open and hospitable conception of community without community, a community without unity[12]. Resistant as they are to any attempt at translating the inoperative community into a remedy for the communities in crisis in our world, the works of Nancy, Blanchot and Lingis allow us to discern the importance of a certain in-between space as a space full of potential for rethinking communities in a world where the exclusion and inclusion of the other make the crises facing communities, in developed and developing countries, more intense.

Although I approach this in-between space, propitious for the imagination of alternative communities, from a postcolonial perspective, it is worth noting that works of philosophers like Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Jean-Luc Nancy, Gilles Deleuze and Giorgio Agamben theorize a similar malleable zone from which the concept of community can be thought. Whether it is Bataille's "society of lovers," Nancy's "inoperative community," Blanchot's "unavowable community,"

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[11] Nations are an example of normative communities.
[12] A community without community refers to an alternative conception of community that distances itself from the pitfalls of normative communities. The latter conceive of themselves as immanent, sovereign and totally detached from other communities.

Agamben's "community-to-come" or Deleuze's anti-community, these alternative conceptions of community arising from the in-between are instances of resistance to the hegemonic conceptions of community (be they national, religious, or military). Diana Brydon's work on the renegotiation of community insightfully analyzes the formation of alternative communities in a globalizing world through the study of a number of cases. She also acknowledges the importance of studying the importance of the above-mentioned postmodern philosophical works to the rethinking of community. Studying the implications of these works for the rethinking of community remains outside the scope of her collection as the latter focuses more on communal rather than individual autonomy. My dissertation examines the relation between the philosophical works mentioned above and the rethinking of community. Dealing with fictional renegotiations of community, rather than actual renegotiations of community, my dissertation not only allows me, but also requires me to study these philosophical works, with a specific focus on the relation of self and other, and the urgent task of rethinking the terms through which we articulate community. I would even contend that only through rethinking the terms on which the self relates to the other[13] can we reach a reconfiguration of community that would avoid the exclusion, discrimination, injustice and belligerence that, more often than not, characterize normative communities.

Not being devoted to an examination of already-existing alternative communities, the dissertation studies the way a number of diasporic novels, including Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*, Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*, Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost,* rethink community (both at the national and international levels). Juxtaposing these diasporic texts and two indigenous

[13]The other both within and outside community

(Canadian) texts (Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce*), my thesis explores the interesting tension between two different worldviews and the way they inform the interpretation and response to communal crises. The privileging of filiation over affiliation and cross-cultural friendships over family ties at the heart of the diasporic alternative conceptions of communities makes the latter radically different from the postcolonial alternative indigenous society imagined in Boyden's novels. Boyden's texts make it clear that strong families and family ties are the cornerstones of a viable alternative indigenous community.

Fictional renegotiations of community in a globalizing world are as important as the examination of alternative communities on the ground because of the strong ties between literature and the formation of communities. This relationship was established by Anderson through his study of the ties between one form of normative communities (nations) and literature (particularly the novel) in *Imagined Communities*. These novels help us discern the necessary contingency of the alternative communities that emerge to do justice to those excluded, discriminated against, disregarded and marginalized by normative and sometimes corrupt national communities. Before theorizing the fictional representations of alternative conceptions of community, I analyze the reasons behind the failure of normative communities. In this regard, I will concentrate mainly on the limitations of conceiving community around the Cartesian conception of being, communion, fusion and communal substance. This raises a further concern, namely the constitutive role of a lost ideal community in the western communal imaginary. To counter this failure, this dissertation rethinks community by exploring the response of a number of novels to problems emanating from the injustice, exclusion and inhospitality intrinsic to the normative configuration of community. It studies cultural and

affective practices that bring together the alternative communities offered in the above-mentioned novels, namely longing, healing, touch, story telling, and the revival of indigenous practices.

First, however, I would like to define the terms normative community and alternative community. Defining normative community, one could start with ancient Greece or with Europe in its early modernity. However, my objective is to provide a working definition against which I can situate my project. The term normative community refers mainly to normative national communities in my project. Normative national communities provide an institutional framework through which community is organized and controlled. Raymond Williams notes that this type of community emerged in the nineteenth century (75-6). While the first meaning of the concept community— derived from the Latin *communis*—refers to "fellowship, community of relations or feelings," the second meaning of the concept refers to a more institutionalized and political entity (Williams 75). As Stephen Slemon reminds us, "the other road [the second meaning of the concept]—a faint one, Williams tells us, until the nineteenth century—leads to something much more grounded: 'the sense of immediacy or locality,' 'a body of people organized into a political, municipal, or social unity'" (234). The second conception of community refers to the kind of communities that developed into what we know now as national communities. States organize and control this kind of community and its citizens. Through their institutions, states invest in nation-building projects. This has earned them the hyphenated name: nation-states. Marc Redfield succinctly summarizes the relation between the national community and the state in "Imagi-Nation" and holds that:

> The state, in a tradition that in its main lines runs from Schiller through Hegel and Mathew Arnold and is still very much alive today,

> represents the community to itself, thereby giving the community form and in a certain sense giving it an ethical imperative and a future: the state represents 'our best self' (Arnold 99, passim), 'the archetype of a human being' (Schiller 17), because it signifies the *formal unification both of the citizen with the community and of the community with universal humanity* (76 italics mine).

In order to cement the national community, produce loyal and obedient citizens as well as unify the "community with universal humanity"[14] (Redfield 76), the state resorts to a national pedagogy. Literature plays a crucial role in this pedagogy as it is through novels that the national community is imagined and the nation-state made present to its citizens. To study this relation between fiction and community, my dissertation takes Anderson's conception of the normative national community as a starting point. The originality of Anderson's work on nationalism stems from his conception of nations as "cultural artefacts" (4). Anderson contends that the cohesion of the nation is imagined, and thus guaranteed, through reading and a common language. He argues that the daily practice of reading a newspaper reinforces community identity, for instance. The realist novel, on the other hand, functions as the cultural logic of a cohesive community[15]. It is this very fictional space full of potential that allows the imagination of alternatives to the national community. While Anderson highlights the "profoundly modular character" of twentieth century nationalisms, the diasporic novels under consideration deal with communities that foreground the limitations of the normative conception of community and provide communal alternatives to Anderson's modular model. Juxtaposing Anderson's modular model and the alternative conceptions of

[14] The universal humanism accompanying these normative communities is far from being universal as I will show below in the part about alternative humanism. It is Eurocentrism masquerading as universalism.

[15] Referring to the realist novel and the newspaper—"two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century," Anderson says: "Consider first the structure of the old-fashioned novel, a structure typical not only of the masterpieces of Balzac but also of any contemporary dollar-dreadful. It is clearly a device for the presentation of simultaneity in 'homogenous, empty time,' or a complex gloss upon the word 'meanwhile.'" (24-25).

community offered in the novels studied, the dissertation analyzes the changing role of fiction in relation to community building in a globalizing world.

This study of alternative communities provides an alternative configuration of affective communal attachment to the exclusionary, normative one. This affective communal attachment at the national level is also known as an affective national economy. An affective national economy[16] invests an ideal conception of community with a sacred halo and makes of it the object of longing and desire for its citizens. It also makes them align themselves with people from a particular nation, race, or ethnic group and against others[17] as Sarah Ahmed puts it in "Affective Economies." The citizens of a given nation worship an ideal conception of a community that is mostly based on an ideal, imagined, pure past. The citizens' attachment to this past, in particular, and the ideal conception of community, in general, results from a long history of the production of attachment to them. The intensive work of ideological state apparatuses and institutions contributes to the production of this attachment. Erasing this long history of the production of emotions is responsible for what we conceive of as a natural attachment to the nation and to other citizens in that nation. Approaching this production of emotions in the national context from a Marxist perspective, Ahmed contends that:

> Drawing on Marx, I argue that emotions accumulate over time, as a form of affective value. Objects only seem to have such value, by an erasure of these histories, as histories of production and labor. But whilst Marx suggests that

[16] This refers to a normative, national configuration of affect that can be seen at work in the hegemonic discourse, for instance. The objective of the affective national economy is to mak2e the citizens of a given nation lean affectively towards certain people and not toward others. In other words, this affective economy determines the citizens' friends and enemies.

[17] Studying the relation between the ties that bind the white subject with the nation, Ahmed contends that: "*it is the emotional reading of hate that works to bind the imagined white subject and nation together*. The average white man feels 'fear and loathing'; the white housewife, 'repulsion and anger'; the white workingman, 'curses'; the white Christian farmer, 'rage.' The passion these negative attachments to others is redefined simultaneously as a positive attachment to the imagined subjects brought together through the repetition of the signifier, 'white.' It is the love of white, or those recognizable as white, that supposedly explains this shared 'communal' visceral response of hate. *Together we hate, and this hate is what makes us together*" (118 italics in original).

> emotions are erased by the value of things (the suffering of the worker's body is not visible in commodity form), I focus on how emotions are produced. It is not so much emotions that are erased, as if they were already there, but the processes of production or the 'making' of emotions. In other words, 'feelings' become 'fetishes,' qualities that seem to reside in objects, only through an erasure of the history of their production and circulation. (11)

The following chapters will trace these erased histories in a number of diasporic texts for a better explanation of the emergence of alternative communities. The *raison d'être* of the latter is to counter and undermine the normative affective economies responsible for the erasure of the above-mentioned histories. As for the term alternative community, it refers to the alternative conceptions of community offered in the diasporic novels studied here. The fictional alternative communities emerge as an ethical and political response to normative communities in crisis as the following chapters will show.

(I) The failure of National Communities

Before moving on to an examination of the postmodern response to communities in crisis, the following part of the chapter studies some reasons for the failure of community. Normative communities, like the ones studied by Anderson and the ones presently in crisis, have failed because they are based on work (operation) and the will to completion[18]. To follow the logic of Nancy's book, failed communities are operative communities. They are driven by the dictates of a teleology and their forms are consequently predetermined. These normative communities' conceptions of being, self and other, as well as their relation to the past and space account for their rejection as viable communities by postmodernist philosophers. In fact, normative communities conceive of their members as subjects and individuals. Nancy highlights this aspect of normative communities and says that:

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[18] When a community is informed by the will to completion, it is driven by a teleology. It has a preconception of how it will look as a finished product; it works towards matching that preconception.

> some see in its invention and in the culture, if not in the cult built around the individual, Europe's incontrovertible merit of having shown the world the sole path to emancipation from tyranny, and the norm by which to measure all our collective or communitarian undertakings. But the individual is merely the residue of the experience of the dissolution of community. By its nature—as its name indicates, it is the atom, the indivisible—the individual reveals that it is the abstract result of a decomposition. It is another, and symmetrical, figure of immanence: the absolutely detached for-itself, taken as origin and certainty. (3)

The philosophical implications of the concept of the individual and its impact on the relation of self and other have to be studied in depth if we are to understand the failure of normative communities. The Cartesian conception of the subject is summed up in the well-known formula "cogito, ergo sum." When this formula informs a conception of being-together, the Cartesian theorization of the subject can only yield a community of atoms who are totally self-sufficient and separate from the other and the outside. Nancy foregrounds the incompatibility between the Cartesian subject and the experience of community throughout his above-mentioned book and contends that: "the Cartesian subject would form the inverse figure of the experience of community and of singularity" (31). A total separation from the other and the outside also characterizes normative communities. This separation from the outside explains the immanence and self-sufficiency of these communities[19].

This conception of the individual-subject informs the configuration of the communities to which alternatives are suggested in the novels under consideration. The "communities"[20] these individuals form are separate from other communities. A

[19] Nancy defines immanence as that to which community resists. "Community is, in a sense, resistance itself: namely, resistance to immanence. Consequently, community is transcendence: but 'transcendence,' which no longer has any 'sacred' meaning, signifying precisely a resistance to immanence (resistance to the communion of everyone or to the exclusive passion of one or several: to all the forms and all the violences of subjectivity" (Nancy 35). In this quotation, Nancy refers to his alternative conception of community.

[20] Here I have put the word community in quotation marks because there can be no community of separate atoms. Nancy reminds us of that when analyzing the impact of the Cartesian conception of

similar separation governs the relationship between these individual-subjects and the other. Consequently, the other, in particular, and other communities, in general, are the spectral enemies that haunt individuals and normative communities alike. They are already there before they physically manifest themselves. Consequently, rather than being independent from the other and other communities, normative communities depend on the latter for their very existence and self-definition. This means that the normative communities' claim to sovereignty does not hold, nor does that of its members. Deconstructing normative communities' claims to sovereignty allows us to see their dependence on that which is outside them and the mechanics at work in the construction of national identities.

The normative circumscription of friendship to the boundaries of the polis or nation and the conservative community's claim to total separation from the other are informed by the metaphysics of subjectivity. This metaphysics relies on a series of dichotomies consolidating the dividing line between self and other. Btihaj Ajana underscores the importance of the metaphysics of subjectivity in the normative conception of community and argues that:

> in general terms, and in the western tradition at least, the entire edifice of community seems to have derived its foundations from the metaphysics of subjectivity in which demarcation lines are simply traced between the dichotomies of self/ other, sameness/difference, inside/ outside, inclusion/ exclusion, presence/ absence, etc. These dichotomies are inextricably linked to ways of constructing identities and creating a sense of belonging through processes of enclosure. For the subject is "fundamentally constituted through the maintenance of boundaries, both social and spatial (Popke 2003, p.302)." (100)

Such a conception of self and community is responsible for the belligerence and intolerance characterizing the various but equally normative communities

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being on thinking being-together and holds that: "Still, one cannot make a world with simple atoms (3)."

represented in Soueif's, Brand's and Ondaatje's novels. In particular, these conceptions are responsible for the limited and manipulative inclusion of the other in multicultural Canada[21], the protracted civil war in Sri Lanka[22] and the widening gap between East and West (in *The Map of Love*). If some see, as Nancy holds, in the "invention and in the culture, if not in the cult built around the individual, Europe's inconvertible merit" (3), the failure of community in the Sri Lankan and Egyptian cases (as portrayed by Ondaatje and Soueif respectively) attests to the fact that this cult is but a poisoned gift. Similarly, individualism is read as part of the problem plaguing the indigenous community in Boyden's novels. This explains the importance of a collective conception of agency to the imagining of an alternative community in his novels.

Rather than enabling the postcolonies to draw their inspiration from their precolonial experiences of community building that were more compatible with the composition of their populations, the nationalist model has played a crucial role in leading to neocolonial national experiences or to civil wars in the ex-colonies. Normative identities have well-defined borders separating them from the identities of other groups and are informed by fatal nostalgic relations to glorious pasts. This is the case of the Sinhalese group in *Anil's Ghost*. Understanding the role of the western cult of the individual and the modular nationalism resulting from it is not tantamount to romanticizing the precolonial past of the postcolonies in question. It is not a nativist or romantic solution to postcolonial communities in crisis as H. D. Harootunian would say. In his study of Anderson's *Imagined Communities*[23], Harootounian deals with Chatterjee's criticism of the latter and calls his approach to

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[21] In Brand's novel
[22] In Ondaatje's novel
[23] Here I am referring to Harootunian's "Ghostly Comparisons," in Pheng Cheah' edited collection of essays entitled *Grounds of Comparison around the Work of Benedict Anderson*.

Anderson's work nativist and romanticizing. He explains his reading of Chatterjee's response to Anderson's book by the latter's advocacy of a return to precolonial sources. Commenting on the impossibility of recuperating a pure precolonial past, Harootunian holds that:

> If Anderson wishes to propose an approach that must take into consideration the role of some form of replication by Asian societies embarked upon the course of capitalist modernization and national liberation, the proposition of an alternative modernity based upon resuscitating a romantic and anti-modern communitarianism free from the corrosions of colonial (and thus Western) mediation in figuring a national identity must be seen as simply a recuperation—however unintentional—of the second term of the established binary (West/East, civilized/ primitive, developed/ undeveloped) it is attempting to bypass. (177)

Thus, Harootounian cautions us against the pitfalls of thinking that pre-colonial sources subsist unaltered after their contact with the colonial heritage (illustrating his argument with examples from Japanese history). Although I do think that we cannot recuperate the past as it was centuries ago, we still have access to sources that bear its traces. I also argue that relying in part on these sources can help people and novelists in the postcolonies think alternatives to failed communities in ways that are compatible with the history, composition and culture of the population in question. The alternative communities studied in the dissertation relate to the past in this way. They reappropriate it in creative ways and contribute to healing the wounds caused by the prior adoption of the normative, often imperial national model of community.

Contrary to this healing relation to the past that opens the alternative community hospitably to the other, the normative community's relation to the past helps it form an immanent community of similar members and legitimize the exclusion of the other. The past of these normative communities is represented as an ideal, lost past of purity, communion and fusion that can never be regained. This

past can also be read as the ideal that drives the community forward and defines its future. It is a past during which the community allegedly existed as homogeneous, strong, pure and unified. Describing the past to which the above-mentioned normative communities relate, Nancy states:

> The lost, or broken, community can be exemplified in all kinds of ways, by all kinds of paradigms: the natural family, the Athenian city, the Roman Republic, the first Christian community, corporations, communes, or brotherhoods—always it is a matter of a lost age in which community was woven of tight, harmonious, and infrangible bonds and in which above all it played back to itself, through its institutions, its rituals, and its symbols, the representation, indeed the living offering, of its own immanent unity, intimacy, and autonomy. (9)

A nostalgia for this past constantly haunts the modern Christian western consciousness, according to Nancy. This myth of lost origins haunts the modern western communal imagination. Nancy tells us we should be suspicious of such nostalgia because what it hides is not a past ideal community that was actually lost but a constitutive loss upon which western communities base themselves. A similar nostalgic relationship to the past governs the relationship of the Sinhalese group to a mythic, lost, glorious past that is used to legitimize the persecution and oppression of the Tamils in *Anil's Ghost*.

Despite the variety of paradigms related to the loss of community, one major paradigm—that of the first Christian community—haunts western thinkers from Rousseau, Schlegel, Hegel, Bak-ouine, Marx and Wagner to Mallarmé (Nancy 10). This explains Nancy's contention that the "true consciousness of the loss of community is Christian" (10). This kind of nostalgia for an ideal past coupled with the importance of fusion and communion make communities exclusionary, immanent and sovereign. Fusion refers to the fusion of the members of the community into a

higher entity[24]. As for communion, another major characteristic of normative, operative communities, it refers to the conditional identification of the member. Indeed, her identification of herself is a function of her supplementary identification with the "body of the community" (Nancy 9). Fusion and communion provide the members of the normative Christian community criticized by Nancy with a common substance. It is this substance that allows them to transcend the state of being separate atoms. The problem with fusion, communion and the nostalgia for a lost origin is that they produce communities so immanent that they make of death their work. Nancy gives the example of Nazi Germany to illustrate this.

The metaphysics of subjectivity, the Cartesian subject and the conception of community ensuing from it, communion, fusion, hostility to the other and the outside as well as nostalgia for a lost harmonious communal past all contribute to the failure of normative communities. The aforementioned factors derive mainly from a Cartesian conception of the relation between self and other within and without the community, as well as the relationship of that community to the past and the outside. Analyzing them from a postmodern perspective enables us to see the role they play in the failure of normative communities.

The failure of normative national communities has been criticized since the third decade of the twentieth century (if not earlier) and one wonders about the reasons behind the persistent crises plaguing national communities. The persistence of this crisis, I argue, demands that we shift the grounds upon which the self and the relation between self and other are thought. The works of the above-mentioned philosophers from the 1940s to those of the philosophers dealing with the question of

[24] Comparing normative communities to the inoperative community, Nancy stresses the importance of fusion to the former holding that: "If community is revealed in the death of others it is because death itself is the true community of *I*'s, who are not *egos*. It is not a communion that fuses the *egos* into an *Ego* or a higher *We* (Nancy 15)".

community more recently (Deleuze, Lingis, Hardt and Negri) respond to this demand. Before delving into the context that led to their interest in the question of community, it is important to note that the crises plaguing community from the middle ages and the Renaissance to the twenty-first century result from the conception of the relation between self and other at the heart of such communities—a conception similar to the one discussed above. This does not mean that the same crisis has plagued the aforementioned communities, but that they have all shared one defining trait: a reductive conception of the relation between self and other. The circumstances that led to the different crises were certainly specific to the historical moments that produced them, but that trait remained the only constant. To go back to the "members" of these normative communities and communities themselves, they are conceived as immanent, self sufficient and totally separate from the outside and the other. The history of early forms of community is marked by civil wars and wars with people outside the borders of a given city, for instance. Some Shakespearean plays, mainly his history plays, give us a literary account of these early community formations and the civil and inter-state wars that threatened their stability. *Henry V* is a case in point. Likewise, the normative conception of community, nowadays, is still influenced by exclusionary conceptions of the relation between self and other in spite of the reforms and more tolerant policies adopted to make present national communities more hospitable to the other.

(II) Rethinking Community

The persistence of the question of community and its continual haunting of the minds of philosophers, sociologists, literary theorists, economists and novelists since the third decade of the last century does not mean that no new alternative model has been proposed. As Nancy reminds us, there is rather a proliferation of

these models. But that proliferation does not seem to offer a solution to the persistent crises of community[25]. If all the alternative models that have so far been proposed by scholars from a wide range of disciplines do not offer genuine alternatives to the normative conception of community, it may be because they have just dealt with the symptoms of the crisis and not with the crisis itself. In this regard, I agree with Nancy's assessment of those alternative models of community and argue that "we stand to learn from this that it can no longer be a matter of figuring or modelling a communitarian essence in order to present it to ourselves and to celebrate it, but that it is a matter rather of thinking community, that is, of thinking its insistent and possibly unheard demand, beyond communitarian models or remodelings" (22). The insistent, unheard demand of community consists in thinking it beyond the communitarian model associated with immanence, communion, intolerance of difference and codified, conditional hospitality towards the other. Taking this demand into account would mean thinking a community of singularities rather than Cartesian subjects, a community that will not fuse its members into a "higher *We*" (Nancy 15 italics in original).

Faced with the long history of the failure of community and the multiplication of alternative models suggested as a remedy to the ills of community, Nancy concludes that we have not yet thought community. This, according to him, explains the futility of the multiplication of alternative community models. Considering these models, he contends that: "to say that community has not yet been thought is to say that it tries our thinking, and that it is not an object for it. And (perhaps) it does not have to become one" (26). The first half of Nancy's statement takes us back to his contention that the "insistent, unheard demand of community has not yet been

[25] Nancy refers to the failure of multiculturalism to provide a viable alternative in the countries that adopted it as a policy as an example.

thought" (Nancy 22). The thinking of an alternative community to come is one that should take into account the unheard demand of community, or the exigency of community. The quotes from Nancy underline the necessity of modifying the grounds upon which rethinking community has so far been based. Rethinking community from the premises that led to thinking normative (failed) communities can only produce more failed communities. The alternative community imagined by Nancy is yet-to-come and, thus, cannot be the object of our thought as it is animated by inoperativity and unworking. It is not governed by a teleology; it is not conceived as a work. Highlighting the interdependence of this alternative conception of community and the process of unworking, Nancy states that:

> the community takes place of necessity in what Blanchot has called the unworking [*désoeuvrement*]. Before or beyond the work, it is that which withdraws from the work, that which no longer has to do with production, nor with completion, but which encounters interruption, fragmentation, suspension. The community is made of the interruption of singularities, or of the suspension singular beings are. It is not their work, and it does not have them as it works, not anymore than communication is a work, nor even an operation by singular beings: for it is simply their being—their being in suspension at its limit. Communication is the unworking of the social, economic, technical, institutional work.

This implies that the concept of communication[26] animating the alternative conception of community is counter-normative in the sense that it unsettles and debunks all kind of institutional work. The unworking that comes with this alternative conception of communication is reminscient of the way Deleuze and

[26] Communication is the alternative Nancy suggests to communion in communities. Elaborating on this, he says: "in place of such a communion, there is communication. Which is to say, in very precise terms, that finitude itself is nothing; it is neither a ground, nor an essence, nor a substance. But it appears, it presents itself, it exposes itself, and thus it exists as communication. In order to designate this singular mode of appearing, this specific phenomenality, which is no doubt more originary than any other (for it could be that the world appears to the community, not to the individual), we would need to be able to say that finitude co-appears or compears (com-paraît) and can only compear […] (28)." Communication, thus, lies in the exposition of finitude; it consists in the compearance of finitude.

Guattari's war machine "operates". The absence of a horizon, teleology, objective and end from this conception of an alternative community allows it not to solidify into a fixed configuration of the communal. Such a solidification accounts, to a large extent, for the problems of normative communities because it serves to maintain the hegemony of the parties determining the teleology of those communities. The latter's conception of a shared identity, time and space become the only possible conception. Diverging from this normative conception of the common legitimizes the persecution and exclusion of those who undertake it. My study of Soueif's mezzaterrans, in the third chapter, will shed more light on this aspect of normative communities.

To counter such normative conceptions of community, philosophers like Nancy, Agamben, Blanchot and Bataille reconceive being and being together as co-extensive and dependent. In fact, contra Heidegger, Nancy conceives *Mitsein* and *Dasein* [27] as imbricated into and inseparable from one another. A third term enters the equation of being for these philosophers, namely death. The death of the other exposes the self to its own finitude and mortality. Consequently, the community of people conceived in this way is a community of finite beings that does not admit the possibility of immanence. Separation from the other and the outside is simply impossible. Unlike the normative communities, everything is relational for the community of finite beings. Furthermore, death is the very condition of

[27] Mistein means being (sein) with (mit). Dasein, another German word, literally means being (sein) here (da). Dasein is an important term in the philosophy of Heidegger. Nancy criticizes Heidegger's separation of *Dasein* from *Mitsein* and contends that: "All of Heidegger's research into 'being-for (or toward)-death, was nothing other than an attempt to state this: I is not—am not—a subject. (Although, when it came to the question of community as such, the same Heidegger also went astray with his vision of a people and a destiny conceived at least in part as a subject, which proves no doubt that Dasein's 'being-toward-death' was never radically implicated in its being-with—in Mistsein—and that it is this implication that remains to be thought.) (14).

communication[28]. Blanchot studies this through the example of friendship. Friendship is always already haunted by the immanent loss of the friend. Her death is a spectre that haunts the relationship[29]. The moment one communicates with an agonizing friend, as Bataille says, one is outside oneself. Communication under such circumstances is, thus, ecstatic. At that moment communication undoes itself. What matters, as Lingis contends, at this moment of agony is the very act of saying and not what is said.

Rethinking being along the lines advocated by the abovementioned philosophers leads to a conception of its existence on the limit of its own being. This condition allows finite beings to incline towards the other and form a community—a community impossible to reach if we limit ourselves to the Cartesian conception of being. Nancy underscores the importance of this leaning toward the other for a rethinking of the alternative community and contends that

> still one cannot imagine a world with simple atoms. There has to be a clinamen of the 'individual.' Yet there is no theory, ethics, politics, or metaphysics of the individual that is capable of envisaging this clinamen, this declination or decline of the individual within community. Neither 'personalism' nor Sartre ever managed to do anything more than coat the most classical individual-subject with a moral or sociological paste: they never inclined it, outside itself, over that edge that opens up its being-in-common. (3-4)

This conception of a self that exists on the limit of its being and leans necessarily towards the other opens up space for a community of interdependent members. This

[28] Dealing with the relation between communication and death, Blanchot holds that: "Now, 'the basis of communication' is not necessarily speech, or even the silence that is its foundation and punctuation, but the exposure to death, no longer my own exposure, but someone else's, whose living and closest presence is already the eternal and unbearable absence, an absence that the travail of deepest mourning does not diminish (25)."

[29] Blanchot also underscores the importance of death in friendships and says that: "And it is in life itself that that absence of someone else has to be met. It is with that absence—it uncanny presence, always under the prior threat of disappearance—that friendship is brought into play and lost at each moment, a relation without relation or without relation other than the incommensurable […] (25)."

condition of interdependence increases the members' accountability to and responsibility for each other.

Having chosen a theoretical framework that would benefit both from postcolonial and postmodern theories, I would like to linger on the concept of the clinamen from the intersection between the two theories. The openness and leaning toward the others inherent in the clinamen inaugurate an in-between or third space which is a promising site from which the metaphysics of subjectivity and the dichotomies evolving around it can be deconstructed. The deconstruction of the dichotomy between self and other is of paramount importance to the task of rethinking community. Ajana underlines this importance and argues that:

> This task [critically understanding the question of community] necessitates the unworking of these dichotomies so they can no longer function as a defining essence, or as a mechanism for deciding who is deemed to be placed in the inside, who should be left in the outside, and who is to be kept in-between, on the periphery of each side, occupying what Homi Bhabha calls the 'third space' (100)

The alternative communities I study undo these dichotomies between self and other showing the artificiality of the sovereignty of the self and its constitutive dependence on the other. They are neither inside nor outside the normative communities they contest. On the contrary, through their counter-normative solidarities and friendships with the other, they inhabit a Soueifian[30] third-space that allows them to imagine being and consequently being-together in politically more enabling ways.

Rethinking community from (and in relation to) the third space allows us to dissociate it from the shared conception of time, space and identity that is normally imposed on the heterogeneous populations of normative communities. Talking about the potential of the third space in this regard, Ajana holds that:

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[30] Soueifian here refers to Ahdah Soueif, the British-Egyptian writer of *The Map of Love*.

> It is precisely the latter category (the inhabitant of the third space) that exposes the conundrum of western metaphysics for it dwells or rather floats uneasily amid the philosophical and political thoughts, not allowing for any kind of stability, fixity or homogeneity. In doing so, it implicates the production of self and other, of self through other, of 'selfother' in a perpetual state of temporality in which difference and inconsistency contaminate the very basis of the formation and formulation of community. This experience of contamination occurs at the moment of inclination (100).

The importance of a perpetual state of temporality, difference, inconsistency and contamination to the thinking of alternative communities unites all postmodern thinkers preoccupied with the question of community. This approach to the time, identity and space of community takes the thinking of community away from its normative configuration. Being-together is, thus, no longer tied to a shared time, space and identity. Civil wars like the one that tore apart Sri Lanka, testify to the fatal consequences such a conception of time, space and identity have for minority groups who are oppressed and discriminated against to reaffirm the hegemony of the group in power. The hegemony of such a group is guaranteed by its presentation of its conception of a shared time, space and identity as the only possible and legitimate conception. In this regard, Kvisma Korhonen (2006) is right to argue that, taking into account the works of the abovementioned postmodern philosophers, "we need a new concept of community that is not based on the ideas of a shared time, space or identity" (15). In "Why Community Matters," Brydon is wary of the alternatives advocated by postmodernist thinkers. Judging from the work undertaken by scholars from a wide range of disciplines in the collection of essays she edited with William

Coleman, Brydon finds Korhonen's argument too extreme (257). Indeed, some alternative communities emerging at the present historical juncture are based on "the ideas of a shared time, space or identity," as Brydon contends (Kohonen 15). At first, I tended to be as wary as Brydon about Korhonen's claim. However, my five-year long research on communities in crisis made me realize that although we cannot deny the importance of closed off, homogeneous territory and time for a community, conceiving them as such leads more often than not to more communities in crisis. This does not mean that alternative communities distance themselves, by definition, from "a shared time, space, or identity" (Brydon 257). Depending on the nature of the crisis that summoned the alternative community into existence, rethinking being-together may necessitate a common space and time, for instance. However, as I said, those temporal and spatial common grounds have to be conceived in hospitable ways. This, as I will argue later, would allow the alternative communities in question to avoid being exclusionary the way a number of normative communities are.

The alternative communities studied in the thesis emerge from the third space defined above and can theoretically solidify around the communal configuration dictated by particular historical moments. Although the solidification of the alternative community around the moment that produces it will give it a certain unity and cohesion, it will also reduce the alternative community to yet another normative community dedicated to safeguarding its form and borders. However, as the following chapters will clearly demonstrate, the very nature of alternative communities emerging from the third space never solidify around the demands of any particular historical moment and remain, thus, alert to the new demands of a swiftly changing world. In this respect, the alternative communities here are driven

by the same imperative as Deleuze and Guattari's conception of community. The following passage from Irving Goh's "Community in Deleuze and Guattari" demonstrates the affinity between the alternative communities under consideration and Deleuze and Guattari's anti-community:

> But the nomadological war machine is anti-community only because it maintains the future of community, maintains the possibility of a future, radical, and other community to come. It is never nihilistic with regard to community. Instead, what it does, for community is to allow the chance of the future event of a community-to-come to take place. With Deleuze and Guattari then, and at least in *A Thousand Plateaus* as I have tried to show, philosophy is always a question of community. For Deleuze and Guattari, we are always arriving at or moving towards a community with philosophy, but a community that is as indefinite as its linguistic article not because it is not able to decide itself (as community), and not because it is not sure of itself, but because it is always open to something new, always forms itself anew, which as such guarantees its future, and even promises a radical future unrestricted, to its present form. (226)

The work of Deleuze and Guattari thinks a conceptual clearing for an anti-community. But, that does not mean that their work is against community. The concept of anti-community, in their work, refers to the struggle of the war machine against state communities, what I call normative communities. The perpetual change of the form of the community will not hamper feelings of attachment to it as that attachment is no longer a function of symbols, fixed configurations of community or the nostalgia for an ideal past that may never have existed. Rather, it is a function of the members' commitment to responding ethically to the demands of swiftly changing times. It is also a function of their commitment to justice, equality, an open future and unconditional hospitality to the other[31].

Territory can bring together an alternative community struggling for self-determination. However, as the alternative community in Boyden's novel shows,

[31] I will examine this aspect of alternative communities through the work of Derrida on hospitality and friendship.

territory must not be conceived in a normative, exclusionary way. The Cree community's conception of territory in Boyden's novel, for instance, unites this indigenous population not as a closed space conceived along normative lines, but as an open territory to which indigenous peoples are attached as a matter of communal survival. Although the theoretical background outlined here helps one study the alternative communities proposed in Brand's, Soueif's and Ondaatje's novels, it cannot be used (or at least not without scrupulously evaluating its impact on indigenous people) to study, what I call, an alternative community in Boyden's novel. First of all, the alternative community proposed in *Through Black Spruce* is already alternative in two ways. First, it proposes an alternative to a Cree community in crisis. Second, it can also be interpreted as an alternative to the modular national western model. Yet, I include this book which is different from the diasporic novels because of the different type of the communal crisis with which it deals as well as its distinct conception of an alternative community. Moreover, the tension is all the more perceptible when one notes that the alternative community in Boyden's novels bases itself on the kinship and filial ties that are conceived as part of the limitations of normative communities in the diasporic novels under consideration.

Given the importance of postcolonial theory to the theoretical framework of the dissertation (mainly the first three chapters) and indigenous writers' (and critics') vocal rejection of blindly applying postcolonial theory to indigenous literatures, it is expedient to theorize the alternative indigenous community proposed in Boyden's novel separately. My examination of the alternative community in *Through Black Spruce* hinges on James (Sakej)Youngblood Henderson's theorization of an alternative indigenous postcolonial society and Marie Battiste's advocacy of "cognitive decolonization" (210). Both Henderson and Battiste contend that (the

long-lasting effects of) Eurocentrism (Henderson 5) and "cognitive imperialism," (Battiste 210) explain the continuing colonization of indigenous peoples (physical and cognitive) as well as a wide range of problems facing them[32]. The analysis of the alternative community examined in the last chapter is informed by their understanding of colonialism, decolonization and postcoloniality. Their conceptions of these key terms take into account indigenous histories, stories, experiences and traditions. They are developed by indigenous scholars and will allow me to situate my reading of *Through Black Spruce* in an indigenous context. Although both Henderson and Battiste use such terms as colonialism and postcolonialism, their conceptions of these terms are specific to their indigenous contexts and cannot be conflated with what we know as postcolonial theory. Battiste cautions the reader of *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* not to conflate postcolonial indigenous thought and postcolonial theory *tout court* (71). Underscoring the specificity of postcolonial indigenous thought, she says that it is "based on our pain and our experiences and it refuses to allow others to appropriate this pain and these experiences" (71).

Although postcolonial theory alerts us to the limitations of thinking alternative community beyond an attachment to a common space, it is crucial to note the limitations of reading indigenous texts from a postcolonial perspective. Indeed, a large number of Indigenous writers, educators and theorists in Canada think that applying postcolonial theory to indigenous texts does not do justice to indigenous literatures. Debra Dudek deals with this crucial question in her "Begin with the Texts: Aboriginal Literatures" and contends that: "several Indigenous writers and

[32] Among these problems are assimilation, the invisibility of indigenous people and their knowledges in academia (Henderson 6).

critics—such as Thomas King, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Kimberly M. Blaeser—argue that the term postcolonial neither describes nor empowers either Indigenous peoples or their literatures" (93). At the heart of this indigenous attitude toward postcolonial theory lies a wariness of a possible appropriation of indigenous experience and a presentation of the colonial encounter as the driving force behind indigenous writing. In his essay "Godzilla vs. Postcolonial," Thomas King gives us an account of the main reasons explaining the incompatibility between postcolonial theory and Indigenous literature; he holds that:

> And, worst of all, the idea of post-colonial writing effectively cuts us off from our traditions, traditions that were in place before colonialism ever became a question, traditions which have come down to us through our cultures in spite of colonization, and it supposes that contemporary Native writing is largely a construct of oppression. (242-43)[33]

Here King foregrounds the shortcomings of approaching indigenous literature from a postcolonial perspective. This postcolonial approach robs indigenous writers of their agency. Describing indigenous literatures as postcolonial takes away that agency from aboriginal writers and bestows it upon the moment of colonial encounter. Perceiving that historical moment as the origin of indigenous literatures does not do justice to the writers or their traditions. The theory and methodology I use to read Boyden's novel and avoid the above-mentioned shortcomings of using postcolonial theory benefits from the works of Helen Hoy and Renate Eigenbrod. They are based on an investigation of my position as a non-native reader and "the limitations of my vocabulary and my perception" as well as an attempt at indigenizing my reading practice (Eigenbrod 23-4)[34].

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[33] The same quote is used by Dudek in her insightful analysis of incompatibility between postcolonial theory and Native literatures (Dudek 93).

[34] A more detailed account of my methodology and theory will be provided at the beginning of my last chapter.

Moreover, rethinking community necessarily away from a commitment to the struggle over a shared space, time and identity would be tantamount to depriving a number of presently struggling communities of the very conditions that allowed similar communities to achieve autonomy and build strong national communities in the past. However, a quick look at the state of affairs of postcolonial nations today allows us to see very clearly the dilemma of being together in our global times. The examination of the Sri Lankan civil war (Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*) studied in the third chapter illustrates this. On the one hand, it is difficult to deny the importance of a common territory (space), time and identity for the building of a community—conceived in a normative way. On the other hand, majority groups use the conception of a shared territory, time and identity not just to advance the struggle for communal autonomy but also to affirm their power over other groups struggling for sovereignty over the territory of the nation-state to be. In Sri Lanka, this led to a protracted civil war. Once the trio of shared time, place and identity ossifies, it can be used unscrupulously by political parties. The latter either give priority to power over communal autonomy and social heterogeneity or only conceive of communal autonomy from a very limited normative perspective that serves their interests best. In Boyden's novels, the western calendar is a marker of colonization, while the indigenous way of keeping time is presented as a means of resisting it. It grounds the characters in their indigenous worldview and provides them with a way of resisting the Eurocentric one.

To counter these limitations of normative communities, the alternative communities studied inhabit a precarious middle ground that allows them to hold any configuration of community accountable for the moves any historical juncture demands. If what is needed to achieve justice for a community is a shared territory,

then that territory would be what brings the struggling community together. However, and here the difference between alternative and normative communities becomes clear, that question of territory will not be allowed to unite the community once the issues that called it into existence have been dealt with.

(III) Affect and the Rethinking of Community

Although approaching Indigenous texts from a postcolonial perspective does not do justice to them, this very perspective allows us to test the limitations of the postmodern conception of clinamen. Indeed, looking at Nancy's clinamen from a postcolonial perspective, one cannot but wonder about the terms on which this leaning toward the other takes place. Here, at the intersection of postcolonial and postmodern thinking, the postcolonial school of thought puts into question the way the postmodern school of thought imagines the leaning, inclining and declining at the heart of the postmodern renegotiation of community. Does a self simply and unconditionally lean toward any other? Are there material, historical, political, economic, or even traumatic conditions that privilege certain clinamen in particular contexts? If in this postmodern in-between affect plays a crucial role in bringing people together, are we just to accept the flow of affect as historically, politically, culturally and materially unmarked as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick[35], Brian Massumi[36], Simon O'Sullivan and Gilles Deleuze[37] would have us believe? Given the affective turn[38] in the humanities and the importance of affect for thinkers preoccupied with the question of community, it is important to deal with the intersection of affect and community. How can their relation be reconfigured to imagine more just, hospitable

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[35] Sedgwick contributed to the discussion on affect through her *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003).

[36] Brian Massumi wrote on affect in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (2002) And 'The autonomy of affect" (1996).

[37] Deleuze's *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1997) and *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1988).

[38] Patricia Ticineto Clough's edited collection of essays *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social.*

and empowering conceptions of community? Before delving into a philosophical, psychological and literary discussion of affect, I would like to argue that affect, in the context of community, manifests itself as an affective attachment to a particular conception of community.

Although Patricia Ticineto Clough situates the affective turn in the humanities at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the philosophical origins of the word affect can be2 traced back to the seventeenth century. In fact, Baruch (Benedictus de) Spinoza devotes the third book of *Ethics* to affect[39]. According to him, the work of affect can be seen through affection (the impact one person has on another). This affection is accompanied either by the increase or decrease of the power and happiness of the person affected. This philosophical conception of affect inspires Deleuze's work on it at the end of the 1990s. However, the concept's resurgence in the twentieth century came earlier through the work of psychologists. Contrary to the psychological approach to affect common at the beginning of the twentieth century, Silvain Tomkins[40] (1963) does not theorize affect "only in respect to drives" (Hemmings 552). Not content with the common theorization of affect as a mere medium enabling the satisfaction of drives at the time, Tomkins explores its self-referentiality, the way it links self and other as well as the autonomy of the former (the self). Clare Hemmings sums up Tomkins's contribution to the theorization of affect in the following passage:

> Affect can thus be said to place the individual in a circuit of feeling and response, rather than opposition to others. Further, Tomkins argues that we all develop complex affect theories as a way of negotiating the social world as unique individuals. An affect theory is all of our affective experiences to date that are remembered (or better, perhaps registered) in the moment of responding to a new situation, such that we keep 'a trace, within [our] constitution' of those

[39] The third book of *Ethics* is entitled «On the Origin and Nature of Affects."

[40] Tomkins elaborates his conception of affect in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* (1963).

> experiences (Al-Saji 2000, p. 56). For Tomkins, affect connects us to others, and provides the individual with a way of narrating their own inner life (likes, dislikes, desires and revulsions) to themselves and others. (552)

Affect, from a Tomkinsian perspective, accounts for a relational conception of the subject—a subject always responding rather than being opposed to the other. More importantly, it presents the subject as free from social determinisms, free to "negotiate the social world as [a] unique individual" (Hemmings 552).

The importance of the relation between self and other also characterizes Deleuze's conception of affect (1997). Spinoza's conception of affect and its relation to the conatus influenced Deleuze's work. That influence accounts for most of the differences between his work and that of Tomkins. Underscoring this difference, Hemmings holds that "in contrast to Tomkins, who breaks down affect into a topography of myriad, distinct parts, Deleuze understands affect as describing the passage from one state to another, as an intensity characterized by an increase or decrease in power" (552). The increase or decrease of power coming with a particular state is a consequence of the type of affection of the other on the self.

The works of Tomkins, Deleuze and, to a lesser extent, Spinoza on affect are used at the beginning of the twenty-first century to counter what both Sedgwick and Massumi respectively call "critical paranoia" (Hemmings 553) and the "reign of signification" (Hemmings 551) that characterize the linguistic turn in the humanities. Both Massumi and Sedgwick conceive affect as revolutionary and full of potential because it is outside the realm of signification and can, by the same token, be deployed to subvert dominant social structures. Explaining the reasons behind Sedgwick's and Massumi's conception of affect as a hopeful alternative to social determinism (Hemmings 552), Hemmings contends that "for both authors it is

affect's difference from social structures that makes it possess, in itself, the capacity to restructure social meaning" (550). Although I use affect and explore affective communities in the dissertation, I argue along with Hemmings that affect, if it is to reveal its full potential, must not be conceived of outside signification, nor can it be taken as necessarily liberating.

Furthermore, Sedgwick and Massumi do not consider negative affect in their work, although Tomkins, who influenced Sedgwick's conception and work on affect, devoted two volumes of his *Affect Imagery Consciousness* to negative affect. Only the first volume of his book deals with positive affect. Both Sedgwick and Massumi, however, deal solely with positive affect, thus giving one the impression that there is only positive affect. It is, however, worth noting that affect, when deployed in a normative way, can consolidate an exclusionary and unjust configuration of community. In Soueif's East and West (both during the colonial and global eras) as well as in Brand's multicultural Canada and Ondaatje's civil war-torn Sri Lanka, communities in crisis are communities in which affect is manipulated by those in power to consolidate a status quo that guarantees their hegemony. These negative repressive deployments of affect (although fleetingly acknowledged by Massumi and Sedgwick), are somehow erased to leave room for the real affect, the one that has subversive potential to be foregrounded. Hemmings draws our attention to this limitation in the works of Sedgwick and Massumi and argues that:

> as prominent cultural theorists, they cannot fail to be aware of the myriad ways that affect manifests itself precisely not as difference but as a central mechanism of social reproduction in the most glaring ways. The delights of consumerism, feelings of belonging attending fundamentalism or fascism, to suggest just several contexts, are affective responses that strengthen rather than challenge a dominant social order (Berlant 1997). Sedgwick and Massumi do both acknowledge this characteristic of affect in their work, but do not pursue it, interested instead as they both are in that 'other affect,' that undoes the bad. (551)

This erasure of negative affect from the critical landscape has to be heeded as it can blind us to the crucial role it plays in the building of oppressive and exclusionary communities. Not being aware of such a role will lead in turn not only to idealizing affect, but also to possibly falling prey to its limitations when conceiving alternative communities around it.

Avoiding these limitations depends on an awareness of the imbrication of affect in signification. This imbrication can be discerned from an examination of the relation between response and affect, for instance. A response is the result of a judgement that is in turn, the result of an affection. It is also, by definition, imbricated in signifying and social structures contrary to what Sedgwick and Massumi claim. Their claim that affect is autonomous, Hemmings holds, is a "misreading" of Deleuze (564). Massumi, in particular, misreads Deleuze's conception of the relation between body, mind, affect and judgement. The latter links the body and the social and imbricates both in the web of "interpretative meaning" (Hemmings 564) The connection between bodily response and judgement is so strong that the latter determines the intensity of the former. This kind of connection yields, what Deleuze calls, "maps of intensity"[41] which form patterns (*Essays Critical* 64). These patterns, as Hemmings contends, are "subject to reflective or political; rather than momentary or arbitrary judgement" (564). Engaging the political, historical or economic implications of these affective cycles allows us to provide viable alternatives to repressive and unjust configurations of communities, for instance. An apolitical reading of affect which posits it beyond the realm of signification in which it is imbricated cannot help us respond effectively to

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[41] "Maps of intensity" are maps of individual life and meaning in time, perhaps even constituting time (Hemmings 564).

communities in crisis. In fact, it does not allow us to discern the way communities in crisis, or at least groups within them, contest oppressive, dominant social norms through their resistant political judgements. The alternative communities in the novels I study emerge from such political judgements.

The understanding of affect that informs my conception of alternative communities is based on a politicized reading of affect. I focus particularly on the way intense affective cycles influence the judgement of the people affected in such a way as to lead to the reconfiguration of communities in Brand's multicultural Canada, Ondaatje's civil war-torn Sri Lanka, Soueif's East and West and Boyden's Cree community. I also find that going back to the relationship Spinoza establishes between affection and the increase or decrease of the power and happiness (of the person affected) is very enlightening when dealing with the question of alternative communities. Indeed, it will help me study the novels' depiction of affection and explore the political, historical, traumatic and even healing charge of what flows from the self to affect the other. Moreover, since it is almost impossible to guarantee that affection always leads to the increase of one's power and happiness, the following chapters will show how communal empowerment and prosperity become a function of the counter-normative judgements of people; they will show how those counter-normative judgements will unite those people in their quest for an alternative community.

Affect also refers to the importance of longing, desire and love for the other. This dimension of affect evokes Bataille's earlier rethinking of community as a "society of lovers." Bataille argues that an alternative community is one that would necessarily transgress the norms and laws of society. Blanchot joins Bataille in this regard and agrees at the end of his *Unavowable Community* that "the community of

lovers—no matter if the l2overs want it or not, enjoy it or not, be they linked by chance, by '*l'amour fou*,' by the passion of death (Kleist)—has as *its ultimate goal the destruction of society*" (48 italics mine). Society and normative national communities are instances of the "oeuvre" (the work) against which Bataille, Nancy and Blanchot envisage their alternative conceptions of community. These normative communities are governed by teleology and a set of objectives to be reached.

Blanchot foregrounds the distinctiveness of his conception of an alternative community through his study of the May'68 rebellion. Blanchot explores the opposition between normative communities and his conception of an alternative community at the beginning of the second part of *The Unavowable Community*[42]. The transient manifestation of an unavowable community, during the May'68 rebellion, is characterized by the importance of equality, an explosion of communication and an unconditional hospitality to all "irrespective of their class, age, sex or culture" (30). More importantly, an unavowable community is outside the logic of capital. Moreover, its being "without project" (30) makes it an inoperative community, to use Nancy's term, oscillating between "what we call work, *oeuvre*, and what we call unworking, *désoeuvrement"* (Blanchot 56). This community was not meant to survive (Blanchot 30), nor did it strive for power. As this unhierarchical, not to say anarchic, community cannot be sai2d to have had an objective[43], what mattered for it was "to let a possibility manifest itself, the possibility—beyond any utilitarian gain—of *a being-together* that gave back to all the right to equality in fraternity through a freedom of speech that elated everyone" (Blanchot 30). More importantly, there is a certain affectionate hospitality governing

[42] A study of Margueritte Duras's *La Maladie de La Mort*, translated as *The Malady of Death.*
[43]Having an objective or project will bring the alternative community back to the realm of operative communities.

the relations between the members of this inoperative, unavowable community. Indeed, they give an unconditional welcome to the unknown other and relate to her without conditions or questions. Blanchot refers to this affectionate disposition when dealing with the community's unconditional acceptance of everyone and says:

> May'68 has shown that *without project*, without conjuration, in the suddenness of a happy meeting, like a feast that breached admitted and expected social norms, explosive communication could affirm itself (affirm itself beyond the usual forms of affirmation) as the opening that gave permission to everyone, without distinction of age, class, sex or culture, to mix with the first comer as if with an already loved being, precisely because he was the unknown-familiar (Blanchot 30).

The warmth and affectionate disposition towards and unconditional acceptance of the unknown other inform some of the alternative communities I study here.

Although the alternative conceptions of community offered in the novels under consideration share the affective and counter-normative dimensions of Blanchot's and Bataille's conceptions of an alternative community, affective attachment in the former is always imbricated in politics and ethics. Like the postmodern conception of the alternative community, the alternative communities I examine are never permanent configurations (in the sense that they do not outlast the cause they serve). The main difference between them and the postmodern theorization of alternative communities is that the former are far from being projectless. Indeed, they derive their episodic configurations from projects, be they humanitarian, political or historical. However, like Blanchot's *Unavowable Community*, once the cause behind the project that led to a particular configuration of an alternative community has been defended, that community reconfigures itself in response to the demands of another historical moment. It keeps on oscillating between the work and its unworking and leans towards the latter to provide a

clearing from which a reorganization of that community is undertaken around another project.

(IV) Alternative Communities and Anderson's Modular National Model

In this part of my chapter, I would like to delve into the way the alternative communities I study relate to Anderson's conception of normative national communities. How do these alternative conceptions of community relate to space, time, the other and the question of identity? How do they deal with and challenge the limitations of the modular national model outlined above? Anderson claims that Europeans during the period between 1820 and 1920 developed a modular national model inspired by the pioneering experience in South America. He sees that potential communities emerging from the era of colonialism are also confined to choosing among these models. Partha Chatterjee refers to this elevation of Europe to the role of the creator and reduction of the postcolonial other to a mere imitator as our "postcolonial misery" (Chatterjee 5). Chatterjee's phrase sums up the tragic fate of postcolonials to be cast in the role of imitators (never as innovators). Their fate is even more tragic because the modular national model they imitated compounded their misery. In fact, in *Anil's Ghost*—a novel dealing with the Sri Lankan Civil War, the national normative model is responsible, to a large extent, for the violence and war that ravaged the country for decades. This is mainly because the group in power (the Sinhalese) as well as the group struggling for independence (the Tamils) and the Sinhalese opposition (JVP) base their imaginations of community on the European national normative model. This does not mean that the normative national model cannot work outside Europe. However, imposing this communal model on a heterogeneous population—sections of which were traumatized by British colonial rule while others thrived under it— like the Sri Lankan one, leads more often than

not to civil wars. One aspect uniting the different conceptions and representations of the alternative communities I study is their attempt at finding conceptions of community that are compatible with the composition, needs and causes of the people involved. The viability of alternative communities is a function of their contingency, open-endedness and perpetual reconfiguration around the problems preoccupying those people adhering to it. Preserving their potential for justice, equity and freedom depends on the alternative communities' alertness to the new, urgent demands of its members at any historical moment. The following chapters will make this clear by foregrounding this crucial dynamism animating alternative communities.

If one were to study the reasons behind the alternative communities' refusal to follow the normative national model, one could not fail to see the members' awareness of the crippling limitations of a model conceiving community as limited (geographically and numerically) and moving up or down history in homogeneous empty time (Anderson 26). Anderson's work helps us discern what shape communities take in response to the pressures of both globalization and the disillusionment of so many peoples around the world with the normative, national model. Comparing Anderson's modular nationalism to the alternative conceptions of community offered in the novels under consideration, my dissertation focuses on the alternative communities' conceptions of space and time; more importantly, how those conceptions affect the alternative communities' relation to the other.

The homogenising and solidifying effects of normative, exclusionary communities are avoided by most of the alternative communities examined in the thesis. While normative national communities conceive time as calendrical, "homogeneous empty time" (Anderson 26), the alternative communities conceive of it as heterogeneous. The alternative communities' conception of the present is

constantly haunted by a past or multiple contesting pasts. Conceiving of time as homogeneous and empty, in these contexts, is synonymous with a certain erasure of an insistent haunting that demands an ethical response from the people inhabiting a heterogeneous temporal scape. This ethical response to the co-presence of past and present in *The Map of Love*, *Anil's Ghost*, *What We All Long For* and *Through Black Spruce* informs the question of rethinking community. Not recognizing the haunted temporality of Soueif's novel, for instance, will only obscure the solidarities across the cultural and temporal divides informing the alternative community depicted there.

Furthermore, unlike the normative national community, alternative communities are not limited territorially and numerically[44]. Examining a defining aspect of the normative, national community, Anderson contends that the national community is imagined as limited both numerically[45] and territorially. He holds that "the nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (7). The bounded space of the community does not only give geographical frontiers to the nation-state. It also gives a national identity to the citizens of the latter by othering those people beyond those frontiers. The alternative communities' opposition to this territorial limitation of community does not mean that they conceive of themselves as encompassing the whole world, nor do they advocate the abolition of boundaries. But, they do not limit their solidarities, friendships and alliances to a bounded national space. Moreover, when these alternative communities emerge and want to remain national in scope—a scope

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[44] This is just an assessment of the numerical and territorial boundedenss of the alternative community. An examination of the alternative community making process will follow.

[45] Being numerically limited, the nation is not and cannot be coterminous with humanity. It is finite and enumerable.

dictated by the historical moment and dilemmas that called these communities into existence—they do not adhere to the normative understanding of national territory in so far as the normative national community relies on a fatal process of othering and inhospitality to the other.

(V) Alternative communities and alternative humanism

The alternative communities conceived across cultural and national borders are not limited numerically. This is yet another aspect consolidating the difference between normative national communities and alternative communities. Although they are not coterminous with humanity, alternative communities have the potential to be so, at least in theory. This can be explained by the alternative, truly inclusive humanism at the heart of alternative communities. This humanism, unlike the one that ensued from the Enlightenment, puts at its center the body rather than reason. This does not mean that it excludes reason or does not acknowledge its importance. But by privileging the body that carries the burden of history, politics, violence, injustice and more importantly differences, an alternatively conceptualized humanism strives to guarantee the inclusion of every one.

Rather than privileging European reason, this alternative humanism is hospitable to all bodies: scarred bodies, marginalized bodies, neglected bodies, visibly invisible bodies, invisible bodies, different bodies, traumatized bodies and even monstrous bodies. These bodies do not claim to be and are not represented as undifferentiated. They bring with them their histories, grievances and demands for justice. Their cries demand an accountable and responsible humanism— one that is asked to really cater to all humans and not divide humanity into humans and lesser humans to serve the interests of capital. Adequately responding to these calls determines whether the humanism associated with the alternative communities is

truly different from the humanism associated with Europe and the Enlightenment. The division of people into humans and sub-humans (or non-humans) pervading Enlightenment texts[46], for instance, legitimized the West's colonial enterprises and usurpations of the wealth in the colonies. People in those colonies were represented as uncivilized sub-humans in need of the white man's civilizing mission. Being based on the refusal of hierarchies between groups of humans, this alternative humanism does not permit the use of the discourse on humanism and human rights by global powers to advance their global capitalist enterprises. Studying these alternative humanisms closely, one can see that they respond to Edward Said's call to fashion a different kind of humanism that avoids the limitations of the old, Eurocentric one. Highlighting the possibility of an alternative humanism in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Said says: "I believed then, and still believe, that it is possible to be critical of humanism in the name of humanism and that, schooled in its abuses by the experience of Eurocentrism and empire, one could fashion a different kind of humanism […]" (Said 11). This critical humanism, according to Said, should benefit from the history of abuses of Eurocentric humanism. It should be conceived in such a way as to avoid being co-opted by capitalist enterprises, difficult as that is.

The alternative conceptions of humanism proposed in the novels listed above, as the following chapters will make clear, come at a very high price. Indeed, although the mezzaterrans —people inhabiting a certain middle ground, to borrow Ahdaf Soueif's term, manage to build solidarities across lines of cultural, national, religious, ethnic or class difference, they find themselves faced with the hazards of

[46] Among these texts, one may refer to Immanuel Kant's *On the Different Races of Man* (1775) (*Über die Verschiedenen Rassen der Menschen*) and Charles De Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu's (1748) *The Spirit of the Laws* (L'Esprit des Lois).

the mezzaterra. Their counter-normative friendships and alliances deprive them of the guarantees and privileges that their prior belonging to normative communities used to offer them. In fact, belonging to a normative national community gives the members of that community access to a particular type of friendship, privileges, support and belonging. Alphonso Lingis claims that whatever one does, one is received warmly as the prodigal son by the normative community against which one rebelled. The novels under consideration test and show the limits of this contention. Once one opts for the hazardous space of the in-between and the alternative humanism that comes with it, one automatically loses all the privileges, securities and friendships that the normative community used to guarantee him/ her. As full as the in-between "area of transformation" is with potential, it is also hazardous as it can turn without notice into a dangerous no-man's land (Soueif, *Map* 66).

(VI) Alternative Communities, Alternative Spaces

This in-between space, to which I also refer as mezzaterra and area of transformation, is reminiscent of Homi Bhabha's "third-space" and Edward Soja's "Third Space." It is true that Bhabha's "third space," which is a "metaphor for an alternative space that is emerging once people of different cultures try to negotiate and transgress the boundaries between self and other" (Ikas 123), helps people inhabiting it to go beyond normative forms of solidarity, friendship and community. At the same time, it always runs the risk of being reduced to an "element of a series of discrete and bounded spatial units which have 'condensed' alongside distinct ones" (Julia Lossau 70). The space of the in-between enabling the imagination of alternative communities, in the novels studied here, avoids the pitfalls of Bhabha's conception of the third space. In this regard, the spaces from which alternative communities are imagined have more in common with Soueif's conception of the

mezzaterra than with Bhabha's theorization of the "third space." Defining the mezzaterra, Soueif says: "looking back, I imagine our sixties as a spacious meeting point, a common ground with avenues into the rich hinterland of many traditions" (Souief, Mezzaterra 6). The interesting diagram that Soueif draws of the mezzaterra clearly shows its difference from Bhabha's third space. It also helps the reader of Soueif's political essay, *The Mezzaterra: Fragments from the Common Ground*, know why and how her conception of the area of transformation avoids the pitfalls of Bhabha's third space.

In her conception of this middle ground, Soueif stresses the fact that neither the mezzaterra, nor the surrounding cultures, religions and traditions are bounded. This implies that the mezzaterra is imagined as an unenclosed space with open access to equally unbounded regional, national and traditional domains. The mezzaterrans' access to the hinterland of many traditions and cultures, in the 1960s, has long been limited as this hinterland is now bounded and well-guarded by particular nations claiming ownership and sovereignty over it. This enclosure does not mean the end of the mezzaterra. It just means that inhabiting the mezzaterra is all the more hazardous. This takes us back to the hazards that come with the alternative conception of humanism underlying the alternative conception of humanism at the heart of the alternative communities. The precariousness of the in-between stems from the antagonism of the bounded spaces. At any moment, the mezzaterrans can become the targets of people guarding the sacred borders of national territories on all sides of the mezzaterra.

(VII) Alternative Communities and Subversive Translation

Inhabiting the mezzaterra also influences the kind of translation produced by the mezzaterrans. Instead of the conservative translation associated with normative

communities, the mezzaterrans produce a transgressive translation. In order to define the latter, an examination of the former is in order as transgressive translation is provided as a response to conservative translation. Enlisting translation in a project that rethinks community, at a historical moment characterized by jingoism and parochialism, is particularly significant given the strong ties between translation, the invention of literary discourse, and the emergence of national communities. Lawrence Venuti studies this intricate relationship through his examination of the importance Friedrich Schleiermacher gives to "foreignizing" translation[47] as a means of forging a national German culture and national community[48]. Schleiermacher outlines his nationalist theory of translation in a lecture presented to the "Prussian Academic Establishment on 24 June, 1813" (Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility* 90). His theory foregrounds the paramount importance of translation in the development of "national cultural politics" (Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility* 90). Another major feature of his theory is its emphasis on the mutual affection of the source and target languages. The latter, according to Schleiermacher, must retain the imprints of the former. It is this foreignizing impact of the foreign language on the target language that allows Schleiermacher to develop German away from the French model and influence. Upon this linguistic development depends the development of a German national culture. This in turn will lead to the development of the German nation.

The democratizing promise of Schleiermacher's national cultural project evaporates, however, as the abovementioned linguistic and national developments

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[47] A foreignizing translation brings the foreignness of the source language and culture to the target language. Comparing foreignizing translation to domesticating translation, Venuti says: "The question is whether they [translations] are thoroughly domesticating or incorporate foreignizing tendencies, whether they resort to 'trumpery' by concealing their 'manipulations' of the foreign text or show 'respect' for it by 'offering' a 'correspondence' that 'enlarges, amplifies, and enriches the translating language (81)." The target language is enriched by the inscription of the idiosyncracies of the source language and culture on it.

[48] This occured during the first half of the nineteenth century.

are tailored to the tastes, demands and priorities of the German, educated elite. Venuti foregrounds the affiliation of Schleiermacher's translational project saying that: "Here it becomes clear that Schleiermacher was enlisting his privileged translation practice in a cultural political agenda: an educated elite controls the formation of a national culture by refining its language through foreignizing translation" (*Translator's Invisibility* 86). The conception of the nation this foreignizing translation yields is exclusionary, as it only reflects the perceptions and values of one group of German people, namely the educated elite. It produces a uniform and homogenizing cultural identity which is aligned with a specific social group. Needless to say, the conception of the German nation underlying Schleiermacher's conservative, translational project serves only the interests of the afore-mentioned group and guarantees its hegemony.

The alternative community studied in the second chapter deploys transgressive translation in its struggle against the stereotyping effects of conservative translation. Like Schleiermacher's translation, Boyle's foreignizing translation in *Map* is used to consolidate national identity. However, it is in no way democratizing, as it only represents the interests of the cultural constituency in power. *Map*, as I will show in detail in chapter two, responds to this by harkening to more than one audience, questioning normative representations of the other and representing the interests of more than one cultural constituency. Unlike conservative translation which consolidates the hegemonic discourse and representations of the other, transgressive translation in *Map* questions that discourse and those representations to produce translations that attempt to know the other in her own terms and acknowledge the limits of that knowledge. Moreover, reading transgressive translation metaphorically as a subversive act of translating the oriental

other ethically contributes to the building of the alternative community in *Map*. This kind of translation is based on communicating with and knowing the other intimately. It bridges the gaps maintained by hegemonic discourses between cultures and nations. The latter reinforce the normative boundaries separating self from other.

The acts of subversive translation in *Map* counter acts of conservative translation. Here I would like to define the background against which transgressive translation is proposed. The institutional production of translation reproduces the stereotypes, values, representations, and perceptions of those in power in order to further their interests and guarantee their hegemony. Venuti refers to the political importance of translations reproducing the values and representations of the hegemonic discourse to the maintenance of the status quo. He holds that, "[i]n cases where translations are housed in institutions like the church, the state, or the school, the identity-forming process enacted by a translated text affects social reproduction by providing a sense of what's true, good, and possible" (*The Scandals* 78). The metaphorical acts of translation in the novel, on the other hand, form alternative, counter-hegemonic cultural constituencies.

(VIII) Methodology

Having dealt with the theories of community that inform the framework of my dissertation, I will devote the following part of the Introduction to the methodology. The theories of community I used in my investigation of the question of alternative communities helped me discern a certain dynamic at the heart of the fictional depictions of these communities. However, approaching my texts through those theories, I quickly realized the way the latter were questioned by the former. This dialogue between fictional representations and theories of alternative

communities allowed me to see the limitations of the latter and take the theoretical rethinking of community a step further. Using a number of keywords for each chapter, I examine each novel's contestation of and alignment with the theories of community detailed above. My keywords are affect, longing, subversive (cultural) translation, friendship, healing, touch and self-determination[49].

The keyword through which I approach the question of alternative community in each chapter will allow me to rethink and renegotiate community away from the limitations of the community in crisis presented in the novel under consideration. My choice of the keywords is inspired by the novels themselves. They represent the focus of my approach to the different conceptions of the alternative communities studied in this dissertation. Inspired by the novels, the keywords shape not only my reading of the configuration of alternative communities but also the exchange between the novels and theories introduced. This exchange, which is mediated by the keywords, also helps one discern the limitations of the theories. The configuration of affect in Brand's *What We All Long For*, for instance, challenges Massumi's and Sedgwick's conceptions of affect beyond the realm of signification. Likewise, Soueif's conception of the mezzaterra will allow me to theorize the space of in-betweenness, associated with the alternative communities, beyond the limitations of Bhabha's third space.

The keywords through which I will engage with the diasporic novels (affect, longing, subversive (cultural) translation, friendship, healing and touch) share a common trait: their reference to strategies that help us rethink the relation between self and other in such a way as to re-imagine community beyond ethnic, cultural, national and religious differences. Moreover, they refer to the means through which

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characters are brought together as members of an alternative community responding to a communal crisis. Before dealing with the keyword around which my study of Boyden's novels will revolve, I would like to explain the rationale behind the choice of my diasporic novels. Juxtaposing a British diasporic novel (Soueif's *Map*) and two diasporic Canadian novels (Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* and Brand's *What We All Long For*) aims at foregrounding the global scope of the question of rethinking community and the different fictional responses to communal crises emanating from different geopolitical locations—their similarities as well as their divergences.

So far I have dealt with the keywords that I will use to develop my methodology in the chapters dealing with the diasporic novels. The radically different configuration of the communal crisis and conception of the alternative community in Boyden's novels necessitate a different type of keyword dictated by the indigenous worldview informing *Through Black Spruce* and *Three Day Road*. The keyword I will use for the last chapter is self-determination. There is a productive tension not only between the worldviews informing the diasporic texts and that informing Boyden's novel, but also between the first group of keywords and the keyword that will help me engage with Boyden's novels. This tension can be explained by the difference between communities dealing with the limitations of the normative national communal model (in the diasporic novels) and an indigenous community struggling for its sovereignty and self-determination. Moreover, the centrality of filiation to the worldview shaping the alternative community in Boyden's novels demarcates the latter from communities seeking alliances, solidarities and friendships beyond those allowed by the modular national model (in the diasporic novels).

(IX) Chapter Outline

My first chapter studies an affective alternative conception to Canadian multiculturalism in Brand's *What We All Long For*. This alternative conception of community revolves around Tuyen's artistic work and the conception of a number of alternative micropublics. Examining Tuyen's Lubiao—an artistic work that unites the longings of Torontonians, I will explore the accountability and responsibility at the heart of a community that longs to belong.

My second chapter examines the alternative community and the mezzaterra from which it emerges as depicted in Soueif's *The Map of Love*. I will focus on the potential of subversive cultural translation. More precisely, I will study the way it enables the characters who resist the interpellation of normative communities to forge counter-normative constituencies which are hospitable and open to the other. As a response to conservative translations that reduce the other to a set of stereotypes, the mezzaterrans' practice of subversive cultural translation allows them to build solidarities and communities across lines of cultural, national and even temporal difference. These counter-normative communities revolve around values shared by different normative cultural constituencies that are presented by the hegemonic western discourse as irreconcilably different. The shared values that bring east and west together in one cultural constituency, in the novel, are a tolerance of difference[50]. This tolerance is accompanied by the constant attempt at knowing the other in her own terms and not through the stereotypes propagated by those in power. Another important shared value in which the constituents of this alternative cultural formation believe is dialogue as a major means of knowing the other.

My third chapter explores the tightly-knit relation between healing, touch and the emergence of an alternative community in Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*. In this

[50] This acknowledgement of differences is grounded in an acknowledgement of the relations of power informing them.

chapter, I will study the importance of touch not only as something that distances the alternative community from the normative one, but that also brings the latter together in spite of ethnic, religious and linguistic differences. Another key theme with which I will deal in this chapter is the importance of unconditional hospitality in relation to healing and the constitution of an alternative community.

My last chapter examines the emergence of an alternative conception of community at the intersection of story telling, healing and the revival of indigenous rituals. Telling stories not only brings sick people to life, but it also evokes an indigenous practice—windigo killing—through which communal autonomy is claimed. I will explore this intersection through a reading of Boyden's *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce*. I will focus mainly on the way story telling and windigo killing permit the renegotiation of a self-defining Cree community.

The Alternative Affective Community in Dionne Brand's What We All Long For

Introduction

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* studies the crucial role played by the novel in the rise of nationalism in Europe during the period between 1820 and 1920. This simultaneous development in the political and fictional realms incites one to pose the following questions: In a global world marked by the crisis of the nation-state, how is the relationship between the latter and the novel configured? Do the fictional portraits we get of a particular national community coincide with, contest or exceed its "real" counterpart? Although these questions are posed in a globalizing context, answering them must be local given the variety of guises globalization processes take in different locations. This chapter examines the alternative proposed to the Canadian, multicultural community in Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*. This national best seller not only criticizes the multicultural status quo, but also proposes an alternative to it. The tension between the institutional sanction the book receives as a national best seller, on the one hand, and its proposal of an alternative configuration of community, on the other hand, evokes Smaro Kamboureli's account of Canadian Literature. The latter "contests the stateness [of the Canadian state], and boldly points beyond it, to an elsewhereness that is not yet legible, that defamiliarizes the tropes that produce transparency and its accompanying contentment and complacency" (x).

This chapter engages with Brand's approximation of that elsewhereness. In my opinion, two major factors make it necessary to study Brand's alternative to the multicultural Canadian community. First, the severance of the erstwhile strong ties between nation and state, which started at the end of the 1970s and has since deepened due to the pressures of globalization. Second, there has been an increasing

critical interest in cultural and political theories of affect in the humanities. The first factor, which is also a symptom of the crisis of the nation-state, results, as Delanty argues, in the state's loss of its "monopoly on collective identity" and consequently in a power vacuum due to the end of the era of "nationalism as a project of nation-state building" (Delanty 97). This power vacuum seen in light of recent theories of affect, developed by Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Hally in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (2007), represents a historical opportunity for the redefinition of community from below. Referring to the affective turn does not imply that thinking community in conjunction with affects is unprecedented. Rather, it was and is still used by political systems to align the individual bodies of citizens with a particular conception of the body politic, an alignment that serves the interests of those in power and maintains the status quo. In this chapter, I argue that Brand's *What We All Long For* reconfigures the affective economy at the national level in such a way as to forge a longing, alternative "we," one that is inclusive and empowering. The first part of the chapter studies the importance of affect to the criticism and rethinking of community in Brand's novel. The following section of the chapter criticizes Canadian multiculturalism's management of diversity and the negative affective impact of such a management on minority groups. The last part of the chapter studies the alternative conception of community proposed in the novel and shows its limitations.

What We All Long For tells two interwoven stories highlighting the affective dimension of the characters' lives. On the one hand, we have the stories of four Torontonian youths: Oku, Carla, Tuyen and Jackie. This narrative strand is told by an omniscient narrator in twenty-five chapters. Throughout this longer part of the novel, the narrator tells us the stories of the four friends and those of their parents.

The past of the latter haunts them perpetually and punctures their present as well as that of their children. This explains the friends' flight from their families and their forging of an affective micro-community. The other narrative strand is the first-person account by Quy—the lost son whose memory haunts the Vus throughout their life in Toronto. I call them the Quy chapters because they are not part of the first narrative strand which is arranged numerically. A Quy chapter interrupts the flow of the first narrative strand without affecting its numerical order.

The term affect has philosophical and psychological genealogies as it is outlined in the introduction. The study of affect and the affective community in this chapter is informed by the work of Gilles Deleuze as well as that of Baruch (Benedictus de) Spinoza. The notion of affect is central to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's conception of the multitude—an alternative global community. Hardt and Negri recuperated this notion from the work of Deleuze and Guattari, who in turn recuperated it from Baruch de Spinoza, the philosopher of substance. Spinoza's notion of affect revolves around affection (the impact of the self on the other and of the other on the self).

There has been an increasing interest in affect in Canadian literary studies. Peter Dickenson's interesting paper "Subtitling CanLit," for instance, studies the psychological genealogy of affect. His study of this genealogy of affect is influenced by the work of Teressa Brennan. Moreover, his work explores the potential of affect as it gets played out in the classroom situation in order to "create counter-narratives of reparative possibility and even revolutionary change" (50). Diana Brydon's insightful reading of Brand's *Inventory* is another instance of the increasing interest in affect in Canadian Literary studies. It examines the emergence of an affective

citizenship. This chapter contributes to this developing body of scholarship on affect by focusing on Spinoza's notion of affection.

An empowering affection is accompanied by an increase of power and happiness, while a disempowering affection is associated with a decrease of power and happiness. The normative multicultural community portrayed in Brand's novel manages difference in such a way as to decrease the power of visible minorities and increase their sadness. The affect generated by the official multicultural policy is negative. It permits those in power to contain diversity and preserve the status quo. As the alternative affective community, which is associated with positive affect in the novel is a response to the discrimination, oppression and injustice of the normative community (Canadian national community) and its deployment of negative affect, studying the latter is of paramount importance to understanding the former. Furthermore, the importance of affection goes hand in hand with the conception of being that is open to the other. This conception of being is radically different from that of the Cartesian subject or individual who is presented as self-sufficient, sovereign and totally independent from the outside world and the other. The openness of the finite being allows the latter to incline toward the other and form a community. Jean-Luc Nancy develops this post-Cartesian conception of being as finite and on the limits of being in *The Inoperative Community*. Central to his conception of an alternative community is the "clinamen, this declination or decline of the individual within community" (Nancy 4). The clinamen is at the heart of community formation according to Nancy; it consists in the inclination of the self toward the other.

(I) The manifestation of Affect in Brand's *What We All Long For*

Before examining the normative and alternative communities depicted in Brand's novel, studying the importance of affect to the configuration and depiction of both is in order. In fact, the importance of affect as an element through which being-together (community) is criticized and rethought is signalled right from the beginning of the novel. The opening chapter, for instance, portrays the way passengers on the train affect one another. It foregrounds the work of affection at the heart of being-together. The impact of the story told by the three friends on the other passengers who will "be trying to figure out the rest of the story all day" and the friends' "succumbing to some law they'd broken" illustrate this work of affection (Brand 3). The elation of the newly-arrived immigrant who hears the laughter of the friends on the train is another instance of the work of affection. The friends' laughter increases his happiness. However, affection may lead to one's empowerment and happiness as it may lead to one's disempowerment and sadness. The narrator stresses this precarious condition: "what floats in the air on a subway train like this is chance. People stand or sit with the thin magnetic film of their life around them. They think they're safe, but they know they're not. Any minute you can crash into someone's life, and if you are lucky, it's good, it's like walking on light" (Brand 4). This passage undermines the Cartesian binary between self and other. It shows the impossibility of the self's total independence from the other and the outside as well as the inevitability of the interdependence between self and other. One's life is a film around oneself, an uncontainable "heterogeneous baggage [which] falls out with each step on the pavement […] so much spillage" (Brand 4). One is bound to affect the other with that film around one.

In order to guarantee that being-together is empowering, accountability to the other should regulate the relationship between self and other and, by extension, between people and those in power. This accountability does not sufficiently govern the relationship between the government and visible minority groups in the Canadian multicultural context. Indeed, affect, as Brand's critique of multiculturalism illustrates, is deployed by those in power in order to contain minority groups and maintain the status quo. This normative deployment of affect—or negative affect, to put it in Hemmings' terms—disempowers the aforementioned groups and increases their sadness (551). Oku's reading of the way the multicultural policy shapes the management of urban space (Toronto) is a case in point.

(II) The Novel's Criticism of Multiculturalism

Oku's reading of the negative affective repercussions of the management of space in Alexandra Park—a neighbourhood inhabited mainly by African Canadians in Toronto—shows the way affect can be used by those in power to disempower sections of the population under their rule. Focusing her criticism of multiculturalism on the deployment of negative affect distinguishes Brand's criticism of this policy from the one developed by Himani Bannerji and Rinaldo Walcott. Thinking about the desolate state of the neighbourhood with "its scarred brown buildings" as well as the absence of trees, flowers and colour, Oku understands the bitterness of Jackie's father and that of the other "burned-out" black guys (human wreckage as he prefers to call them) on Vanauley Way (Brand 260). The management of this neighbourhood defines and tames its inhabitants. That taming leaves its imprints and traces on the bodies of the citizens in question. Jackie's father's (Mr. Bernard) "wry, defeated and bitter" face testifies to such a taming. Although Mr. Bernard's risk-taking and dangerous living account for his physically-

registered bitterness and defeat, poverty, color and the way the multicultural policy deals with both do have their role to play in that affective and material predicament. Underscoring the way power produces negative affect and decreases the power and happiness of minority groups, the narrator argues:

> [p]eople defended that park, saying to the city, in so many words, Don't drop your negative vibes on us, we're trying to live the same as everybody, but if you couldn't see it in your heart to put a garden here, if you turned over every piece of earth, then don't blame us. Would it have killed them to splash a little colour on buildings? […] The general outlook might have been worth it. The sense of space might have triggered lighter emotions, less depressing thoughts, a sense of well-being. God, hope! The park wouldn't have driven Jackie's father and mother to drink like it had. And the dream of going back down east for good wouldn't have faded and died right there on the narrow asphalt of Vanauley Way (Brand 262).

This passage testifies to the intricate relationship between normative power, as a force shaping urban space, on the one hand, and negative affects and disempowerment, on the other hand. The depressing management of space affects the behaviour and attitudes of the inhabitants of Alexandra Park negatively and contributes to their disempowerment.

The negative affective impact of the management of urban space on the abovementioned section of the population also warns us against idealizing the potential of affect as a way of countering the hegemonic status quo. Hemmings criticizes Brian Massumi and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick for such an idealization of affect as it does not allow us to discern the imbrication of affect in oppressive and

discriminatory configurations of community[51]. Furthermore, the conception of affect informing this chapter diverges from the one adopted by both Massumi and Sedgwick as the former does not situate affect outside signification the way the latter does. Hemmings notes this shortcoming of Massumi and Sedgwick's work (conceiving of affect outside signification) and holds that "for both authors, it is affect's difference from social structures that makes it possess, in itself, the capacity to restructure social meaning" (550).

The negative affective impact of multiculturalism examined above is compounded by multiculturalism's recognition and management of diversity. The friends' school experience, for instance, shows that the Canadian school system is conceived in such a way as to respond to the needs of an implied white Canadian student. Indeed, Tuyen, Carla, Oku and Jackie find out very early in their school life that "nothing [they were taught] was about them" (Brand 19). This irrelevance of the school system to the friends makes one wonder who the imagined learner targeted by the educational system is. The ideal learner around whose needs the school system is conceived is not neutral or unmarked. Indeed, the educational system is tailored to fit the friends' white classmates who are given the central and active role of actors in the school scenario. Hyphenated Canadians like Tuyen, Carla and Oku, on the other hand, assume the passive role of spectators. "So [the friends] settled in as mainly spectators to the white kids in the class" (Brand 20). This alienates them in the educational context. Moreover, Tuyen's response to her mother's request to fit in "[y]es ma I'll get a blonde wig and fit in alright" gives a concrete shape not only to the ideal learner in the Canadian school context, but also to the ideal citizen: a white mainstream Canadian (Brand 19). Funny as it is, Tuyen's answer hints at the

[51] For a detailed discussion of this point, see introduction.

concreteness of the national ideal. Like Sara Ahmed's examination of the question of the Muslim veil in the French context, Tuyen's answer and the friends' marginal position in the educational context reveal "the intimacy of a national idea with an ideal image" and suggest that "the national ideal takes the shape of a particular kind of body, which is assumed in its 'freedom' to be unmarked" (Ahmed, "Revolt" 99).

The white, Canadian imagined learner at the heart of the Canadian educational system and the "blond wig" to which Tuyen refers reveal the masquerade of Canadian liberal pluralism as corporate pluralism (multiculturalism). The major difference between these two responses to the pluralist dilemma consists in the latter's recognition of difference in the civic realm. Countries that choose liberal pluralism as an answer to the pluralist dilemma (like France) assert the neutrality of the civic realm and do not allow "any ethnic, religious, or linguistic minority groups [to possess] separate standing before the law or government" (May 125). The friends' alienation in the Canadian educational context shows that the difference between corporate pluralism and liberal pluralism is blurred as both aim at attaining universalism by other means. In both cases, the ideal image at the heart of the national idea is that of a particularism masquerading as a universalism.

The recognition of difference, being a defining characteristic of corporate pluralism, further disempowers minority groups. In fact, the recognition of differences depends on their closeness to and compatibility with the abstract ideal of white mainstream society. The more members of minority groups fit the above-mentioned ideal image at the heart of the national idea, the more acceptable they are to mainstream society. More importantly, Brand's novel shows that the differences sanctioned within the multicultural framework are mere semblances of differences. They are emptied of the potential to bring about significant change in the civic realm

and public sphere[52]. In this regard, Canadian multiculturalism is simply a politically correct means of maintaining the hegemony of mainstream groups by actively crippling, what Smaro Kamboureli calls, the "'third force'—a coalition of all non-English and non-French ethnic collectivities" (97). Multiculturalism, with its emphasis on expanding "[this policy] throughout Canada in harmony with the national commitment to the official languages of Canada," strives to circumvent the power and potential of "the third force" (Kamboureli 97).

Furthermore, the multicultural policy, as it is applied now in Canada, filters differences, tames them and confines their safe expression to the realm of safe spectacles, ethnic food stores, and restaurants. Differences are tolerated as long as they do not threaten to significantly alter the civic realm. Other traditions are recognized and respected, but not allowed to legitimize certain acts or support crucial culture-specific demands. Only the mainstream tradition has that power. The recognition of difference associated with the official multicultural policy does not empower visible minorities.

The management of diversity in multicultural Canada does not recognize cultural differences in a way that would empower visible minority groups legally, for instance. The recognition of diversity is presented and conceived as the major problem of visible minorities in multicultural Canada. This conception of the problem of visible minorities is problematic as it, on the one hand, does not lead to the empowerment of the groups recognized and, on the other hand, does not deal with their material and class problems. This superficially cultural reading of the

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[52] Sara Ahmed's criticism of Australian multiculturalism draws our attention to a similar flaw in it, when she says : « I will also suggest that multiculturalism can involve a double and contradictory process of incorporation and expulsion: it may seek to differentiate between those strangers whose appearance of difference can be claimed by the nation, and those stranger strangers who may not yet be expelled, whose difference may be dangerous to the well-being of even the most heterogeneous of nations (SEN 97)."

problems of minority groups is to be heeded as it reduces the material problems of minority groups to cultural ones only to deal with the latter in a way that allows those in power to maintain the status quo. Structural injustices remain outside of the official interpretation of the problems of minority groups. The criticism of Canadian multiculturalism in Brand's novel examines these structural injustices and highlights the material structures responsible for the problems of minority groups.

Brand's criticism of the structures of injustice in multicultural Canada revolves around her conviction that a multiculturalism concerning itself solely with a commodification and fetishization of cultural differences at the expense of crucial structural and class issues can only fail miserably. For instance, Brand's focus on the Vus's decertification due to their Vietnamese origins foregrounds Canada's multiculturalist tendency to reduce the cultural difference of the other to things like "arranged marriages, and ethnic food, clothes, songs and dances," as Bannerji argues (296). The Vus were "defined by the city," and metaphorically by Canada and its multicultural policy as ethnic food and a Vietnamese restaurant (Brand 66). That is the tribute multiculturalism pays to their cultural difference. It is acknowledged through the presence of the restaurant. But that same difference also accounts for the decertification of the Vu couple and their confinement to slums at the beginning of their life in Toronto. "Tuan used to be a civil engineer in Vietnam, Cam, a doctor. When they arrived in the Promised Land, the authorities would not ratify their professional documents" (Brand 65). The decertification of the Vus and their occupation of positions that do not match their high qualifications remind us of Bannerji's contention that "by locking immigrant workers into zones of menial labor and low wages, the state has brought down the wage structures of the country as a whole. It has actively de-skilled and marginalized Third World immigrants and

forced them into the working class" (294). "Locking immigrant workers into zones of menial labor" also means that the best jobs are kept for mainstream Canadians. The novel conveys this plight of immigrant workers through their spatial confinement to slums, and gruesome, depressing places like Alexandra Park.

Along with its disempowering recognition of diversity, Canadian multiculturalism manipulates minority groups affectively to determine their solidarities. Indeed, its recognition of cultural differences segments the third force and divides it into separate groups. Each of the latter is identified through a number of signs (linguistic, religious, cultural and/ or culinary). This segmentation of the third force is evoked through the enumeration of the ethnic neighbourhoods at the beginning of the novel. The narrator refers to "the Italian neighbourhoods and Vietnamese neighbourhoods in this city; there are Chinese ones and Ukrainian ones and Pakistani ones and Korean ones and African ones" (Brand 41). This conception of neighbourhoods around particular national cultures hints at the kind of solidarities encouraged by the multicultural policy. Needless to say, the affective leaning toward a familiar other is not to be explained solely as the work of multiculturalism, but the multicultural policy doubtlessly contributes to this kind of affective leaning. The affective leaning encouraged disempowers minority groups as it keeps them separate from one another. It does not allow them to see their common material grievances. Rather, it emphasizes their differences to keep them affectively unaligned and divided in order to maintain the status quo. Indeed, the unity and affective alignment of minority groups will certainly give them more power to bring about social change. The conception of alternative community proposed in *What We All Long For* encourages the affective leaning discouraged by the multicultural policy as the micro-community of friends makes it clear.

(III) The Alternative Community in What We All Long For

(III.i) The Alternative Micro-Community of Friends

The alternative micro-community of four friends (Tuyen, Oku, Carla and Jackie) not only challenges the affective configuration of community encouraged by multiculturalism, but also privileges friendship over filiation, friends over family. They forge this community through their relations across lines of ethnic difference. Oku and Jackie are African Canadians; Tuyen is Vietnamese-Canadian; and Carla is an African Canadian who may pass for a southern European. Their community is not built around a shared ethnic, religious or cultural background, but rather on "their common oddity" (Brand 19). What matters in this regard is not their being of Asian, Jamaican or Italian backgrounds, but their difference from the mainstream. Taken metaphorically, the affective leaning of these friends towards each other across lines of difference challenges the normative affective leaning of people sharing a common background.

The affective alternative micro-community does not only challenge the affective configuration of community encouraged by Canadian multiculturalism, but also the normative conception of community more broadly speaking. Taking Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* as a reference point, normative national communities are described in "the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, *Vaterland*, *patria*)" to convey the natural ties relating citizens to it (143). Metaphorically, normative national communities are seen as big families and "have about them a halo of disinterestedness" (Anderson 143). The friends' rejection of their families hints at the difference of their alternative community from the communities seen metaphorically as big family. Tuyen, for instance, decided to leave her family because the relations between its members are governed by duties and material well-

being. The following description of her family can also be an adequate account of a national community: “she [Tuyen] had left the embrace of her family—truthfully, not embrace, her family did not embrace. They fed you, they clothed you, they fattened you, but they did not embrace. Yet they held you. With duty, with obligation, with honour, with an unspoken but viselike grip of emotional debt” (Brand 61). This is an appropriate metaphorical account of the relationship between Canada and a majority of its citizens. It would actually coincide with what Rudolf Kalin calls “civic nationalism” (28). In this context, one’s relation to the nation can be translated into a balance sheet of rights and duties.

Cooking is another trope through which the alternative micro-community distances itself from their families and metaphorically from the normative conception of community. Before dealing with Oku’s culinary creations, it is worth noting that both Carla and Tuyen have cultivated an aversion to Jamaican and Vietnamese food respectively. Tuyen’s childhood, for instance, was marked by the reduction of the Vus to the Vietnamese restaurant. Through their aversion to the ethnic food related to the cultural backgrounds of their families, they counter multiculturalism’s reduction of difference to ethnic food.

(III.ii) Oku’s Cooking and the Unity of the Third Force

Oku’s cooking metaphorically resists multiculturalism’s segmentation of the third force. His development of his culinary skills does not rely exclusively on his parents’ Jamaican background or his mother’s cooking. Had he contented himself with that, his cooking would simply reinforce multiculturalism’s fetishistic understanding of diversity and, thus, consolidate the status quo. Despite their aversion to Vietnamese and Jamaican food respectively, Tuyen and Carla like Oku’s food. His cooking unites the friends and metaphorically conveys the difference

between their alternative community and multicultural Canada. Oku's cooking interestingly combines his mother's cooking with what he has learnt from his friends' mothers. Indeed,

> he [Oku] had taken his mother's training and augmented it all along the way with all the trainings of all the mothers of the friends he had. His father would probably not approve, preferring the monoculture of Jamaican food, but Oku's tastes had expanded from this base to a repertoire that was vast and cosmopolitan. (Brand 132)

This description of Oku's cooking and his difference from his father provide a different conception of the relation between the different minority groups in Canada. Rather than privileging one's cultural background or visible signs of difference, this conception of the relation between the different minority groups privileges the breaking of barriers between the groups and the collective use of the different traditions, cultures and culinary skills of all groups to achieve social change for all. It distances the community from the monoculturalism preferred by Oku's father who would prefer "the monoculturalism of Jamaican food" and the consequent strengthening of the boundaries of his ethnic group metaphorically speaking. In this sense, Oku's cooking and his access to the different culinary traditions of his friends is reminiscent of Ahdaf Soueif's concept of the mezzaterra presented in the introduction. Soueif defines the mezzaterra as "a spacious meeting point, a common ground, with avenues into the rich hinterland of many traditions" (Mezzaterra 6). The friends act from a "common ground" that allows them to have access to different traditions in order to resist the status quo and advance the causes of minority groups if need be.

Tuyen's identification with Korean Canadians on the day of Korea's victory during the World Cup is another instance of the alternative community's privileging of unity and solidarity among minority groups. Her reaction to the television announcer's comment renders this beautifully:

> [a]s she left her apartment, she heard a television announcer say, 'I didn't know we had a Korea Town in the city.' Asshole, she thought, you wouldn't. You fuckers live as if we don't liveet here. She wasn't Korean, of course, but World Cup made her feel that way. No Vietnamese team had made it, so today she was Korean. (Brand 204)

The alternative community proposed in Brand's novel is strengthened by a number of micropublics associated with it. Leonie Sandercock uses Ash Amine's micropublics to articulate her conception of urban cosmopolitanism and community. Micropublics are "sites such as the workplace, schools, colleges, youth centers, etc." as sites of "coming together with ethnic differences" (Sandercock 45). However, the alienation and marginalization of the friends at school put the efficiency of school as a micropublic into question. "Coming to terms with ethnic differences" cannot take place in schools, which are an integral part of the ideological state apparatus (Sandercock 45). Indeed, the four friends in Brand's novel find themselves compelled to enact certain roles that are already scripted for them in the multicultural scenario. The micropublic presented as an alternative to the abovementioned co-opted micropublics in the novel is the Casteries Barber Salon:

> He [Oku] got a haircut at Casteries Barber Salon after an hour's wait and strong debate on the state of the world. The barbers were in-house philosophers. They commanded a chair and an audience—people waiting for their hair to be cut. They rivalled each other for the

> fineness of argument and their depth of knowledge. The barbershops were universities of a kind and repositories for all the stifled ambition of men who were sidelined by prejudices of one sort or another (Brand 189).

The barbershop, described in this passage, is a counter-hegemonic micro-public where voices silenced in micro-publics, like the university to which Oku goes, are heard. It is also a place where alternative, or simply other, knowledges circulate.

(III. iii) Tuyen's Lubaio and the Alternative Community

Along with the micro-affective community and the counter-hegemonic micropublics, the alternative community in Brand's novel is imagined through Tuyen's lubaio. The lubaio is a Chinese signpost that serves as an artistic intermediary thanks to which Tuyen attempts to establish communication between the city of Toronto (and by extension the government) and the citizens. More precisely, Tuyen's installation consists in gathering the longings of citizens and posting them on the lubiao. Tuyen presents her installation as an alternative to the fake signposts/ lubiaos in Chinatown on Spadina. Explaining this to her friends Tuyen says: "you know these fake carved posts they've put in the middle road down on Spadina? In Chinatown? Well, they're kitsch down there, but they're supposed to be signposts. Like long ago people would pin messages against the government and shit like that on them. So my installation is to reclaim … […] I still have to think it all through" (Brand 16-17). Tuyen does not explicitly announce what her installation reclaims, but following the progress of her artistic work throughout the novel makes it clear that her work aims at reclaiming a public space or platform from which Torontonians can interact with their city and government. The potentially counter-normative aspect of this public space is signalled by Tuyen's reference to the

fact that long ago "people would pin messages against the government and shit like that on them" (Brand 16).

Tuyen's choice of the Lubaio instead of the Wenshou or Hutong, elements of Chinese architecture in the Purple Forbidden City, gives us an insight into the difference between the alternative community proposed in the novel and the normative community. Although in its heyday, nationalism was not yet *en vogue*, the structure of the Purple Forbidden City, as well as the symbolism of the Wenshou and Hutong can be read as proto-modern and proto-nationalist. At the centre of the city is the imposing palace that is raised on a podium to further distinguish it from the surrounding buildings. The centrality of the palace is meant to reflect the power and special status of the emperor, as Liu contends (34). The Wenshou is also associated with the emperor's control of the people; the latter's subservience and obedience to the former. Wertz highlights the power relations represented by the Wenshou:

> Chinese palaces, temples and mansions have special kinds of ornaments on their roofs called Wenshou or 'zoomorphic ornaments.' Some are found on the main ridges […] these are made of glazed ceramic and form an outward marching procession. The imperial yellow glaze is always reserved for the emperor. At the tail of the procession will be an imperial dragon, representing the authority of the state. At the head of the procession will be a man riding a Phoenix, one legend suggests that he represents a minion of the emperor who grew greedy for power and was hanged from the roof gables for treason […] another interpretation is that this is a person serving the emperor, being watched by the following beasts (Wertz 2).

So, the Wenshou, a Chinese architectural decoration, evokes the absolute power of the king and the subservience of the people who have to observe their duties to the king under the gaze of the Wenshou. The repressive symbolical charge of this architectural element and Tuyen's aversion to a conception of a community based on duty explain Tuyen's rejection of the Wenshou as a possible object of her installation.

Likewise, the Hutong, which refers to the intricate system of alleyways in the city of Beijing, bears the mark of unequal power relations. It also bears the mark of discriminatory practices on the basis of class. The discrimination and inequality associated with the Hutong echo the exclusionary and discriminatory character of Habermas's public sphere against which Tuyen develops her own radically democratic and inclusive public sphere. The Hutong also reminds us of the class-based and discriminatory management of urban space in the novel. Carla's cycling from the "down-scale suburb of Etobicoke, which looked like the badlands of some alienated city" (Brand 28) through "the upscale region of High Park [with] its old British-style houses" (Brand 29) to the centre of the city where she lives, makes the reader aware of the spatial inscription of discrimination. Being aware of the repressive symbolic change of both the Hutong and Wenshou, Tuyen opts for the Lubaio, a Chinese sign post and intermediate artistic space between longing citizens and the state—a component of civil society[53] that is full of potential. Furthermore, Tuyen's choice of colours—white cloth and black ink—is a departure from the oppressive and discriminatory symbolic charge of the architectural models she discarded (Wenshou and Hutong). Having dealt with the difference between

[53] Civil society is defined generally as "a zone of mediation between the state and the private individual (Crossley and Roberts 2)."

alternative communities and normative communities, the next section deals with the material Tuyen chooses for her installation.

The material on which Tuyen chooses to inscribe the longings of citizens is evocative of the monstrous flesh of the multitude in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's work. She chooses a "huge diaphanous grey-white piece of cloth" (Brand 155). Her choice of this material aligns her project with Spinoza's conception of life and transformation. Referring to Spinoza's anticipation of the monstrous flesh of the multitude, Hardt and Negri contend that: "Once again, Spinoza is the one who most clearly anticipates this monstrous nature of the multitude by conceiving of life as a tapestry on which the singular passions weave a common capacity of transformation, from desire to love and from the flesh to the divine body" (Hardt and Negri 194). Tuyen's choice of a piece of cloth as the material on which to inscribe the citizens' longings rather than glass, videos, or paper, evokes the Spinozan conception of life as a tapestry—an intersection of threads (Brand 155). Video enactments would have separated the different longings. Paper would not have conveyed the flesh-like fabric of the Spinozan tapestry. However, the diaphanous grey-white piece of cloth metaphorically renders the idea of a common space in which singular passions do not have to be tailored to the uniform national mould to be voiced.

The messages Tuyen gathers and inscribes on the aforementioned piece of cloth are the longings of citizens; their answers to her question: "What do you long for?" Basing an installation that rethinks and re-imagines community on longings highlights its affective dimension. It also allows the citizens to express their singularity and heterogeneity. Longing is the only requirement to belong to the alternative community. The yearners are accepted into this community no matter what their ethnic or cultural background may be. Moreover, the alternative

community challenges heteronormativity by accepting homosexual longings like the ones Tuyen has for Carla.

Evolving around the longings of the citizens, the alternative community avoids the pitfalls of presentism. Avoiding these pitfalls allows the alternative community not to fall prey to amnesia. It also makes it accountable to the spectres of the past haunting its members. Only such an accountability to the ghosts of the past can generate a better future for the members of the alternative community. The editor's longing for relief from multiplicity, for instance, evokes his disenchantment with the multicultural Canadian present and expresses his nostalgia for a time when the photograph of the Stanley Cup stood alone without the encroaching pictures of hyphenated criminals. The editor's nostalgia for the past hints at the ideal future he envisages for Canada: a uni- or mono-cultural future that would assimilate all minority groups. The potential of longings, in this regard, stems from their encapsulation of past, present and future. Shaped by their sufferings, failures, disenchantments, regrets or successes, the longings of citizens either heed these or strive for them in the future. The simple longings evoke happier pasts (a safe childhood, past dreams turning sour) and reclaim better futures by reclaiming past "dreams, desires and possibilities" (Cho 178). The importance of reclaiming past dreams to the reclamation of better futures is reminiscent of Cho's articulation of the relation between the reclamation of postcolonial pasts to the reclamation of postcolonial futures. Arguing for a "reclamation of postcolonial futures," Cho says "I am also asking for a reclamation of postcolonial pasts, of dreams, desires, and possibilities which mark postcolonial and Canadian literary studies
178)."

In spite of foregrounding and respecting the singularity of yearners, the alternative community pays particular attention to the unity of yearners. This unity which does not homogenize the yearners or take away from their singularity is conceived at the linguistic level. Giving form to that commonality can be seen as the first step towards forming a political multilingual community that includes people who are, otherwise, compelled to deal only with the particular and the foreign, something multiculturalism sadly fosters. The narrator underscores the importance of capturing a space of linguistic commonality to Tuyen's project:

> Yes, that is the beauty of this city, it's polyphonic, murmuring. This is what always filled Tuyen with hope, this is what she thought her art was about—the representation of that gathering of voices and longings that summed themselves up into a kind of language, yet indescribable. Her art—she had pursued to stave off her family—to turn what was misfortune into something else. She had devoted all the time to it, and here they were—her family—returning again and again. (Brand 149)

Tuyen's art, like the micro-affective community of friends, takes its distance from family and filiation; her art privileges affiliation friendship over family ties. Unlike the latter, which restrict solidarity and collectivity to relations of same with same, the former privileges and necessitates border-crossing. It also extends solidarity and friendship to the other across lines of cultural, linguistic and national differences. The privileging of affiliation over filiation is also signalled by the importance of the figure of the border-crosser: Angie, Carla's mother. Indeed, Angie is presented as the paradigmatic border-crosser of the alternative community in Brand' s novel: "Carla had said it all, not just about her mother but about all of them. Trying to step across the borders of what they were. But, they were not merely trying. They were,

in fact, borderless" (Brand 213). Border-crossing allows the members of the alternative community to forge counter-normative alliances and solidarities and further challenge multiculturalism's segmentation of the third force. More importantly, the members of the alternative community described above are borderless and, thus, open to the affection of the other which may increase the happiness and power of the person affected or decrease them. The precariousness of such a condition is rendered through Angie's tragic end. Her rejection of her Italian community with their arranged marriages as well as restriction of solidarities to the community of Italian Canadians and crossing over to Derek's[54] world lead to her eventual suicide. She commits suicide after Derek's rejection of her. Having left the safe world of filial belonging behind and crossed over to the other's world, she loses ground when the other denies her access to his world. The precariousness of her situation as a border-crosser is reminiscent of the precariousness of Ahdaf Soueif's mezzaterra studied in the third chapter. Like Anna who gave up her British friendships to cross over to the Egyptian world of Sharif Basha, Angie finds herself suspended in the middle of nowhere. She is unable to go back to the safe world of filiation or cross over to the space she forged through affiliation.

The precariousness of the openness to the other characterizing the alternative conception of community in Brand's novel is increased by the inclusion of perverse longings. Presenting the conception of alternative community informing the lubaio as unconditionally hospitable to all longings even the hideous ones, Tuyen says to Carla that not including such longings would make her installation "a fake" (Brand 58). Those hideous longings exist and any serious attempt at rethinking community and making it more empowering and democratic should grapple with their existence;

[54] Derek is African Canadian.

otherwise, the project becomes utopian, unrealistic and blind to its own limitations. Carla's revulsion from the abject, perverse longings and her decision not to help Tuyen inscribe them on the diaphanous cloth of the lubiao already hint at the necessary and understandable, affective disalignment between yearners with positive, empowering longings and those with negative, perverse and dangerous longings.

Like Tuyen's incomplete statement about what her installation aims to reclaim at the beginning of the novel, her grappling with the tension between unconditional hospitality and the limitations of including perverse longings in her project remains unfinished. Such a tension between unconditional hospitality, as Derrida defines it[55], and the precariousness of including it as an integral part of a project rethinking community crops up not only in Brand's novel, but also in the other diasporic texts (Soueif's *Map* and Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*) that propose unconditionally hospitable alternative communities. This tension remains unresolved in the above-mentioned texts. It remains unresolved as the two ethical demands to, first, be unconditionally hospitable, and, second, acknowledge the precariousness and threat inherent in that very hospitality are equally important. However, given the crises of community and the problems ensuing from repressive and discriminatory normative communal models, dealt with in the three aforementioned novels, the alternative conceptions of community proposed take the risk of being unconditionally open to accommodate everyone and avoid the pitfalls of normative, discriminatory communities. However, they all register their

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[55] Derrida elaborates on this difference between conditional, codified hospitality, or what he calls, "the laws (plural) of hospitality" (77) and "the law of hospitality" (77) respectively. The latter demands that we transgress the former in order to be able to welcome the stranger without demanding her name or complying with the legal norms regulating codified hospitality. For a more detailed discussion of this point, see the introduction.

awareness of the risks, threats and precariousness that come with a counter-normative openness and hospitality to the other.

Carla's aversion to the hideous longings and her refusal to participate in their communication also gestures towards the formation of a "skin of [alternative] community" among yearners with positive longings (Ahmed 96). The formation of the skin of community, as Ahmed—taking her cue from Julia Kristeva—conceives of it, is a function of an alignment of individual bodies with a collective body. Abjection plays a crucial role in this alignment. It permits members of the community to move away from certain alignments and solidarities and toward others that would guarantee their safety. However, Ahmed uses her conception of "the skin of community" to examine the formation of normative, national communities and the alignment of individual bodies with the collective body of the community as a response to the threatening presence of an outsider.

Following this line of logic, one becomes aware of the easiness with which the alternative community can turn into yet-another normative community. It is true that the yearners with positive longings will preserve the potential and welfare of the alternative community by leaning towards the other yearners with positive longings and away from those with negative ones. However, one wonders whether such an affective alignment will not unnecessarily exclude some yearners, mainly if we take into account the fact that Tuyen, the artist, does not speak to the yearners with perverse longings. She just intuits them (i.e. the longings). The narrator highlights the artistic mediation and imagination that go into Tuyen's production of the lubaio: "there were longings about bodies hurt or torn apart or bludgeoned. *No one had actually confided details. She had intuited these*, perceived them from a stride, a dangling broken bracelet—a rapist's treasure, each time he rubbed the jagged piece

he remembered his ferocity" (Brand 158 Italics mine). The yearners themselves do not confess the hideous longings she incorporates in the lubaio. Tuyen's speaking for such yearners also hints at a major limitation of her artistic, communal project. Her reading of the "dangling broken bracelet" as a sign of criminality and perversity may be mistaken after all. Although the artistic mediation of longing is crucial to Tuyen's project of re-imaging community through longings, the reader has to be cautious about the carrying across of longings onto the lubaio. In that carrying across of longings, some of them are altered or even imagined. And, those acts of imagination or alteration, crucial to the artistic work, may be as repressive as the multicultural policy to which the lubaio is proposed as an alternative.

Conceiving an alternative to the normative multicultural community in Canada depends on affectively aligning minority groups and dealing with the structural injustices responsible for their decertification and alienation. Central to Brand's alternative community are affects, micropublics, culinary skills and artistic works. The affective alternative community proposed in *What We All Long For*, different as it is from the alternative communities studied in the other chapters, shares a dilemma that haunts the alternative communities proposed in the diasporic texts under consideration: the unresolved tension between being unconditionally hospitable and the precariousness of such hospitality. The urgent crises plaguing the communities in the novels of Ondaatje, Soueif and Brand necessitate the risk-taking involved in such hospitality. Leaning on the limits of their being, the characters in the aforementioned novels incline towards the other to forge empowering solidarities beyond the limitations of normative communities. They incline toward the other even though they are aware of the precariousness and bleakness of ending up groundless, suspended in the middle of nowhere. The suspension, non-belonging,

alienation and even possible death (or suicide) that may ensue from the courageous counter-normative leaning toward the other—undertaken by Angie in Brand's novel, for instance—characterize all the alternative communities presenting themselves as unconditionally hospitable.

Mezzaterran Community, Politics of Friendship and Transgressive Translation in

Ahdaf Soueif's The Map of Love

Affective affiliative formations emerge to contest the exclusionary boundaries of normative filiative formations (like the nation) and forge solidarities with those beyond the borders of the latter. Although literature and translation play a crucial role in consolidating the configuration of normative communities, they also provide the loci from which alternative communities can be and are imagined. Novels affiliated with the hegemonic group, at the national level, bestow naturalness on the bonds between fellow citizens. These communities revolve around a politics of similitude privileging, as Leela Ghandi contends, "separation over relationality, demanding uniformity as the price of belonging" (25). The relations between fellow citizens in these normative communities are represented in filiative form. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* provides analyses of this aspect of normative communities. His book also foregrounds the importance of filiative metaphors and the vocabulary of kinship in creating an aura of naturalness around national communities. The cohesion and continuity of these communities are predicated upon an exclusion of the other, a representation of the other as inferior and incommensurably different from the self. This representation of the other as radically different limits, not to say forecloses, the possibility of communication and solidarity across cultures or nations. Ghandi and Jacques Derrida examine the exclusionary (even narcissistic) character of these communities and relate it to the self-sufficiency and non-relationality of the said communities. When it comes to international relations, these normative national communities tend to privilege relations with communities that are similar to them. Even such an apparently cosmopolitan imagining of international communities as Emmanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, which anticipates the League of Nations and

subsequently the United Nations, is informed by this ethics of similitude. Ghandi underlines this communitarian solipsism, this tendency to bond with the same both at the individual and national levels: "Communitarian and partialist thought, no less, Hegel's valorized relation of Same with Same, always privileging commitments to those who are either 'proximates' 'given,' or in some inalienable way 'our own' (of the same nation, family, community, republic, revolution, etc.)" (25). This commitment to the same leads to the discursive demonization of the other. In the western context, for instance, it also consolidates the superiority of the self and legitimizes its violent colonial and global capitalist enterprises in the territories of the other. In this chapter, I argue that the politics of friendship and cultural translation as well as the middle-ground from which the afore-mentioned acts emerge cement the alternative community in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*. In the first part of my chapter, I outline the protagonists' initial normative attitudes toward the other. This stereotypical attitude is dictated by the worldviews, values and representations propagated by the hegemonic discourse in the protagonist's nation. Then, I examine the mezzaterra, a transformative space adopted by the members of the alternative community as the ground from which they struggle for justice and social progress. After studying the mezzatterra as a space that gives its inhabitants access to a wide range of cultures and traditions, I explore Soueif's translational novel as a fictional and linguistic mezzaterra. The last part of my chapter investigates the crucial role played by a Derridean politics of friendship and transgressive cultural translation in the emergence of an alternative community in *Map*. It also studies three tropes through which the alternative community is portrayed in Soueif's novel: Anna's tapestry, the mosque in St-Catherine's monastery and the hybrid shrine next to al-Baroudi house.

Soueif's *Map* tells the story of two cross-cultural couples at the beginning and end of the twentieth century. Amal, a first-person narrator and protagonist, unearths Lady Anna Winterbourne's story from a trunk brought to her by Isabel Parker, an American journalist and long-lost cousin. Anna, a British lady, visits Egypt at the beginning of the twentieth century in an attempt to get over the loss of her husband, Edward. Ensnared by the Orientalist glow of John Frederic Lewis's representations of the East and influenced by her father-in-law's anti-imperialist attitude to British colonialism in Egypt, she chooses the latter as the site of her convalescence. She meets Sharif Basha, an Egyptian lawyer and nationalist, after being kidnapped by young Egyptian nationalists. Their romance and marriage end with the assassination of Sharif Basha, who has enemies in all camps. The reader gets three versions of the story: through Anna's diaries as they are read by Amal, Layla Ghamrawi's account of the same romance and Amal's imaginative reconstruction of the story.

(I) Normative Attitudes towards the Other

At the beginning of the novel, the protagonists Anna, Sharif Basha, Amal and Isabel have normative attitudes toward the other. These attitudes align them with the normative national communities to which they belong. Amal, upon hearing that Isabel is an American journalist who wants to write about Egypt immediately stereotypes her. Amal makes sense of Isabel through the *clichés* available to her when Isabel first calls. The narrator refers to this moment saying:

> Amal could not pretend she was not wary. Wary and weary in advance: an American woman—a journalist she had said on the phone. But she said Amal's brother had told her to call and so Amal agreed to see her. And braced herself: the fundamentalists, the veil,

> the cold peace, polygamy, women's status in Islam, female genital mutilation—which would it be. (Soueif, *Map* 6)

Seeing Isabel as just another American journalist, who would reduce the oriental other to a number of stereotypes, Amal indirectly identifies with a particular Egyptian constituency that sees all American journalists this way. Although this common view of American journalists is quite understandable in the Egyptian context, it may consolidate the illusion that a national community, be it American or Egyptian, is homogeneous. Likewise, when she first meets 'Omar al-Ghamrawi, Isabel is briefly concerned with the rumours about his connections with terrorists. She shares her concerns with Deborah saying: "Is he really involved with terrorists?" (Soueif, *Map* 8). Understanding the limitations of normative communities as well as their crises necessitates an examination of the structures that produce stereotypical, reductive attitudes towards the other.

The stereotypical, normative representations of the other underlying conservative translation, literature and painting contribute to the protagonists' alignment with normative national communities or, what I called in the introduction, normative constituencies. As the hegemony of a normative constituency depends, to a large extent, on its homogeneity, it efficiently propagates beliefs, values and representations of the other that pit its members against the latter. The British, colonial, normative constituency, for instance, reduces the other to a number of degrading stereotypes. This in turn legitimizes his representation as inhuman and inferior to the self. These discursive strategies deployed by the British normative constituency lead simultaneously to a valorization of the self and a devaluation of the other. The other and the other's country become the epitome of an evil that has to be fought against. The other's inferiority, quasi-primitivity and depravity legitimize the

colonizer's *mission civilisatrice* or, to put it in Rudyard Kipling's words, "the white man's burden." This colonial discourse strips the other from his/ her humanity and civilization in order to discursively make room for the colonizer as protector and guardian of the child-like inhabitants of its colonies. However, as *Map* and history show us, this is but a discursive sleight of hand that allows British colonial forces to achieve their capitalist objectives.

A number of scenes in Soueif's novel reveal the dynamics responsible for the formation and consolidation of the British normative constituency. More importantly, they allow us to identify the media and institutions through which normative constituencies can hail their members into the role of dutiful citizens. These citizens see the other the way the normative constituency wants them to see the other. In their relationships to the Egyptian other, they relate more to the stereotypical conceptions of the other than to the other as such. This explains the absence of understanding, communication, friendship and solidarity between Egyptian and British characters at the beginning of the novel. The only friendships and solidarities possible are thought within the confines of the nation (be it British or Egyptian). Among the media deployed by the British, normative constituency in the novel are: conservative translation, art (literature and painting) and the hegemonic official discourse.

(I.i) Conservative Translation and Normative Attitudes towards the Other

Conservative translation plays a crucial role in the production and consolidation of the British national community and identity in *Map*. Harry Boyle's fake translation illustrates this very well. Conservative translation is best understood in relation to its opposite: transgressive translation. The difference between the two kinds of translation is determined by the position of intelligibility in which the

translation places the reader and the constituency affiliated with that position, the relation between the translation and national institutions, as well as the representation of the foreign culture (and the other) underlying the translation. Articulating the difference between the two types of translation, Venuti contends that:

> Whether the effects of a translation prove to be conservative or transgressive depends fundamentally on the discursive strategies developed by the translator, but also on the various factors in their reception, including the page design and cover art of the printed book, the advertising copy, the opinions of the reviewers, and the uses made of the translation in cultural and social institutions, how it is read and taught. Such factors mediate the impact of any translation by assisting in the positioning of domestic subjects, equipping them with specific reading practices, affiliating them with specific cultural values and constituencies, reinforcing or crossing institutional limits. (68)

Upon considering its representation of the other, its relation with institutions as well as the position of intelligibility into which the British reader of Boyle's fake translation is placed, it becomes clear that his is conservative.

Harry Boyle's fake translation not only allows Lord Cromer to get the reinforcement he wishes for in Egypt, but also contributes to the consolidation of a homogeneous, national identity in the British context. Boyle's fake translation is sent to the Foreign Office in 1906 "to give a true picture of the workings of the oriental mind" as Carla Boyle asserts in her memoir, published in 1965 (Soueif, *Map* 493). To produce this true picture of the oriental mind, Boyle relies on a large number of orientalist stereotypes that discursively legitimized British colonial presence in Egypt. These stereotypes, which inform not only the fake translation but

also Lewis's paintings, British literary works and travelogues, are presented by British colonial institutions as the truth about the other. Carla Boyle acknowledges the fakeness of the translation, but asserts that the representation of the oriental other informing it is truthful: "although he [Harry Boyle] invented the 'translation,' he did not invent the spirit of it which served as a graphic illustration of the situation" (Soueif, *Map* 494). This "graphic illustration" of the situation and the oriental mind, I would add, underlying the translation simultaneously reinforces the normative domestic representation of colonial Egyptians and consolidates the British national identity formation process. In fact, the translation places the British people in the Foreign Office a well as British public opinion in a position of intelligibility that "is also an ideological position, informed by the codes and canons, interests and agendas of certain domestic social groups" (Venuti 68). The codes and canons at the basis of this position of intelligibility represent the oriental other, in general, and the Egyptian other, in particular, as a foolish, fanatical person using an excessively flowery language. To make the tableau of the oriental other complete, Boyle adds a translation of an Arabic verse about camels: "why do the camels march so slowly? Are they bearing stone or iron?" (Soueif, *Map* 419). Upon listening to Ya 'qub Basha's translation of this verse, Sharif Basha recognizes a crucial component of the "codes" (Venuti 68) informing the above-mentioned position of intelligibility into which the translation places its British readers and says: "Ah, the camels—I have been waiting for those! […] There had to be camels" (Soueif, *Map* 419).

Another well-known stereotype through which British literature, travelogues and paintings, at the time, identified the Egyptian other is the use of flowery language. Carla Boyle refers to this important stylistic strategy deployed by her husband to convince his readers of the presence of an Egyptian original behind his

translation and says: "the original paper, typed by Harry laboriously with two fingers, is still in my possession. As will be seen, there is all the picturesque, flowery language of the East, transposed into equally picturesque English" (Soueif, *Map* 493). Among the expressions used to give translation this flowery aspect are: "To the Branch of the Fair Tree, the light Rain of the Generous cloud, the Son[56] and Daughter of the prophet" (the opening salutation), "May all the odours of these greetings be upon you and may the blessing of God cover you" and the misreading of the name of a woman (Souad) for the name of a planet in "How can one arrive at the planet Souad" (Soueif, *Map* 417).

The content and style of the fake translation make Ya 'qub Artin Basha, Sharif Basha and Shukrey Bey *realize* that the translation must be fake. They all see it as a "joke" (Soueif, *Map* 417), "nonsense" and "rubbish" (Soueif, Map 419). Knowing Arabic very well and, more importantly, being well-acquainted with British stereotypical representations of the oriental other, Sharif Basha and his friends agree that the letter is a forged translation and that it was written by Englishmen who know almost nothing about Arabic and Arabs, let alone about Islam. Indeed, responding to the fake translation, Shukri Bey says: "It could not have been written by an Arab. It makes no sense." Ya 'qub Artin speculates about the nationality of the writer and his knowledge of Arab culture and thinks that "this is the work of an Englishman. An ignorant Englishman who imagines he knows how Arabs think" (Soueif, *Map* 419). Sharif Basha's speculation, however, is confirmed by Carla Boyle's memoir as he guesses that the writer is no other than Harry Boyle (Soueif, *Map* 419).

Studying the reactions of the British people (in the Foreign Office and even those of anti-imperialist characters like James Barrington and Anna) side by side

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[56] This is definitely a joke as the prophet had no son.

with the reactions of Sharif Basha and his friends (members of the Egyptian bourgeoisie) shows the British normative conception of the Egyptian other for what it really is: a set of stereotypes that has nothing to do with reality. Egyptians (like Sharif Basha and his friends) can easily read the representation of the other as an orientalist joke emanating from the writer's ignorance of the Egyptian culture and people. Unfortunately, the British people who read Boyle's letter believe its content because British literature, paintings and conservative translations of Egyptian works (those aligned with the dominant discourse) have taught them to equate the Egyptian other with those stereotypes. Sharif Basha sums up the way Boyle's conservative translation interpellates British people into positions of intelligibility that best serve the interests of those in power: "but the Foreign Office will not know that [the fact that Boyle' s conservative translation is a fake one]. They will read 'camels' and 'God is generous' and odours of blessings' and they will say fanatical Arabs' and send the troops" (Soueif, *Map* 419). In this sense, Boyle's conservative translation "constructs a domestic representation for a foreign text and culture and […] simultaneously constructs a domestic subject'' (Venuti 68). The Foreign Office does send reinforcement and Lord Cromer's objective is achieved thanks to Boyle's forged translation. The consolidation of the status quo as well as the homogeneity and unity of the British, normative national community is, thus, conditioned upon an ideological blinding of British people to the "wrong being done here [Egypt] and that there is a living world which [British] people are refusing to see or hear about," as Anna argues (Soueif, *Map* 209). The ideology that seeps through conservative translations, art and all the other media aligned with the hegemonic discourse blind and deafen British people to the "living world" of the Egyptian other and restrict

their knowledge of that other to the above-mentioned reductive and dehumanizing stereotypes.

Having dealt with the highly-knit relation between the identity making process and conservative translation, it is worth noting that Boyle' s foreignizing translation of the "target" language is reminiscent of Schleiermacher's recourse to the same strategy. A foreignizing translation consciously inscribes the foreignness of the source text, language and culture on the target language. While Boyle does not resort to foreignizing translation in order to contribute to the development of a national language, culture and nation[57], they both enlist foreignizing translation in nation-building projects and coopt its democratic potentials. In fact, foreignizing translation is supposed to give the readers of the target language an idea about the foreignness of the source language and culture. Theoretically, it should hospitably make room for the idiosyncracies of the source language. It is also supposed to do away with the stereotypical representations of the other and her culture. Rather than doing away with these stereotypes, Boyle's translation is full of them. The ethics of sameness[58] at the heart of his translation compromises the democratic promise of foreignizing translation. Moreover, instead of attempting to know the other and her "living world," it merely reduces her to a set of stereotypes that consolidate the status quo and the hegemonic discourse (Soueif, *Map* 209). The other major element that undermines the potentials of foreignizing translation in Boyle's letter is the ethnocentric movement inherent in his translation. This ethnocentric movement manifests itself in the fact that the translation takes into account just the interests of

[57] Schleiermacher deploys this translational strategy in order to contribute to the emergence of a German language, culture and nation. See introduction for more details.
[58] "Institutions, whether academic or religious, commercial or political, show a preference for a translation ethics of sameness, translating that enables and ratifies existing discourses and canons, interpretations and pedagogies, advertising campaigns and liturgies—if only to ensure the continued and unruffled reproduction of the institution (Venuti 82).

the dominant cultural constituency at the detriment of other constituencies. One of the British cultural constituencies whose interests are not represented in Boyle's document is the one made up of British anti-imperialists like Anna, Sir Charles and George Barrington[59].

(I.ii) Arts and the Domesticating Attitude toward the Other

Paintings, literature and art, in general, play an equally important role not only in consolidating the British normative national community, but also in shaping Anna's perception of and attitude to the Egyptian other. Anna's stay at the Shepherd's hotel and her association with the people at the agency, at the beginning of her Egyptian adventure, compel her to see things through the lenses of British common sense. Although she questions the jingoistic attitudes of the British gentlemen affiliated with the Agency (Mr. S. and HD, Lord Cormer, and Harry Boyle), Anna keeps on seeing Egyptian reality through the orientalist tales she read and orientalist paintings she saw in England. Her attitude in the bazaar and in Zeinab hanim's Haramlak[60] shows this clearly. Her visit to the bazaar gives her a feeling of *déjà vu*. This déjà vu is not connected with the unconscious (as defined by Sigmund Freud), but to the values, worldviews and representations of the other that cement a cultural constituency together. Exoticizing representations of Egypt in British literary works, newspapers, guidebooks, travelogues and paintings account for Anna's reaction at the bazaar:

> It is exactly as I have pictured it, the merchandise so abundant, the colours so bold, the smells so distinct—no, I had not pictured the smells—indeed could not have—but they are so of a piece with the whole scene: the shelves and shelves of aromatic oils, the sacks of

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[59] Ghandi's Affective Communities studies this British cultural constituency and the solidarities it forged with the colonized other.

[60] Haramlak is the area in the house reserved for women.

> herbs and spices, the necks rolled down to reveal small hills of smooth red henna, lumpy ginger stems, skinny black carob sticks, all letting off their spicy, incensy perfume into the air. (Soueif, *Map* 67)

The exoticizing representations of the other to which Anna was exposed in England also explain her reaction upon finding herself in Sharif basha's haramlak. In fact, her knowledge of a number of orientalist tales allows her to interpret the scene in which she finds herself. Her journal entry dated March 13 testifies to this: "I had been abducted as a man and in the oriental tales I have read it has happened that a Houri or a princess has ordered the abduction of a young man to whom she has taken a fancy" (Soueif, *Map* 134).

The impact of the orientalist discourse pervading British paintings, literature and art on Anna persists during the first part of her Egyptian adventure. Before she feels that her destiny is somehow connected to Egypt, her knowledge of Egypt— in spite of her discontent with the disdainful attitudes of most British people (in Cairo) towards Egyptians—is shaped by "British" common sense, another name for the hegemonic discourse. Before 'a conviction must have grown in [her] mind that if a creature of such little significance as [herself] can be said to have a destiny, that destiny bore, somehow, a connection to Egypt," (Soueif, *Map* 101) she expresses the constant interruption of her immediate experience of Egypt by the "magical space" carved out by the British community in Cairo (Soueif, *Map* 195). Anna refers to this magical space, which recreates Britain in Cairo for those British people who abide by its imperialist and segregationist rules, saying:

> I felt at once the fear of being discovered and the strangeness of their sweeping by me without acknowledgement—but the oddest thing of all was that I suddenly saw them as bright, exotic creatures, walking in

> a kind of magical space, oblivious to all around them, at ease chattering to each other as though they were out for a stroll in the park, while the people, pushed aside, watched waited for them to pass. (Soueif, *Map* 195)

This is Anna's account of how she sees members of the Agency in the train station during her Sinai adventure with Sharif Basha. She sees them from the perspective of a veiled Egyptian woman and stresses the liberation[61] that results from wearing the veil. In fact, the veil allows her to discover the reasons for the alienation that comes with accepting the rules of the Agency community life. Keeping the privileges of a secure belonging to the British community in Egypt depends on appropriating Egyptian space, making it another England, and thus acting as if there were no natives. In this imperialist *tableau*, natives are either servants or "professional malcontents," as Mr. Boyle calls the effendis[62]. Anna's Egyptian experience as a member of the Agency gives her the eerie feeling that she did not leave Britain. She refers to this in her March 10 journal entry saying: "And yet—I sit in my room at the Shepherd's hotel possessed by the strangest feeling that still I am not in Egypt" (Soueif, *Map* 102).

(I.iii) The Hegemonic Discourse and its Attitude toward the Other

The hegemonic discourse, no matter through which medium it is channelled, predetermines the attitudes of the members of the community in question towards the other in such a way as to serve the interests of the hegemonic group. Edward's involvement in the brutal battle of Umm Durman illustrates this. Indeed, firmly

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[61] «Still, it is a most liberating thing, this veil. When I was wearing it, I could look wherever I wanted and nobody could look back at me. Nobody could find out who I was. I was one of many black-clad harem in the station and on the train and could have traded place with several of them and no one been the wiser" (Soueif 195).

[62] Educated, Egyptian men belonging to the bourgeoisie

believing in the oriental discourse's construction of the eastern other as monster-like, "fanatical dervishes," Edward joins the British forces and goes to Sudan.

> He had stood on the plain of Umm Durman and the thought that had hovered around him in 'Atbara, in Sawaskin, in the officers' mess—the thought that he had for weeks held at bay—rose out of the dust of the battlefield and hurled itself full in his face in its blinding light. And once that thought had revealed itself and taken hold, the fanatical dervishes transformed themselves in front of his eyes into men, men with their sorry encampments, with the ragtag followers of women and children and goats, with their months of hunger upon their bodies, and their foolish spears and rifles in their hands, and their tattered banners fluttering above their heads. Men impassioned by an idea of freedom and justice in their own land. (Soueif, *Map* 35)

The power of the hegemonic discourse here blinds Edward to the "living world" of the Egyptian other and the justice of his cause (Soueif, *Map* 209). More precisely, it makes him unable to see his shared humanity with a people fighting for a just cause that was hidden from him due to the overwhelming effects of the orientalist discourse. The stereotypical representation of the other as fanatical dervishes convinces British soldiers of the rightfulness of their fight in Umm Durman as well as the injustice of the cause of the Sudanese Dervishes. It is upon such a discursive sleight of hand representing justice as injustice and vice versa that the interests of the hegemonic groups depend. The dissolution of the stereotypes on the plain of Umm Durman and the sudden eruption into view of the other's humanity shock Edward, haunt him and precipitate his death.

A similar perception of Egyptian peasants informs the hegemonic discourse in postcolonial Egypt. Indeed, peasants are represented as terrorists, natives and fanatical islamists who want to overthrow those in power (Soueif, *Map* 124). Presenting the fellaheen (peasants) as "natives" is particularly interesting in a novel that juxtaposes the stories and histories of a land (Egypt) both in the colonial and global eras (Soueif, *Map* 438). First, the word has a colonial resonance and was used by British colonial forces to refer to the Egyptian fellaheen. Second, in its conjunction with the discourse of terror in postcolonial Egypt, it is a crucial element in the discursive apparatus allowing the Egyptian government to control this potentially subversive segment of the population. The relegation of peasants to the status of non-citizens and even infra-humans legitimizes state violence and terrorism against them. It makes the soldiers and police forces torture and kill peasants without impunity. It also makes them conflate peasants with terrorists. This discursive apparatus allowing this conflation turns peasants into homo sacer who can be killed without punishment. "Everybody in the Sa 'id] is a suspect," as a high-ranking officer tells Amal (Soueif, *Map* 439). The scene in which Amal goes to the markaz (police station) to inquire about 'Am Abu el-Ma 'ati afer his arbitrary detention shows the aforementioned discursive apparatus at work. Upon her arrival to the markaz "one of the soldiers heads for the markaz and I start to follow. The women open the doors of the car but the soldiers push them back, 'No natives,'" (Soueif, *Map* 438). Then, to Amal's shocked exclamation "these are your people," the soldier replies "I'll be shot" (Soueif, *Map* 438). The soldier here does not allow the peasant women access to the markaz because of their being peasants (a matter of class), while the middle-class Caireen intellectual land-owner, Amal, is allowed to enter the police station.

However, the scene relating the government's violence against the Sa 'id in general and the village of Tawasi in particular, after the terrorist bombing of the Luxor Temple, shows best the hegemonic discursive apparatus at work. The bombing led to the death of sixty western tourists. Conflating peasants with terrorists, the government retaliates by torturing and imprisoning people in the Sa 'id. Although the village of Tawasi has no link to the terrorist attacks, its men are rounded up like the men of the other villages of the Sa 'id—like the other "natives." Studying the government's reprisal, it is interesting to note that it does not just target the peasants, but also their lands, their crops as well as any communal medium conceived by the peasants to help their children cope with the challenges of the educational system. 'Am Abu al-Maati talks about "the sugar cane [that] was burned because [the police force claims] the terrorists hid in it after the bombing" (Soueif, *Map* 124). The policemen and soldiers blindly believe the hegemonic discourse and act upon the conflation between peasants and terrorists without remorse. Even Amal's initial attitude to the upheaval in the Sa 'id is informed by the hegemonic discourse and hegemonic representation of peasants. 'Am Abu al-Maati tells her that the crops of these peasants are burned down by the police force, who claims that terrorists are using the land as a hideout. Volunteer teachers who help village children with their homework are also labelled terrorists just because they talk about justice. When Amal hears the peasants' version of the events, she thinks the teachers and the fellaheen under arrest are either Islamists or communists. Islamism and communism, for her, are two controversial forms of resistance that do not offer a viable alternative to the problems[63] of postcolonial Egypt. The peasants' search for justice is depicted by a dominant discourse that draws its inspiration from the

[63] The high unemployment rate and poverty are two examples of these problems.

colonial discourse in a way that recalls the orientalist depiction of the Sudanese people's struggle for justice in Umm Durman.

Scrutinizing closely the fight between the government and the peasants of Upper Egypt, we can see that it is actually a conflict of interests between two social groups: the peasants and the capitalists in power. Adding the terrorist term to the equation serves those in power in two ways. First, it inscribes their violence against the peasants, or their state terrorism in a broader, international fight against terror. Second, the representation of the upheavals in Upper Egypt as stemming from radical Islamism and terrorism mask the real problem at the heart of the conflict: the unjust land laws which the government wanted to impose on the peasants undemocratically. Deena, one of Amal's intellectual friends sums up this problem succinctly saying: "The interests of the governing class are different—are practically opposed to the interests of the majority of the people" (Soueif, *Map* 230). In fact, upon passing and implementing the new, unjust land laws depends the success of the Egyptian government's role as a facilitator of global capitalist flows. To be able to facilitate those flows, the Egyptian government backed by its businessmen (whose enterprises do not acknowledge national boundaries) has to make an alliance with international partners like Israel. This increases the anatagonism between the government and the peasants of Upper Egypt. The latter's knowledge of the history of the land—a knowledge not in the interest of those in power—convinces them of the dangers inherent in accepting any partnership with the Israelis, for instance. The peasants think that this partnership will take away their jobs and their lands to make the Egyptian economic field smoother for the flows of global capital. Thus, the fight against terrorism at the national, level is revealed for what it is: a discursive

apparatus that permits the Egyptian government to silence a potentially rebellious segment of its population and achieve its objectives.

Furthermore, the justice of the peasants' cause, like the justice of the cause of the Egyptian and Sudanese populations during the colonial period, is hidden from the Egyptians interpellated by the hegemonic discourse. This helps the group in power to further legitimize its violence against the peasants and to get support for its presumed fight against terror both at the national and international levels. Having explored the way normative, exclusionary communities predetermine the attitudes of their members to the other through an examination of conservative translation, art and the hegemonic discourse in *Map*, the following part of the chapter studies the conception of community proposed as an antidote to the normative one.

(II) The Emergence of an Alternative Community in the *Map* of Love

(II.i) Responding Ethically to the Affective Interpellation of the Other

The initial attitudes of Amal, Anna and Isabel to the other foreground the important role hegemonic representations of the other play in the formation and foreclosures of communities, solidarities and friendships. However, what distinguishes Anna, for instance, from other British and European people is her openness and ethical response to the affective interpellations of the other. This inclination toward the other is born out of Anna's indignation at the way British people in colonial Egypt do not question the stereotypes that inform their attitudes towards Egyptians and blindness to the justice of their cause. It is strengthened by her friendship with feminist and nationalist Egyptian ladies as well as other anti-imperialist ladies shunned by the Agency.

Feeling interpellated by Egypt, Anna leaves the world of the Agency with its guarantees and privileges behind to know Egyptians not as props in a British

imperialist scene but as people fighting for a just cause. Her departure from the familiar world of the Agency is signalled by a change of diaries. In fact, her "big green journal falls silent" as an ethical response to Egyptian calls of friendship. In answer to these calls, she breaks the spell of the magical insulated space of Britishness and learns the language of the other and does her best to know him/ her on his/ her own terms and in his/ her space. She unlearns the presumptions with which she used to approach the other and, as Gayatri Spivak instructs us, "listens to the other as if it were a self" (83). It is this careful listening to the other and keen interest in his/ her language and culture which leads Soueif's mezzaterrans to forge cross cultural and cross-national friendships and solidarities. These relationships defy the horizon of the possible and admissible associations in normative communities. This leads her to build a community with Egyptian friends and anti-imperialist British friends. Her subsequent Sinai adventure is recorded in the blue journal.

(II.ii) Space and the Alternative Community

Anna's choice to move from the green journal to the blue one echoes a major trope through which the "area of transformation" is articulated (Soueif, *Map* 66). The area of transformations is a middle ground that allows its inhabitants to transgress the boundaries and accepted forms of friendship associated with the normative communities discussed above. Its inhabitants also have access to more than one culture, religion, and history. Amal situates this area between blue and green and asks the reader to:

> Lie on the line between blue and green—where is the line between blue and green? You can say with certainty 'this is blue, and that is green' but these cards show you the fade, the dissolve, the

> transformation—the impossibility of fixing a finger and proclaiming, 'At this point blue stops and green begins.' Lie, lie in the area of transformation—stretch your arms to either side. Now: your right hand is in blue, your left hand is in green. And you? You are in between, in the area of transformation. (Soueif, *Map* 66)

Soueif's choice of a primary colour (blue) and a secondary colour (green) is significant here as the colour we can imagine somewhere in between the two is a hyphenated one. This blue-green testifies to the impossibility of claiming with certainty the limits of green or blue. It is a spatial metaphor through which Amal articulates the hybrid identities of the alternative community's members in the novel.

The fact that the boundaries of green and blue blur in the area of transformation shows the way the latter complicates the theorizations of in-betweenness and hybridity in postcolonial studies, specifically those developed by and in response to Homi Bhabha's concept of the third space. In her examination of Mexifornia as a third space, Karin Ikas gives us the following account of Edward Soja's and Bhabha's conceptions of the third space.

> By and large, they understand the Third Space respective third space as a metaphor for an alternative space that is emerging once people of different cultures try to negotiate and transgress the boundaries between self and other. The Third Space is neither physical nor entirely spiritual. Rather, it is something else that manifests itself as a plurality of realities that must be endured in a world increasingly marked by cultural multiplicity, hybridity, and cross-border traffic. (123)

Although the third space, which is a space of hybridity and cultural translation, enables minorities to rewrite hegemonic narratives and contest their authority, the third space can easily turn into yet another bounded space situated between two other spaces. Julia Lossau refers to this in her study of the pitfalls of Bhabha's third space:

> when he writes of the third space as 'unrepresentable in itself,' for instance, Bhabha seems to hint at the problem that third space is deprived of its potential power as soon as it is represented, or in system theory diction, as soon as it is thought of as an element of a series of discrete and bounded spatial units which have 'condensed' alongside distinct ones. (70)

The third space loses its potential once it is reduced to a bounded space producing an exclusionary conception of collective identity and community.

Soueif's area of transformation, what she calls in her political writing, mezzaterra or common ground, avoids this pitfall as it is an open area. This absence of enclosure implies that neither the mezzaterra nor the surrounding cultures, world views or regions are bounded. In fact, as Soueif's diagram of the mezzaterra shows us, the inhabitants of the area of transformation (like Anna, Amal, and Isabel) stand on a middle ground that gives them access to many traditions (Muslim, Egyptian, Christian, Arab, western, African, Mediterranean, non-aligned and socialist). Soueif holds that this mezzaterra flourished during the 1960s. "Looking back," she says, "I imagine our sixties identity as a spacious meeting point, a common ground with avenues into the rich hinterlands of many traditions (*Mezzaterra* 6)." This access to a number of traditions and cultures implies that the mezzaterrans' approach to identity is different from that of the people inhabiting the magical space of the Agency, for instance. The identities emerging from normative cultural

constituencies, like the British imperialist one in the novel, are fixed, stable and hermetically sealed. Difference from the identitarian status quo, in this context, is seen as a threat to the integrity of the body politic.

The exclusionary and subsequently belligerent conception of normative collective identities is not part of the mezzaterran view of the world. Soueif mentions this at the beginning of her Preface to Mezzaterra saying: “the question of identity as something that needed to be defined and defended did not occupy us” (Mezzaterra 6). Rather than being concerned with an exclusionary well-defended and well-fenced identity, the inhabitants of the mezzaterra are preoccupied with affinities across lines of cultural difference. The importance of affinities for mezzaterrans evokes the importance Sharif Basha, a mezzaterran, gives to “unity of conscience between the people of the world for whom this phrase itself would carry any meaning” (Soueif, *Map* 484). According to him, in such a unity of conscience lies “our only hope” (Soueif, *Map* 488) to make the world a place “where everyone could engage freely in the exchange of ideas, art forms, technologies” (Soueif, *Mezzaterra* 7). Arab mezzaterrans in the 1960s thought that independence would bring forth this free exchange between the people of the world. In spite of the political change that led to the hijacking of the mezzaterra in the 1980s, mezzaterrans are still fighting for a world that is more just and hospitable to everyone. Indeed, with the increasing hostilities between east and west as well as the growing jingoism plaguing the world, the mezzaterra has come under attack. Soueif underscores the shrinking of the middle ground at the beginning of the Mezzaterra:

> As components of my mezzaterra have hardened, as some have sought to invade and grab territory and others have thrown up barricades, I have seen my space shrink and felt the ground beneath my feet

> tremble. Tectonic plates shift into new positions and what was once open and level plain twists into a jagged, treacherous land. (9)

The claim of ownership some countries or groups lay to a religion or a culture led mezzaterrans to shift from a celebration of the mezzaterra to a "defense of it, an attempt to demonstrate its existence" in spite of the barricades (Soueif, Mezzaterra 9). In this sense, *Map* is a defence of the mezzaterra and a renewed commitment to the other and to a world that is more just. It is this area of transformation that Anna inhabits after she closes her green journal and starts writing in the blue one. What we find in the blue journal is a result of her friendships with the Egyptian other.

(II.iii) The Fictional Space of *Map* as a Mezzaterra

The characteristics of the space from which the protagonists of *Map* form their cross-national solidarities inform and shape the fictional space of the novel. Indeed, the fictional space of the translational novel allows Soueif to accommodate the different languages, traditions, cultures and religions strategically used by her protagonists in their struggle for justice. Wail Hassan coined the term translational novel in his "Agency and Translational Literature: Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*." Defining the specificities of the translational novel, he claims:

> in the space between translators and translated there are texts that straddle two languages, at once foregrounding, performing and problematizing the act of translation; they participate in the construction of cultural identities from that in-between space and raise many of the questions that preoccupy contemporary translation theory. I call such texts translational literature. (754)

Given Hassan's apt definition of the translational novel, the fictional genre chosen by Soueif is in harmony with her cultural translational projects as well as her

protagonist's (Amal's). The translational novel also shares the characteristic in-betweenness of the mezzaterra. As with the writer and her protagonist, translational novels are between cultures and languages.

(II.iv) *The Map of Love*: A Linguistic Mezzaterra

Map, however, is not only a fictional mezzaterra but also a linguistic one. Indeed, the in-betweeness of the alternative community proposed in the novel does away with the boundaries of conventional national communities. Linguistically, for instance, the novel vacillates in an area of transformations. It vacillates between English and Arabic. This kind of linguistic configuration is characteristic of translational novels[64]. Hassan emphasizes this aspect of the genre and holds that "translational texts may Arabize, Africanize, or Indianize English, sometimes by transliterating words and expressions for which there is no English equivalent, then explaining them in the text or in a glossary or not all" (754). Soueif resorts to this transliteration technique, using the English alphabet to write Egyptian or Arabic words[65] like "khalas" (meaning enough) (Soueif 174), "bint el magnouna"[66] (Soueif 109). This transliteration of Arabic words and Amal's tendency to translate idiomatic Arabic/ Egyptian expressions into English infuse the language of the novel with an Arab spirit. To put it in Hassan's words, her text "Arabizes" English (754). Bill Ashcroft holds that this linguistic hybridity characterizes the postcolonial works of such writers as Chinua Achebe, who inhabits the third space. Inhabiting the middle ground between metropolis and periphery, these writers transform the culture and language of the colonizer. Ashcroft highlights the transformative potential of such a positioning and contends that:

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[64] Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* is another example of the translational novel.
[65] I use Egyptian to refer to the Egyptian dialect and Arabic to refer to standard Arabic.
[66] "Bint el magnouna" can be translated (literally) as "daughter of the madwoman."

> The strategies by which a colonial language is transformed are extremely varied. Apart from direct glossing in the text, either by explanation or parenthetic insertions, such devices include syntactic fusion, in which the English prose is structured according to the syntactic principles of a first language; neologisms, new lexical forms in English which are informed by the semantic and morphological exigencies of a mother tongue; the direct inclusion of untranslated lexical items in the text, ethno-rhythmic prose which constructs an English discourse according to the rhythm and texture of a first language, and the transcription of dialect and language variants of many different kinds, whether they come from diglossic, polydialectical or monolingual speaking communities. (117)

The relationship between English and Arabic/ Egyptian in Souief's novel is similar to the relation between the language of the colonizer and that of the postcolonial writer in Ashcroft's work. The linguistic middle-ground between English and Arabic in *Map* differentiates the alternative community from the normative ones presented in the novel, at least linguistically.

Rather than a common language or dialect, friendship is what brings the alternative community together. It plays a crucial role in the formation of affiliative solidarities. In this regard, the alternative community conceived in *Map* is similar to Ghandi's conception of an affective community. Ghandi's affective community is a utopian, socialist one. Moreover, belonging to it results in a loss of one's privileges and secure social networks. Highlighting the sacrifices members of the affective community must make and the precedence they give to friendship over filiation, Ghandi contends that:

> in each of these instances we are witness to that critical conjuncture when some of the selves who make up a culture loosen themselves from the security and comfort of old affiliations and identifications to make an unexpected 'gesture' of friendship toward all those on the other side of the fence. There is no finality in this action, no easily discernable teleological satisfaction. Just the expression, to end with Giorgio Agamben, 'of a mediality a process of making a means visible as such.' A breach, that is, in the fabric of imperial inhospitality. (189)

Ghandi's affective communities are based on a politics of friendship that carries its adherents from the safe world of national belonging to the contingent space of the mezzaterra. Likewise, the characters' friendship across national borders in *Map* unmoors them from the secure ground and privileges of national filiation and delivers them to the contingent and uncertain space of solidarity with the other. The alternative communities in the works of Soueif and Ghandi derive their subversive potential from their very contingency. They emerge at particular historical junctures as a result of the labor of friends who unite because of their affinities and belief in the justice of a given cause.

(III) Mezzaterrans and Epicurean friendships

The self-exile and alienation ensuing from their mezzaterran solidarity with strangers are informed by a Derridean ethics-as-hospitality and Epicurean philoxenia. This is another feature shared both by Ghandi's affective community and Soueif's alternative community. Both communities discard the Aristotelian conception of friendship. This conception of friendship confines this kind of bond to the boundaries of the polis (or nation in Soueif's novel). It is conditioned upon

similarity and equality (Ghandi 28). From this perspective, Anna's relationship with Layla al-Ghamrawi and her struggle for Egyptian independence cannot be seen as manifestations of friendship. They can actually be read as treason from the British, national point of view. As Ghandi puts it, "If the politics upholds *polis* or state, as the natural and highest representation of human sociability, the Nichomachean Ethics privileges friendship as the best rehearsal of citizenship—the elaboration, always within the boundaries of the polis, of a being-in-common" (28). This means that these relationships do not extend to the stranger, the other beyond one's national borders.

Rather than this Aristotelian conception of friendship, the members of the above-mentioned alternative communities adopt an Epicurean conception of friendship. In the Epicurean model of *philia*, "friendship is construed very differently, as philoxenia, or a love for guests, strangers, and foreigners national" (Ghandi 29). Soueif's mezzaterran characters open themselves up unconditionally to strangers in whose just cause they believe. With that unconditional opening to the other, they leave their secure homes behind with all the privileges they offer.

The precariousness of this situation is shown, as I have said, through the assassination of Sharif Basha, but it is also shown indirectly at one point in Anna's romance when she has a misunderstanding with her Egyptian husband. She goes to the bank to withdraw some of her money which occasions the anger of Sharif Basha. The latter tells her that it is unacceptable that his wife withdraws money from her bank account. Her going to the bank may make people think that he is not generous to his wife. His anger makes her think for a moment that she has made the wrong choice. At that moment, we sense that she is suspended in mid-air, unmoored from her national British context and deprived from the common ground she chose as an

alternative. In her rewriting of Anna's journal entry dated June 15, Amal foregrounds Anna's loss of ground when she says:

> All certainty is dissolved. The rooms she has so lovingly arranged, the wordless companionship with his mother, the bond she had thought so secure with his sister; what is Anna to make of those now? Images from the hours she has spent with him, in his arms, in this very room, bring a hot blush of shame and anger to her face and her tears spill out yet again. (Soueif, *Map* 351)

This misunderstanding between Sharif Basha and Anna (due to her ignorance of what is at stake in withdrawing her money) leaves her groundless and highlights the vulnerability, affective dependence and risk that come with the solidarities built by mezzaterrans. Here, it is worth noting that the alternative community, liberating as it may seem, for women and men alike, threatens to lose its liberating potential in situations such as this. Anna finds herself compelled not to use her own money in order to show respect to the patriarchal codes regulating her husband's world. Such a moment in the life of Anna, a mezzaterran, takes her back to the realm of repressive, normative communities. It also cautions us against the ease with which the mezzaterra and mezzaterrans can slip back into normative communities and their limitations.

Although vulnerability and dependence are seen as a threat to normative communities that honor self-sufficiency and invulnerability, they make community possible for mezzaterrans. Here, the mezzaterra has to be understood as a fertile ground of overlap that should inspire our being-together at the local, national and global levels. Soueif herself thinks that the mezzaterra is our only way out from conflict, exclusion and oppression; she holds that "in today's world a separatist

option does not exist; a version of this common ground is where we all, finally, must live if we are to live at all" (Soueif, *Mezzaterra* 9). Although the mezzaterra is not a model toward which our present communities have to move in a teleological manner, its intimations can be taken into account in political projects attempting to resolve conflicts (like the Sri Lankan). The vulnerability and unconditional hospitality of mezzaterrans make room for a community where the well-being of each member is not a function of his/ her own labor or his/ her affiliation with a particular institution but of the commitment of the other to one's well-being and cause. Soueif's depiction of the struggle for independence in Egypt is not limited to covering the work undertaken by Egyptians, but encompasses the contributions of anti-imperialist British people like Anna whose anti-imperialist, British friends help her publish Sharif Basha's nationalist work in British newspapers. This dependence of Sharif Basha's nationalist work on the collaboration of anti-imperialist, British friends implies that even the efforts that led to independence bear the marks of cross-national friendship.

Moreover, the alternative community in *Map* thinks the gift of friendship around a Derridean conception of hospitality. Derrida differentiates "just hospitality" from "hospitality by right" (Derrida 26). While the latter is codified and conditional, the former is unconditional. Unlike "hospitality by right," "just hospitality" transgresses the legal framework determining the people to whom hospitality is rendered and the space it must not exceed. It makes Anna, Amal and Isabel hospitably extend their friendships and solidarities beyond national and cultural borders. In fact, the normative communities to which the characters used to/ belong confine boundaries of the nation. This conjugation of friendship and a

Derridean hospitality differentiates the alternative community proposed in *Map* from normative communities.

Anna, like the members of Ghandi's affective community, has to sacrifice some of her British friendships the moment she decides to privilege her friendship with and love for the other over the possessive claims of her national community. Her marriage to Sharif Basha and friendship with his sister, Leila, allow her to get involved in the Egyptian, nationalist movement by translating texts into or from English, teaching Egyptian women and writing in Egyptian magazines. Furthermore, Sharif Basha offers her the loom with which she weaves her contribution to the Egyptian Renaissance. In fact, after accepting Sharif Basha's marriage proposal, she realizes that

> alongside my new happiness an unease too was in that moment born, for I saw that I could not perhaps expect my friends to share in my joy. Sir Charles and Caroline, James Barrington and Mrs. Butcher—I cannot believe I will be estranged from them forever, yet at the best something different will colour our relations. (Soueif, *Map* 305)

Anna's new friendships and marriage, which defy cultural and national borders, are predicated upon the loss of her old, British friendships and privileges. Zeinab Hanim tells her son about the price that Anna will have to pay for her counter-normative friendship and marriage:

> For her, her whole life will change. Her people will be angry with her. And the British here will shun her. And even if they soften, it will be difficult for her, as your wife, to visit or receive visits from them. She will be torn off from her people. Even her language she will not be able to use. (Soueif, *Map* 281)

Zeinab Hanim's assessment of Anna's situation after her marriage to Sharif Basha echoes Anna's unease mentioned above. Anna's friendships and love beyond national boundaries lead to her estrangement from her national community (as well as her own language). Sharif Basha's tragic fate also testifies to the sacrifices mezzaterrans must make in order to honour their obligations to the other. He is assassinated, to a large extent, because he chooses to inhabit the mezzaterra.

The abrupt transformation of the mezzaterra into a dangerous no man's land makes inhabiting it even more hazardous. If we consider Soueif's diagram of the mezzaterra in the 1990s (the diagram replaces mezzaterrans' free access to the different cultures and traditions of the area of transformation [in the 1960s] by a number of barricades and enclosures), however, we can notice another kind of overlap. Instead of an overlap between the cultures and traditions of the mezzaterra, the area of transformation overlaps with the no-man's land between two (or more) belligerent identitarian enclosures. Mezzaterrans live on these overlapping territories. Their position in the area between green and blue, to go back to Soueif's metaphor, allows them to be critical and empathetic of the two worlds between which they live. From the perspective of those inhabiting definite, distinct and well-contained blue-land or green-land, the mezzaterra is the no-man's land separating mezzaterrans from the territory of the enemy and its inhabitants. Mezzaterrans may get caught in the cross-fires in that no-man's land, between blue-land and green-land. They may be targeted as a result of their criticism of the people on either side of the divide. The assassination of Sharif Basha is a case in point. As an Egyptian nationalist, he refused to adhere to any of the parties on the political scene. This non-alignment with any of the parties leaves him with nobody to protect him, as Husni tells his wife. Likewise, 'Omar, his twentieth-century counterpart and an

Edward Said figure, witnesses the precarious transformation of the mezzaterra into a no-man's land because of his criticism of both east and west. Wherever he sees injustice and oppression, he intervenes as a public intellectual through his books and music. Near the end of the book, Amal expresses her misgivings about 'Omar's position in the no-man's land:

> When would he ['Omar] come? When would he call? Isabel is not worried, but she has not known him long enough. She does not realize what a solitary figure he now cuts. Beloved by many, hated by many, but essentially solitary. How else could he have ended up—living where he lives, doing what he does—except alone in that *no-man's land between east and west*? (Soueif, *Map* 515 italics mine)

This is the price mezzaterrans have to pay for opting out of the possessive normative communities and leaning affectively towards strangers with whom they have affinities.

The interdependence of self and other at the heart of the alternative community opposes communitarianism in such a way that it does not "return to a position of radical individualism/ autonomy" (Ghandi 25). It opposes the Hegelian conception of community, which privileges "the relation of Same with Same" (Ghandi 25). The British community at the Agency is informed by the Hegelian conception of community. The alternative community proposed in *Map* departs from the "politics of similitude" around which normative communities (national communities and communities of difference) revolve. This politics of similitude privileges "separation over relationality, demanding uniformity as the price for belonging" (Ghandi 25). Choosing not to adhere to this politics, the community of friends hospitably and ethically welcomes difference in its struggle for justice.

However, this alternative community should not be conflated with communities of difference, nor with any liberal politics of recognition (Charles Taylor). Unlike communities of difference, which reify difference into yet-another homogeneous identity, the community of mezzaterrans makes strategic use of the different traditions and cultures available to them to contribute to the struggle of the other for justice, freedom and empowerment. The mezzaterra is open to all, no matter how different they are. It is the task and responsibility of mezzaterrans to be unconditionally open to the other, even if that other may be coming from the country of the colonizer (in the case of Sharif Basha and Anna). In this sense, Soueif's alternative community revolves around a Derridean notion of hospitality-as-ethics. Derrida defines this kind of ethics as follows: "the stranger, here the awaited guest, is not only someone to whom you say 'come,' but 'enter' …come in, 'come inside,' 'come within me,' not only toward me, but within me: occupy me, take place in me (Derrida 123)." The novel opens with a scene illustrating this unconditional opening of self to the other. "Amal reads and reads deep into the night. She reads and lets Anna's words flow into her, probing gently at dreams and hopes and sorrows she had sorted out, labelled and put away" (Soueif, *Map* 4). Amal's welcoming openness to the impact of the other's touch on her dreams, sorrows and hopes sets the tone for the relations between the other mezzaterrans in the novel.

However, it is worth noting that the openness to the other, unconditional as it is, is motivated by a clear concern for justice. This concern with justice does not diminish the unconditionality of the hospitality at the heart of the alternative community but makes the latter unconditionally just. Being unconditionally just, in a Derridean way, means favoring an absolute form of justice that is not limited to the provisions of legal texts. The relation between absolute and codified justice is

similar in this regard, to the relation between "just hospitality" and "hospitality by right" (Derrida 26). As far as the alternative community is concerned, unconditional justice guarantees unconditional hospitality to the other as it guards the members of that community from the injustice and oppression that may result from the unethical, irresponsible inclusion of members who may jeopadize and eventually put an end to humane communal structures like the Mezzaterra. These members who may put an end to embryonic communal formations like the one described in *Map* can be easily differentiated from the members who put their lives on the line to promote the justice of a given cause. 'Omar's activism is a case in point. It is obvious that aligning oneself with the alternative community proposed in the novel does not even occur to Tareq, for instance. Tareq's enterprise will prosper by passing and implementing the new, unjust land laws, which will take away the land and livelihood of a large number of the fellaheen in Upper Egypt. Consequently and logically he is neither going to consider belonging to a community that fights against the new land laws and easy partnership with Israel, nor is he going to be welcome by a community he wants to sacrifice in order to serve his interests.

(IV) Cultural Translation

Alongside a Derridean politics of friendship, cultural translation contributes to bringing together the alternative community. This kind of translation involves a careful listening to the other. *Map* is, in this respect, an answer to colonial acts of conservative translation, more precisely to Boyle's scandalous translation. Boyle's forged translation, which I analyze in detail above, revolves around a set of stereotypes about the Egyptian other. Amal's counter-normative cultural translation, rather than simply extolling Egypt and its glorious past and civilization, shows the fertile common ground that gets barred and forgotten by all cultural purists on

whatever side of the border they may be. In this sense, her approach to cultural translation is similar to Bhabha's. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha defines cultural translation in relation to Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* as follows:

> Rushdie translates this into the migrant's dream of survival: an initiatory interstices, an empowering condition of hybridity, an emergence that turns 'return' into reinscription or redescription; an iteration that is not belated, but iconic and insurgent. For the migrant's survival depends, as Rushdie puts it, on discovering 'how newness enters the world. (227)

Rather than turning return into blasphemy, as it is the case in Rushdie's book, Amal and Soueif turn return into "a fertile land; an area of overlap" (Soueif, *Mezzaterra* 7), a meeting point between cultural constituencies that are currently and officially antagonistic. Cultural translation and translation, *tout court*, in this novel revolve around an ethics of difference. Contrary to the ethics of sameness which informs translations produced within "institutions, whether academic or religious, commercial or political [and] show a preference for a translation ethics of sameness, translating that enables and ratifies existing discourses and canons, interpretations and pedagogies, advertising campaigns and liturgies—if only to ensure the continued and unruffled reproduction of the institution," translations informed by an ethics of difference subvert the existing discourses to do more justice to the other and the culture of that other (Venuti 82). These transgressive translations depart from the stereotypical, reductive representations underlying the hegemonic discourse that informs conservative translations. The latter domesticates the other and the other's culture by representing them in assimilative terms that make the foreign and unfamiliar familiar. This, of course, makes the culture and text translated more

accessible to a foreign readership, but it also sacrifices their idiosyncrasies. Relying on Antoine Berman's work, Venuti evaluates this type of translation and calls it "bad translation" (Venuti 81). He contends that it shapes toward the foreign culture a domestic attitude that is ethnocentric: "generally under the guise of transmissibility, [it] carries out a systematic negation of the strangeness of the foreign work" (81).

Unlike this "bad" translation, which relies on a cannibalistic ethics of sameness, translation in *Map* is informed by an ethics of difference. That is, it does not consolidate the values and representation of the hegemonic group. It departs from them to do justice to a plurality of values and provide more ethical representations of the other. I would add that this ethics is enabled by and fosters mezzaterran thinking and modes of relating to the other. Thus, 'Omar al-Ghamrawi, who is known in the hegemonic discourse as the "Molotov Maestro" and the "Kalashnikov Conductor," returns as the inhabitant of a precarious no-man's land because his criticism spares neither the west nor the authorities in Palestine (Soueif, *Map* 17). Applying such translational strategies, Isabel, the American mezzaterran, understands 'Omar's struggle as a struggle for justice and not as terrorism. She comes to know that he is not a terrorist as rumors have it. He is simply a public intellectual straddling east and west, criticizing injustice in both worlds from his position in the mezzaterra. More importantly he does not identify with one world or another, but contributes ethically and responsibly to the struggles of the inhabitants of both worlds. The transgressive acts of translation in *Map* do more justice to the other and her culture because instead of endorsing the hegemonic "representations of foreign cultures" prevalent in the societies that will receive the translation, they diverge from them; they listen carefully to the stories, histories and concerns of the

other. They produce translations of the other's culture that attempt to know him intimately and yet does not claim to know him totally.

Moreover, cultural translation, as it is conceived by Soueif, ethically acknowledges the limits of translatability and knowledge of the other. Anna's refusal to provide a domesticating translation of the other even when the situation lends itself to such a translational strategy is a case in point. Here I am referring to her desert excursion with Sharif Basha during which she hears Bedouin women ululating—making joy cries. Anna prefers to keep this easily exoticizable part of oriental culture untranslated. There is no British equivalent for the joy cry; she could present it as part of the exotic, oriental women and culture. A normative British translation, informed by an ethics of sameness, could be expected to do that. However, Anna's cultural translation, informed by an ethics of difference as it is, departs from the normative, reductive representation of the other and acknowledges the limits of her own translation. Her attitude, here, echoes Spivak's injunction to withhold translation in those moments when the other does not lend himself/herself to translation and interpretation. Anna's attitude also echoes bell hooks's conception of translation as it is based on the conviction that "we do not need 'to master' or conquer the narrative [of the other] as a whole, that we may know in fragments. That we may learn from spaces of silence as well as spaces of speech" (300). Anna's silence about the Bedouin women's ululation implies that although, as an inhabitant of the mezzaterra, she strives to know the other in her own terms, she acknowledges the limits of her knowledge. More importantly, knowing the other does not imply studying her as an object of knowledge that must be known in its totality.

Likewise, Amal's position in the mezzaterra between Upper Middle Class Cairo and Tawassi (Upper Egypt/ Saiid) allows her to serve as a mediator and

translator between the two cultural constituencies, or more precisely between the government and the peasants. This mediation and translation aims at making the views of the peasants (concerning the oppressive land laws) known to the government. It is worth noting that Amal's attempts at mediation and translation in this situation do not solve the problem of the fellaheen. Only the intervention of Tariq, the businessman, leads to that. Amal's failure here allows us to get a glimpse of the obstacles facing mezzaterrans in their quest for justice. Corruption and the interests of global and local capital make the law in Soueif's Egypt. Cultural translation and mediation are important, but the struggle for justice clearly necessitates more than that.

A discussion among the intellectuals of the atelier reveals some of the reasons explaining the limitations of intellectual work from a pragmatic point of view. These mediators, Mustafa holds, "'re a bunch of intellectuals who sit in the atelier or Grillon and talk to each other. And when we write, we write for each other. We have absolutely no connection with the people. The people don't know we exist" (Soueif, *Map* 224). It is true that the 1952 army movement which was led by Gamal Abd al-Nasser did not give the people a voice, nor do the fundamentalists in present-day Egypt. But, it is improbable that a number of intellectuals out of touch with the people can give them a voice either. This does not underestimate the work undertaken by Soueif, and her protagonists (Amal, Isabel and Leila). It rather sheds light on the possible limitations of an ambitious, counter-normative project. Unlike the fundamentalists who have been gaining ground, the intellectuals are not even "on the ground" (Soueif, *Map* 225). Their work shows a keen interest in the state of affairs of the people but it does not lighten the burden of the latter. It does not offer pragmatic solutions to the problems of the fellaheen.

These are the limitations Amal endeavors to overcome by going back to Tawasi and learning from the fellaheen. This will allow her to get the knowledge she could not garner from a university education and involvement with the circle of intellectual friends at the atelier. Thinking about what she can do after finishing her Anna project, she refers to this:

> And Amal has made up her mind. When Anna's story is finished she will close down her flat [in Cairo] and move to Tawasi. Not for ever, but for a while. If she has any responsibility now, it is to her land and to the people on it. There is so much there that she can do, so much she can give, so much she can learn. […] If she can open up the school she'll whitewash the walls and put bright posters up on them. She'll record the children's songs and learn to make bread. She'll find some old man who still has an Aragoz and a Sanduq el-Dunya—and a storyteller. There must still be storytellers around—[…] But she has a piece of land and people who depend on it. She can hold that together. She can learn the land and tell its stories. (Soueif, *Map* 297-8)

Amal's intention to immerse herself in the land and know it on its own terms through the oral stories told by storytellers and children's songs will allow her to be on the ground, in touch with the people and their sufferings. This will distinguish her from the other intellectuals at the ateliers and make her work as conscious of the material determiners of its production as Anna's weaving. It will make it useful to those to whom it is addressed.

(V) Translation and justice

Translation does not only allow mezzaterrans to do justice to the other but also to support the other's struggle for justice and independence both at the national and international levels. Anna, for example, who is convinced of the justice of the Egyptian national cause, translates memoranda and important documents from and into English and French for her husband. Her commitment to the cause of her Egyptian friends and husband makes her speak against her own country. In this sense, Anna reminds us of the question E. M. Forster, to whom Ghandi refers in her above-mentioned book, poses in *Two Cheers for Democracy*: "I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the guts to betray my country (qtd. in *Affective Communities* 66)." Anna does not just hope to betray her country, if she had to choose between country and friends. She does choose friends over country, affiliation over filiation. Her translation of a document sent to her by James Barrington alerts Sharif Basha and his circle of Egyptian nationalist friends to Boyle's forged/ scandalous translation. This makes the nationalists aware of Cromer's intention to have more soldiers in Egypt. It in turn prompts the nationalists to appeal to the anti-imperialist segment in the British public in an attempt to prevent Lord Cromer from getting reinforcement in Egypt. Having so far dealt with the principles governing the alternative community, I would like to devote the last section of this chapter to the tropes through which this community is depicted.

(VI) Troping the Alternative Community

The alternative community is depicted through a number of tropes that recall the in-betweenness of the mezzaterra. The three major tropes used to convey the contingent formation of the alternative community are weaving (the three panels of Anna's tapestry), St- Catherine's monastery and the hybrid shrine near al-Baroudi

house. The stories of 'Omar and Isabel, Sharif Basha and Anna and Amal are woven together through Anna's tapestry. This tapestry has three panels. Mabrouka, Zeinab Hanim's Ethiopian maid, gave Layla and Anna a panel each after the assassination of Sharif Basha. The third panel gets lost in the process and appears magically at the end of the novel. Anna weaves tokens of Egypt's Pharaonic and Islamic histories together. Isis, Horus, Osiris and a verse from the Koran adorn the tapestry. Weaving has always been related to community. Here, we have to take into account the metaphorical relation between weaving and community building. Annette Lucia Giesecke explores this relation in her "Mapping Utopia: Homer's Politics and the Birth of the *Polis*" and holds that: "Weaving is the type of skill by which a house, a village, or a city is constructed. Weaving is a means to build an environment as well as a means by which to cement social relations within the built environment" (202). The weaving of a hybrid tapestry opens up space for imagining a hybrid and tolerant community in which differences co-exist peacefully.

The peaceful coexistence of difference is taken up by the other above-mentioned tropes. For instance, the peaceful coexistence of Islam and Christianity in Egypt is metaphorically conveyed through the central image of the mosque nestling in the embrace of St-Catherine monastery (in Sinai). The fact that Sharif Basha and Anna's friendship and romance start in the above-mentioned monastery endows this site with a particular significance. Referring to this peaceful cohabitation of Islam and Christianity, Amal says:

> The building is rather like a mediaeval Castle and was established in the Sixth century and soon afterwards, as the Moslem armies advanced Westwards from the Arabian Peninsula, somebody had the prescience to build a small Mosque in its courtyard to guard against it

> being burned or demolished. At the time of the Crusades it was the turn of the Monastery to protect the Mosque, and so it has been down the ages, each House of God extending its shelter to the other as opposing armies came and went (Soueif, *Map* 213).

The image of the mosque nestling in the embrace of the monastery epitomizes the possibility of understanding and dialogue across lines of religious difference. Each of the two religious edifices extended a protecting hand around the other in times of persecution.

The shrine next to al-Baroudi's house is another trope that echoes the fading of the area of transformation. Indeed, it is a meeting point that gives its inhabitants access to different religions (Islam and Christianity) and historical periods (Ancient Egypt as well as early twentieth century Egypt) and class elements (the serving woman). In this place, which bears witness to the intricacies of human relations, Isabel, a mezzaterran, finds the missing panel of Anna's tapestry. Elements that are kept separate in and by hegemonic discourses are brought together through this metaphorical rendition of the mezzaterra. To further elucidate the hybridity of the site, which provides the key to Anna's weaved rebus, an examination of the representation of the people Isabel meets there is in order. In fact, the "strange sheikh" has a hole in the palm of each hand, which makes him a Christ-like figure[67]. The Christian element is further consolidated through the presence in the shrine of a "woman dressed like a Madonna in a painting" (Soueif, *Map* 307). The Upper Egyptian element is represented by the cheery serving woman (Um-Aya). The orange blossom fragrance accompanying her connects her with the Ethiopian maid in al-Baroudi house, Mabrouka. The fact that Amal and Isabel smell orange blossom

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[67] This brings together Islam and Christianity in a way that recalls a key metaphor of the peaceful coexistence of the aforementioned religions, namely the small mosque nestling in the embrace of the St-Catherine Monastery in Sinai.

when they surprisingly find the missing third panel in Isabel's bag indirectly stresses the important role played by the "felleha" in Egypt's Renaissance.

Healing, Touch and Being-in-Common in *Anil's Ghost*

Introduction

Contrary to the stories of spirit possession and avenging ghosts that emerged as alternative ways of coping with traumatising war experiences in southern Sri Lanka (between 1988 and 1991), *Anil's Ghost* does not deliver the justice it promises. However, it does succeed in revealing the responsibility of the government in the crimes and disappearances reported to the international non-governmental organization in Geneva[68]. Rather, the outlines of a coping community emerge to counter the crippling effects of trauma and terror (exercised by the warring parties: JVP, Sinhalese-Buddhist government and Tamil Tigers). This alternative community is an artistic and communal response to the violence, exclusiveness and intolerance of the normative communities responsible for the injustice, deaths, disappearances and trauma that reign supreme in Ondaatje's representation of Sri Lanka. Adopting touch as its medium of communication, the alternative community bridges the gap widened between Sinhalese and Tamils due to the virulent linguistic nationalism that culminated in the adoption of the Sinhala Only Bill in 1956 (De Silva 628). In this chapter, I argue that the alternative conception of community proposed in *Anil's Ghost* strives to heal the Sri Lankan community by rechanneling its affective attachment away from a normative, divisive understanding of Sri Lanka's past to one that accommodates all Sri Lankans regardless of their linguistic, ethnic or religious identity. This conception of alternative community revolves around the importance of healing and a clear concern with commonalities rather than differences. In the first part of this chapter, I will examine the manifestations of the

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[68] Ghost narratives are narratives of haunting that lead to the revelation of the perpetrator of a particular crime or the fate of a disappeared person. Sasanka Perera studies their emergence as means of coping with war trauma in the aftermath of the counter-insurgency terror in the south of Sri Lanka, a province where the JVP threatened to overthrow the government. The ghost narratives studied by Sasanka (narratives that appeared at the beginning of the 1990s) are alternative ways of achieving justice for a people who daily come face to face with the bankruptcy of the secular apparatus of justice.

alternative community, the communities to which it is proposed as an antidote, its members as well as its relationship to institutions. The second part of this chapter focuses on the centrality of healing and touch to the community. The last part of the chapter analyzes Ananda's healing artistic communal reconstruction project and its contribution to the formation of the alternative community.

The secondary literature on *Anil's Ghost* centers around three major, equally important questions. The first question is about Ondaatje's representation of the Sri Lankan civil war, the politics of that representation and its aesthetics. A derivative question that most critics are bound to ask here is whether the aesthetics of Ondaatje's representation compromise (not to say, does away with) its politics[69]. In this regard, Marelene Goldman succinctly sums up the concern of most critics in the following question: "[w]hat kind of engagement with Sri Lanka is forged within his text (27)?" This question stems from the critics' concern with the political dimension of the fictional civil war narrative. Moreover, the absence of historical details and other crucial components of a conventional political novel makes critics wonder whether "Ondaatje might risk aestheticizing terror [and] repeating the modernist gesture of turning away from atrocity to timeless form' " (Scalan 302)[70]. The investigation of Ondaatje's representation of violence yielded another question pondered by many critics: what conception of history does Ondaatje's representation of violence allow for?[71] All these questions are related to the representation of the civil war. The third question underlying a considerable number of articles on the

[69] Here it is worth noting that a considerable number of critics think that Ondaatje's novel is apolitical. Among these, I may refer to Kanishka Goonewardena, Qadri Ismail and Jon Kertzer.
[70] Although Margaret Scalan uses this question, as Victoria Burrows notes, as a "rhetorical gambit," it explicitly formulates one of the major questions underlying the critical works of the writers to whom I refer in the preceding footnote.
[71] Heike Härting responds to this question, in her reading of the novel, when she says: "to substitute history for the erratic operations of violence also betrays the novel's modernist signature and its desire to seek refuge in Robert Duncan's prose" (54).

novel is: what kind of solution does the novel propose/ imagine to the problem at hand? Most critics who consider this question focus on the reconstruction work carried out by Ananda (in the last chapter of the novel) and the importance of touch to that work. Among these, I may refer to Sandeep Sanghera, Gillian Roberts[72], Patricia P. Chu, Victoria Burrows and Geetha Ganapthy-Doré and Joseph Slaughter. Their critical work investigates Ondaatje's intimations of an alternative community that unites single, family-less individuals (Chu), doctors practising marginalia criticism[73] (Slaughter 193), or people connected through an affective gesture--touch (Sanghera). My chapter responds to the question underlying these critics' work and traces other manifestations of the alternative community as I see them proposed in the novel, manifestations that anchor it significantly in a genealogy of healing. Choosing to focus my work on this question is also my response to the urgent task of rethinking community in a globalizing world where the normative affective community (the nation-state) is in crisis. In this sense, my work is also a response to Ganapthy-Doré's call to the "urgent need of reconstruction in the world" (par. 15)[74].

(I) Manifestations of the alternative community

Before examining the alternative community in *Anil's Ghost*, I would like to explain what I mean by alternative community. An alternative community refers to the contingent formation of solidarities that do not align themselves with the boundaries, limits, and exclusions of normative national communities. The alternative community that emerges as an ethical response to the Sri Lankan war in

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[72] Roberts focuses her reading of the alternative community in the novel on a study of hospitality and healing.

[73] Marginalia criticism consists in the medical staff's writing comments on the margins of the hospital library books. Referring to this practice, Slaughter explains: "in contemporary field hospitals that sprouted up in remote areas of Sri Lanka during the civil war, there developed among the doctors and nurses what Ondaatje's narrator parenthetically calls a 'habit' of 'critical marginalia' a social-reading practice conducted in the margins of the book in the hospital's ad hoc library" (Slaughter 193).

[74] This occurs at the end of her reading of *Anil's Ghost.* She gives priority to this reconstruction work over the academic interest in the deconstruction of "discourses, art and memory" (par. 15).

Anil's Ghost, for instance, is not coterminous with what is conventionally known as the Sinhala national community. Rather, it is an attempt at articulating community and solidarities in such a way as to heal the wounds of the normative community (and prevent the alternative community from falling prey to the pitfalls of an exclusionary nationalism).

The project of rethinking community in *Anil's Ghost*, then, can be seen as a postcolonial endeavour to think beyond the "postcolonial misery" which takes the shape of a civil war in the Sri Lankan case (Chatterjee 5). Partha Chatterjee uses the notion of postcolonial misery when criticizing Benedict Anderson's study of national communities as imagined communities. Chatterjee's central disagreement with Anderson's argument in *Imagined Communities* revolves around the latter's contention that "nationalisms in the rest of the world [outside Europe and the Americas] have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas" (Chatterjee 5). This, according to Chatterjee, bestows historical agency only on Europe and the Americas and by the same token deprives the postcolonial world of it. When it comes to imagining community in the postcolonial world, this deprivation of agency does not leave room for the people to exercise the power of imagination.

Although Chatterjee's insistence on a clear-cut division between the public (political) sphere and the inner (or cultural) one in pre-colonial India and his conception of an alternative modernity based upon recurperating anti-modern ways of managing community have won him such labels as romantic and nativist (Harrotunian 177), his contention that "Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and

postcolonial misery," explains, to a large extent, quite a few civil wars that tear apart a number of postcolonial countries (Chatterjee 5). In his essay on "Sinhalese Identity"[75] in the context of the civil war, Stanely Jeyaraja Tambiah argues along the same lines as Chatterjee. In fact, he sees that the modernization of the Sri Lankan political formation is one of "the structural reasons explaining the civil war in Sri Lanka. This process resulted in the transformation of the Sri Lankan polity from a multi-centric galactic polity which was more flexible, incorporationist, and inclusive" to an exclusionary Sinhala Buddhist nation-state (Tambiah 175). Tambiah argues that

> the social changes wrought by a unitary and autocratic British colonial regime, and the new space, opportunities, and modes of influencing and mobilizing public opinion in post-independence Sri Lanka dedicated to the project of 'nation-state'-making hitched to the judgement of mass participatory politics. This modern Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, while it carries or activates a legacy from the past, is a change to a new nationalist and nation-state-making complex. (Tambiah 172)

Although the pre-colonial configuration of the Sri Lankan polity witnessed the mounting of insurrections and rebellions, it permitted the decentralization of power and the coexistence of different groups (Tambiah 175).

The modern configuration of the Sri Lankan polity, however, does not tolerate that difference. Rather, it thrives on its assimilation or demonization and eradication. Literary works produced by monks played an important role in the demonization of Tamils (the Demalu). In fact, the poems of monk-literati in the mid-

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[75] This is the title of an essay at the end of his book *Buddhism Betrayed?*

nineteenth century (like the *Kirala Sandesaya* and the *Vadiga Hatana* written respectively by Kitalagama Devamitta and Valigala Kavisundera Mudali in the mid-nineteenth century), which nurtured the Buddhist Sinhalese communal ideology, demonize Tamils, as Tambiah contends (164). These works implicitly ask for either the domestication of Tamils or their eradication. The interweaving of Buddhist cosmology and Sinhalese exclusionary politics led to the production of a discourse which represents Tamils as "evil, demonic, outside and threatening to the very core of Sinhalese Buddhist identity and existence." (Tambiah 169). Being seen as alien and demonic, Tamils have to be subordinated in order for Buddhism to reign supreme over the island. [76]

The proliferation of such discourses and their influence on public opinion were compounded by the growing politicization of Buddhism in the aftermath of independence. During the post-independence period *bikkhus* (monks) became actively engaged in politics and demanded the establishment of Sinhala as the only official language and Buddhism as the religion of Sri Lanka to redress the injustices which Buddhists had to suffer under British colonial rule. For instance, school laws discriminated against them by legally pre-empting them from establishing schools under certain circumstances. This accounts for the "near-monopoly that Protestant missions had over the educational system," as Tambiah says (6). Given the monopoly of English-speaking schools on the educational system, the Tamils who had an English education had more chances to get the most coveted jobs than the Sinhala Buddhists. Referring to the consequences of the above-mentioned monopoly on the Sinhalese and the Tamils, de Silva states:

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[76] "On this issue of the motivations and orientations of monk writers through the centuries or producers of the chronicles, Kapferer attributes to these literati a deep ontological commitment to the Buddhist cosmology which implies that the alien must be domesticated, subordinated, and then incorporated into its hierarchical scheme" (Tambiah 168).

> although they were not without influence in the villages, they had seldom in the past been able to exert any influence on a national scale and they felt that they had been unjustly excluded from a share of power commensurate with their numbers by the western-educated elite. [...] They also felt that the Tamil community had taken an unfair share of power by virtue of its superior educational opportunity. (613)

The anti-Tamil sentiment that is abundant in the propagandist literary work of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks in the mid-1890s is a fundamental element of the Chronicles. *The Mahavamsa*, which was written in the sixth century A.D., is not only an account of the unification of the island by the hero-king Dutthagamani, but also a discourse that dehumanizes the Tamil other. Feeling remorse after the slaughter of Tamils necessary to the unification of the island, Dutthagamani is confronted by eight arahants (enlightened saints) who telll him that the non-Buddhists among the Tamils he slaughtered did not count as humans. Thus, being a Buddhist bestows humanity upon the victim, while being a non-Buddhist (a Tamil/ Demalu) takes that property away from the victim (Tambiah 1).

Just focusing on the Sinhalese does not mean that the ideological precepts of the Tamil Tigers or Tamil Eelam in the Northern and Eastern provinces or the JVP in the south are more tolerant or hospitable towards the other. The Tamils and Sinhalese, for instance, have exclusionary conceptions of identity that legitimize killing the other. Both parties have committed crimes against humanity. During the civil war, the government ruled the whole island (even the Sinhalese during insurrections) by terror and so did the Tamils and the JVP. The JVP, although it is a Sinhalese communist party aiming at achieving social revolution, was also involved

in killing Tamils. As Sarath, the Sri Lankan anthropologist, tells Anil at the beginning of Ondaatje's novel, "Now we all have blood on our clothes" (Ondaatje 48). Sarath says this when Anil asks him about the party responsible for Narada's[77] murder. The same statement sums up the complicity of the above-mentioned three parties in the massacres, disappearances, murders and crimes against humanity resulting form the war.

Those in power as well as those fighting them adhere to a modern imaginary of national community, the one criticized by Chatterjee in his introduction to *The Nation and Its Fragments*. The Sinhalese and the Tamils alike base their imagination of the national community on the unity between territory, language and religion. More importantly, both parties present their national identities not as constructs but as natural attributes. Unlike the galactic multicentric communities that used to coexist on the island in the pre-colonial period, the modernized Tamil and Sinhalese imaginings of community led not to coexistence but to a long civil war. Moreover, these imaginings not only testify to the influence of the British modern political institutions introduced by the British Raj but also to their deployment of a politics of difference through which the British colonizer managed the relations between its citizens (British) and its subjects (native Sri Lankans)[78].

The adherence of the normative communities to the modern imagining of community can be seen clearly in the passages relating the experience of doctors in the camps of the different warring parties. Indeed, as the number of the wounded among Tamil fighters or insurgents increases, doctors are kidnapped to help them recover. Doctor Linus Corea, a Sinhalese doctor who chose to remain in the private

[77] Narada is monk. He is Palipana's brother.
[78] British colonial forces also deployed the same politics of difference in its management of the relations between Sri Lankans.

sector after the outbreak of the war[79], is kidnapped by insurgents in the south, while Gamini is kidnapped by a group of Tamil fighters. Two features stand out in the two abduction episodes, namely the focal importance given to language and the difference between the healing associated with the alternative community and the one associated with the normative communities. Language being the very element that gives coherence to Sinhalese Buddhism and Tamil separatism, it is what allows us to identify the warring party with which the camp that kidnapped the doctor is associated. The paltry English used by the fighters speaking Tamil to each other, for instance, make us conclude that the camp to which Gamini was taken is a camp of Tamil fighters. It is also worth noting that the members of the JVP who abduct Dr. Linus Corea use, what the doctor calls, an "idiot language" (Ondaatje 123), a made-up language (Ondaatje 121). The fact that the kidnappers belong to the JVP is confirmed by their use of Sinhala once they reach their camp in the "southern hills" (Ondaatje 122). The insurgents' use of an artificial language hints at their belief in the paramount importance of language as the ur-element around which the collective identity of the other two warring groups revolves (Sinhalese and Tamils). Sharing the same language with the Sinhalese group (i.e. Sinhala), the insurgents make up a language to distinguish themselves linguistically from their Sinhalese enemies in power.

Furthermore, the JVP's staging of power in a spectacular way not only allows them to terrorize and rule the population through a grotesque spectacle of power, but also confirms their adherence to the modern conception of politics. The grotesque spectacle of power staged by the JVP is not limited to their use of a "made up language" (Ondaatje 120), but is also manifest in the way they kidnap their hostages.

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[79] Linus Corea is the prosperous doctor of the Sinhalese-Buddhist prime minister.

In fact, they kidnap Linus Corea and another Sinhala man in broad daylight. Operating in the open is what terrorizes Linus Corea and disciplines the other spectators of the spectacle of power. The insurgents also display their power and discipline the witnesses of the abduction scene by taking their hostage blindfolded on a bicycle. The passage relating the kidnapping is worth quoting at length:

> When they took off, the blindfolded man had to somehow hang on. One hand on the handlebars, but the other he had to put around the neck of his captor […]. They wobble off, the man with the rifle following on another bike. It would have been easier if they had all walked. But this felt in an odd way ceremonial. Perhaps a bike was a form of status for them and they wished to use it. Why transport a blindfolded victim on a bicycle? It made all life seem precarious. It made all of them more equal. Like drunk university students, the blindfolded man had to balance his body in tune with his possible killer. They cycled off and at the far end of the street, beyond the market buildings, they turned and disappeared. Of course the reason they did it that way was so none of us would forget it. (154-5)

The three above-mentioned parties and their respective exclusive conceptions of collective identities all contribute to the accumulation of corpses filling Sri Lankan hospitals. The delicate outlines of an alternative community aiming at healing the wounds of the Sri Lankan population is proposed in *Anil's Ghost* as an alternative to the above-mentioned normative communities.

My critique of the pitfalls of the modern political imaginary of the national community and its incompatibility with the religious and ethnic diversity of the Sri Lankan population does not mean that I wish to align my project with that of Qadri

Ismail and Pradeep Jeganathan. In their introduction to a collection of essays entitled *Unmaking the Nation*, their suspicion of the nation is made clear. At the end of the first paragraph, they say “we suspect the nation” (2). According to them, the nation cannot be a site from which an alternative can be thought. They dismiss it wholesale, saying “we are not enamoured by the possibilities of the nation and nationalism” (2). Rethinking the national community, as it is carried out in Ondaatje’s novel, is not postnational although the novel denounces the violence, injustice and intolerance of the Sri Lankan nation-state, as well as those of the other warring parties.

The alternative community proposed in *Anil’s Ghost* promises a postcolonial appropriation of imagination in the ex-colonies. It also offers an imagining of community that is more in tune with the ethnic and religious diversity of the Sri Lankan population. It is, thus, a potential postcolonial way out of, what Chatterjee terms, “postcolonial misery” (5). Before dealing with the alternative community in *Anil’s Ghost*, it is important to situate this alternative community in relation to Sri Lankans. In fact, the alternative community in *Anil’s Ghost* makes use of institutions as its starting point and spring board. The latter allow the community to heal and its members to deal with their trauma. Two major institutional sites are crucial to the forging of an alternative community in the novel: hospitals and the Department of Archaeology. These institutions are under the control of the government and could have remained totally affiliated with its Sinhalese communal ideology. The will of the agents of the alternative community, however, to be with the other differently interrupts this affiliation. Faced with the endless waves of bomb victims, attacks and counter-attacks, doctors and nurses are unconditionally committed to heal all those who come to the hospital regardless of their religious or ethnic groups. This commitment of the hospital staff in Colombo, the north central province and the

northeast, builds an alternative community by ethically responding to a community in crisis.

The Kynsey Road hospital (Colombo) is a national institution, but the staff working at it disengage themselves from the communal ideology of the Sinhalese-Buddhist majority, its dictates, exclusions and discriminations. In this sense, the response of the medical staff in the novel is akin to that of Tamil psychiatrists in the Jaffna Peninsula as described by Veena Das who holds that

> Somasundaram's case materials do not hold out the hope that the experience of extreme violence would be assimilated and given meaning by the suffers. Instead what these cases point to is that while the technical advances made by medicine were useless in the face of such malignant violence, the fact that medical professionals felt compelled to respond to the suffering created hope for the rebuilding of communities. (Das 16)

This ethical and responsible compulsion to heal the wounds of the war-torn community (both physically and psychologically) informs the work of doctors, nurses as well as artistic healers (Ananda) in *Anil's Ghost*. It is also that ethical response which gives shape to the alternative community. This community is made up of the victims of the failure of the modern political project in Sri Lanka, a failure which results in the civil war, on the one hand, and the medical staff that hospitably heals them, on the other hand. The normative communities only heal the wounded among them as we can see in the Tamil and insurgent camps. They also reserve rights and privileges only for their members. The alternative community, however, unconditionally welcomes and heals everyone. The "doctors," the narrator tells us "were coping with injuries from all political sites and there was just one operating

table" (Ondaatje 243). The hospitality informing this unconditional welcome defies the codes limiting hospitality to the members of a given ethnic or religious group. Instead, it obeys the call of "absolute or unconditional hospitality" (Derrida 26). Dealing with a defining characteristic of unconditional hospitality, Derrida says: "the absolute or unconditional hospitality I would like to offer him or her presupposes a break with hospitality in the ordinary sense, with conditional hospitality, with the right to or pact of hospitality" (26). Answering the call of unconditional hospitality implies that the doctors affiliated with the alternative community in *Anil's Ghost* break up with "hospitality in the ordinary sense" (Derrida 26). The limits established by conditional hospitality strengthen the borders of the community in question. The doctors, through their hospitable dealing with all the wounded regardless of their ethnic or religious belonging, defy the very borders guarded jealously by the insurgents, Tamils and Sinhala Buddhists. Moreover, the medical staff's ethical commitment to the victims of the failure of the political project reorients the affective attachment of Sri Lankans away from their politicized religious or ethnic identities and towards the other. In its struggle against the necropolitan projects of the warring parties, the alternative community gives precedence to the life principle over ethnic and religious considerations.

Although the ethical code by which doctors abide compels them to deal with all patients regardless of their religion or ethnic belonging, their unconditional hospitality toward the patients can be read as the trope through which a more just and hospitable relation between the different ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka is renegotiated. Moreover, the hospital staff's hospitality toward the patients cannot be simply read as the result of their obedience to a professional code of ethics. In fact, Gamini, the paradigmatic healer, for instance, expresses his personal commitment to

healing the wounded. The same attitude is adopted by his colleagues, the "marginalia criminals" as Slaughter calls them (193). More importantly, the centrality of the doctors' work to the reimagination of community in *Anil's Ghost* is highlighted through the past with which it is affiliated. Indeed, the alternative community is associated with a past that revolves around healing and care-giving as it will be shown in detail below.

The recurrence of the numerical leitmotif "thousands" punctuates the text and evokes the dead and the wounded who interpellate the medical staff into the role of healers. Before leaving the hospital, the corpses of the victims of the war have to be inspected by Gamini. The narrator tells us

> every week he walked away from the week's pile of photographs. The doors opened and *thousands of bodies* slid in, as if caught in the nets of fishermen, as if they had been mauled. *A thousand bodies* of sharks and skates in the corridors, some of the dark-skinned fish thrashing. (Ondaatje 213, italics mine)

Those who are scarred forever by the civil war are also referred to in the thousands. Gamini thinks about these people when he is kidnapped by Tamil fighters during his stay at a hotel: "*Thousands* couldn't walk or use their bowels any more" (Ondaatje 220, italics mine). The same numerical leitmotif is used to talk about those who are scarred forever by the civil war.

This numerical note of sorrow also knits Ondaatje's novel into the multitude of Canadian texts dealing with civil wars and using this sad note to depict the failure of the modern political project in the postcolonial world. The texts that come to mind here are Brand's *What We All Long For* and Rawi Hage's *Deniro's Game*. Their narratives of civil wars in Vietnam and Lebanon respectively use the same

note. Comparing 9/11 to the Vietnamese civil war, Quy says: "But nothing will suck all the oxygen out of the air in years to come as what they will call 9/11, then the Americans will rampage the globe like *thousands of Vietams*, and I, I will be forgotten" (Brand 75, italics mine). Hage's narrative of the Lebanese civil war is poetically punctuated by the "*ten thousand bombs*" falling on Beirut.

In Ondaatje's novel, however, the response of doctors and nurses to the wounds, scars and deaths of thousands forges the alternative community in *Anil's Ghost*. The religious differences which led to the civil war are not taken into account by the medical staff in the hospitals. In fact, the alternative community heals the wounds of Sri Lankans by directing the attention of those concerned from what divides them to what unites them—that is from politicized religious identities to a concern with life.

Another important image through which the alternative community is conveyed is that of a "large creature" (Ondaatje 244). This "large creature" brings together two fundamental components of the alternative community, namely the hospital staff and the patients. Here I am referring to the "large creature" of which Gamini feels he is a limb, when the narrator says: "He was aware of every sound. A shoe or sandal step, the noise of the bedspring when he lifted a patient, the snapping of an ampule. Sleeping in the wards, he could be one limb of a large creature, linked to others by the thread of noises" (Ondaatje 244). It is the body of a shapeless creature linked together through the thread of noises that forms the alternative body politic in *Anil's Ghost*. Rather than the Hobbsian Leviathan which presupposes the war of all against all (Bellum omnium contra omnes), we have a large creature in which the furious sounds of the civil war subside and make way for a thread of benign noises that connects the different members of the large creature. This large

creature that stands for the body politic of the alternative community is also a way of countering the image of the normative community as one plagued by fear, a "national disease," as Sarath tells Anil (Ondaatje 53). This relationship between the normative configuration of the Sri Lankan community and fear due to the civil war may help us find a possible explanation for Anil's impression that there is something Sri Lankan about the Amygdala, the almond-shaped gland housing fear and bad memories. She even thinks that it may be the name of a bad god in Sri Lankan. During the Sri Lankan civil war, fear governs the relationships of people to one another. Fear, the national disease, is ironically echoed by the almond-like shape of Sri Lanka itself (no determinism to be inferred).

Furthermore, this large creature is proposed as an alternative to the manifestations of distorted corporeality in civil war-torn Sri Lanka. It is an alternative to the heads on sticks, scarred bodies, dead bodies, unhistorical bodies, dancing bodies, and bodies of stone, i.e. the Buddha statues in Cave 14 (Ondaatje 12) and at the end of the novel ("Distance"). The warring parties rule because they stage a terrifying and traumatizing spectacle of bodies scarred, burned, buried, reburied and mutilated. The large creature also offers an alternative to the fragmented Buddha around which Ananda's reconstruction project revolves. The fragmented Buddha not only stands metaphorically for the distortion of Buddhism on the political stage[80] but also evokes the distorted body of the nation. The large creature, uniting the hospital staff and the patients, is imagined by Gamini, comes as an alternative to all these wounded, burned, crippled and fragmented bodies.

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[80] The fragmented Buddha records the outcome of the politicization of religion, in general, and religious identities in particular. Referring to the fields that witnessed the explosion of the Buddha statue, the narrator says: "these were fields where Buddhism and its values met the harsh political events of the twentieth century (Ondaatje 300)."

Before examining the hospitals themselves—the loci showing the centrality of healing for the alternative community—I would like to examine their location in the northeast and the north central province. Here I am not referring to the Kynsey Road Hospital (Colombo), but the ones in the north central province and the northeast. In the north central province, for instance, we can find Mihintale, a town known as the cradle of Buddhism as it hosted the meeting of Thera Mahinta and king Devan Ampiyatissa. The former came from India to preach the doctrine to the latter. Their meeting place is now a revered place of pilgrimage for Buddhists. Mihintale is also known for its having had a hospital "four centuries before Christ" (Ondaatje 192). Although Mihintale is considered the cradle of Buddhism, Gamini sees that its beauty and uniqueness lie in its having been a site of care-giving and healing. The centrality of care-giving and healing in Sri Lanka's past is what accounts for its civilization and glory. The following nostalgic account of that past by Gamini is worth quoting at length:

> This was a civilized country. We had 'halls for the sick' four centuries before Christ. There was a beautiful one in Mihintale. Sarath can take you around its ruins. There were dispensaries, maternity hospitals. By the twelfth century, physicians were being dispersed all over the country to be responsible for far-flung villages, even for ascetic monks who lived in caves. That would have been an interesting task, dealing with those guys. Anyway, the names of doctors appear on some rock inscriptions. There were villages for the blind. There are recorded details of brain operations in the ancient texts. Ayurvedic hospitals were set up that still exist—I'll take you there and show them to you sometime. Just a short train journey. We

> were always good with illness and death. We could howl with the best. Now we carry the wounded with no anaesthetic up the stairs because the elevators don't work. (Ondaatje 192)

Although the place to which Gamini refers as a civilized country in the fourth century B.C. was not a country as we imagine it in modern political terms, it is crucial to note that healing and care-giving account for its civilization. By the same token, their absence in present-day Sri Lanka accounts for its being a place of "complete crime" (Ondaatje 12).

It is this kind of past that Gamini deems useful, a past of healing and strong communal bonds. In this sense the alternative community is radically different from the normative Sinhalese community in the novel as it does not use the past to legitimize its claims to sovereignty. It does not use the past to relegate the populations of the north and eastern provinces to the status of second-rate citizens. The past is malleable material. Used ethically, it can heal the wounds of a nation. Used opportunistically, however, it can only lead to endless wars. The normative groups in the novel use the past to gain sovereignty over a given territory and power. The two above-mentioned different uses of the past echo a joke Anil tells Gamini about a sign written in Sinhala in Mihintale. The meaning of this sign is drastically altered when one letter is changed. Anil tells Gamini

> at the top of that flight of steps to the hill temple was a sign in Sinhala that must have once said, Warning: WHEN IT RAINS, THESE STEPS ARE DANGEROUS. Sarath was laughing at it. Someone had altered one Sinhala syllable on the sign, so it now read, WARNING: WHEN IT RAINS, THESE STEPS ARE BEUATIFUL. (Ondaatje 193)

Likewise, the use of the past can be healing and beautiful, but can also be dangerous if it is tampered with to serve the interests of a particular group and exclude others.

The wounded bodies of people in the northeast—a province with a majority of Tamils—also interpellate Gamini and a number of other Sinhalese doctors into the role of healers. This reinforces the link between the alternative community and hospitality. In fact, the medical staff in the northeast heals people who belong to the very ethnic group the government is fighting. These doctors, agents of the alternative community, refuse to be interpellated by the communal ideology of the ethnic and religious group to which they belong to forge an alliance with the victims of the war—who are defined as their enemies by the dominant discourse.

(II) Hospitals: The Alternative Community and Space

The hospitals in *Anil's Ghost* and particularly the children's ward cherished by Gamini are the loci from which the alternative community is imagined and symbolically represent the alternative space of the nation. The choice of this space affiliated with the nation-state and detached from its politics to rethink community responds to Chatterjee's call to "claim for us, the once-colonized, our freedom of imagination" (13). The once-colonized have to take up whatever sites and materials are available to them to rethink and rebuild community without realigning it with the normative modern political discourse. In this sense, the project of rethinking community in *Anil's Ghost* highlights the contingent nature of the sites from which this kind of project is undertaken. Dipesh Chakrabarty underscores this contingency when he says:

> There are of course no *(infra)structural sites* where such dreams lodge themselves. Yet they will recur so long as the themes of citizenship and the nation-state dominate our narratives of historical transition, for these dreams are what the modern represses in order to be. (46, italics mine)

Healing the other unconditionally and being unconditionally hospitable to the other provide different ways of thinking citizenship in times of crisis. In this sense, the hospitality of Sinhalese doctors to those wounded on all sides in defiance of the dominant discourse reminds one of hospitality-as-ethics advocated by Jacques Derrida in *Of Hospitality*. This unconditional and absolute hospitality towards the other provides an alternative to the exclusionary politics adopted by the warring parties.

The link between hospitals and the idea of home in *Anil's Ghost* is alluded to through a reference to Gamini's experience as a doctor after his divorce from Chrishanti. Gamini's experience of the homeliness of the hospital is put to the fore in the following quotation:

> Two months after his wife left him, Gamini collapsed from exhaustion, and the administration ordered a leave. He had nowhere to go, his home abandoned. He realized Emergency services had become for him, even in its mad state, a cocoon as his parents' house had been. Everything that was of value to him took place there. He slept in the wards, he bought his meals from the street vendor just outside the hospital. Now he was being asked to step away from the world he had burrowed into, created around himself, this peculiar replica of childhood order. (215)

Thus, the hospital provides a protective home for Gamini and, by extension, the alternative community.

In spite of the parallel Gamini draws between the hospital and his parents' house (in his childhood), the alternative community is associated more with the loci of healing than with the family. Indeed, the break-up of the family unit (with

Sarath's and Gamini's secret war, the separation of Anil's parents and her subsequent divorce) conveys metaphorically the break up of the national community and establishes a mirroring relationship between family spaces and national spaces. While Gamini's parents' house reflects the divisions and rivalries plaguing the normative Sri Lankan community, the hospital wards are associated with the space of the alternative community in this chapter. The hospital as a whole grounds the imagining of the alternative community in the imperative to be unconditionally generous to all those affected by the civil war. It is the only place in the novel where people belonging to different groups meet without fighting or killing each other.

Important as the hospital is to rethinking community, the children's ward remains the ideal space associated with the alternative community. Gamini heals his patients regardless of their political affiliation. However, he expresses his mistrust and suspicion of those patients he hears shouting child-like in emergency. This suspicion is due to his patients' belief in normative national communities. It is also due to his conviction that such beliefs can only be used to give legitimacy to the claims of those vying for power.

Gamini only trusts the occupants of the children's ward, hence the security he feels there. Indeed, whenever Gamini needs some sleep and can afford it, he heads for the children's ward where he finds the materialization of one major trope expressing the suffering of Sri Lankan civilians bereaved by the war: the pietas. A pieta, according to the OED, means "a painting or sculpture of the Virgin Mary supporting the dead body of Christ, usually on her lap." The novel opens with such a pieta. Although the Guatemalan woman grieving the loss of brother and husband is not holding their emaciated dead bodies, her squatting body affectively expresses a grief characteristic of pietas.

> She was on her haunches, her legs under her as if in formal prayer, elbows in her lap, looking down at the remains of the two bodies. She had lost a husband and a brother during an abduction in this region a year earlier. […] There are no words Anil knows that can describe, even for just herself, the woman's face. But the grief of love in that shoulder she will not forget, still remembers. (Ondaatje 6)

This pieta is followed by the carved pieta of the "rock carving from another century of the woman bending over her child," her "back bowed in affection or grief" (Ondaatje 157). The last and equally powerful pieta in the novel is the one bringing together the warring brothers, Gamini holding the body of his dead brother, Sarath (Patricia Chu[81]).

The only living pieta—the one taking place in the children's ward—demarcates itself from the other pietas in the novel by its affective potential to rejuvenate the ailing body of the nation. Patricia Chu foregrounds the transformative potential of pietesque tableaux and holds that they "signal that acts of compassionate witnessing can renew shattered spirits, inspire commitments to change, and lead to new relationships between individuals and their communities" (94). This transformative potential can be seen mainly in the living pieta that takes place in the children's ward. The living pieta of the mothers in the children's ward is different from the other pietas in the novel as the children are not dead. This testifies to the exceptionality of the hospital ward for the alternative community proposed in the novel. This ward is a place where what necessarily involves death throughout the novel (the other pietesque tableaux[82]) becomes a promise of life, renewal and healing. Gamini, who distrusts those people and patients standing for normative

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[81] Highlighting the importance of the metaphor of the pieta to communal healing, Chu contends that: "In place of a literary plot of individual bildung, reform of mass or official institutions, or individual justice, Anil uses the tropes of the pieta, artistic creation, and individual transformation to signal that acts of compassionate witnessing can renew shattered spirits, inspire commitments to change, and lead to new relationships between individuals and their communities" (94).

[82] The other pietesque tableaux can be read as metaphorical expressions of the relationship between an observing loving citizen and the Sri Lankan chaotic state of affairs. All of these pietas portray people in love with someone or something irrevocably lost.

conceptions of community, can only believe in the pietesque mothers as well as the love, protection and safety they can give to their children. After telling the reader about Gamini's distrust of the above-mentioned patients, the narrator says "He [Gamini] believed only in the mothers sleeping against their children, the great sexuality of spirit in them, the sexuality of care, so the children would be confident and safe during the night" (Ondaatje 119). Examining the pietesque tableaux allows us to conclude that protection, love and safety are presented as the principles that govern the relationship between the different ethnic groups forming the alternative community. They are the very elements with which the frailty of postcolonial collectivities in crisis should be dealt.

The centrality of the living pieta to the alternative community hints at an alternative conception of the relation between mother and community. Rather than sacrificing her child on the sacred altar of the nation—the way Sinhalese and Tamil mothers do in the context of the civil war—the mother affiliated with the alternative community gives precedence to the life of her child. Sitralega Maunaguru deals with the way the Sinhalese (during the 1980s) and Tamil groups (during the 1960s) appealed to the mothers to send their children to fight for the glory of their respective nations. Maunaguru foregrounds this ideological manipulation of the mothers in both camps when she says:

> Women were constructed here [in the Federal Party weekly *Suthanthiran* during the sixties] either as victims of the Sinhala state or as those who would nurture valour in their sons, so that they would fight to regain the lost dignity and pride of the Tamil community. Parallel developments took place in the South in the late eighties. With the growth of armed militancy among the Tamils, the state

> recruited large numbers of young Sinhala men into the army in an attempt to intensify its military activities. Appeals were made to Sinhala mothers to send their sons to war in order to protect the unity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka: the Sinhala Buddhist nation. (162)

Myths and history are used to make women sacrifice their children to contribute to the glory of the nation. Rather than appealing to women to sacrifice their children for the war the way the normative groups do, the alternative community appeals to mothers to protect their children from becoming child soldiers[83] like the ones upon whom Gamini operates in the Tamil camp. The alternative community again asserts the primacy of the life principle over the dictates of propagandist political speeches. The glory of the alternative community lies in the thriving of the life principle and the destruction of the artificial borders that differentiate self and other, the human and the non-human.

Children, in this sense, metaphorically represent not a developmental stage in the history of Sri Lankan society—as that will reinscribe the novel's rethinking of community in a teleological narrative—but the fragility and precariousness of a dreamed up future (Chakrabarty 46). The fragility of the alternative community is powerfully communicated through the way the hospital—the locus of the alternative community—is described in relation to the outside world of failed normative politics. Describing the children's ward where Gamini worked at Polonnaruwa during his last year in the north east, the narrator says: "Outside this room of infants, and beyond the shell of the hospital building, was a garrisoned country. The rebel guerrillas

[83] The consequences of embracing the propagandist discourse urging women to sacrifice their children for the glory of the nation can be seen in the passage narrating part of Gamini's experience as a doctor in a Tamil camp. The narrator conveys Gamini's puzzling over the rationale behind sending children to war in the Sri Lankan context saying: "Some of the boys were delirious when they emerged from the influence of pills. Who sent a thirteen-year-old to fight, and for what furious cause? For an old leader? For some pale flag? (Ondaatje 219)."

controlled all roads after dark, so even the army didn't move at night" (239). The frailty of the alternative community imagined in the novel is signalled through the clear contrast between the frail shell protecting the site in which it is imagined and the strength of the normative communities. The strength of the latter is conveyed through the reference to the garrison of the normative national community and the guerrilla-controlled roads.

What accounts for the moral ethical strength and reliability of the alternative community resulting from this alliance is its antagonistic position in relation to capital. Giving precedence to healing the wounded, the doctors choose not to work in the private sector. Rather, they devote themselves to the endless waves of the wounded flooding public hospitals. Giving us an account of Gamini's experience as a doctor in the northeast, the narrator refers to the distance the healers of the nation take from capital when he says:

> The doctors who survived that time in the northeast remembered they never worked harder, were never more useful than to the strangers who were healed and who slipped through their hands like grain. Not one of them returned later into the economically sensible careers of private practice. They would learn everything of value here. It was not an abstract or moral quality but a physical skill that empowered them. (Ondaatje 228)[84]

This implies that the narrative of capital will probably not be able to co-opt the alternative community the way it did to the normative and only legitimate community, i.e. the nation. Rejecting the economically sensible careers in the private sector, the doctors affiliated with the alternative community realize that their devotion to healing absolute strangers empowers them. Choosing the private sector,

[84] The distance the doctors take from capital is also referred to in the following passage: "They had found a place a long way from governments and media and financial ambition. They had originally come to the northeast for a three-month shift and in spite of the lack of equipment, the lack of water, not one luxury except now and then a tin of condensed milk sucked in a car while being surrounded by jungle, they had stayed for two years or three, in some cases longer (Ondaatje 231)."

the way Linus Corea does, will allow them to become well-off, but it will not allow them to learn the empowering physical skill that comes with healing absolute strangers. Although we cannot be sure that this alternative community will not be co-opted by capital, its rejection of the gifts of capital (a comfortable life coming with work in the private sector) protects it, to certain extent, from such a cooption. As far as the normative communities are concerned (the Sinhalese Buddhist government, Tamils and insurgents), the novel shows us that they are already co-opted by capital when we are told that "[i]t became evident that political enemies were secretly joined in financial arms deals" (43). The warring parties are central players in the game of capital and can, thus, theoretically make it to the highest ranks of power even if they will have to form a minority government in this case.

(III) The Alternative Community and the Absence of Hierarchies

Another defining characteristic of the alternative community is the crucial absence of a hierarchy between the healers of the nation. This absence of a hierarchy between them conveys the radically democratic trait of the alternative community in *Anil's Ghost*. Nurses operate side by side with doctors. We have two examples of this in the novel. The first example is that of the nurse operating with Dr. Linus Corea when he is kidnapped by one of the warring parties. The second example is that of the nurse who accompanied Gamini when he is operating on the kid suffering from congenital abnormality (Ondaatje 241)." Her dexterity when she had to reverse the process he and Dr. Fonseka started was so remarkable that Gamini told her: "Don't remain a nurse. You'll be a good doctor" (Ondaatje 242). Not only does the presence of Kaashdya (the nurse) disturb the medical hierarchy, but also brings to our attention the heterogeneity of the medical staff as she is "the Tamil wife of one of the staff" (Ondaatje 241). Thus, a Tamil nurse is not only welcome in a

predominantly Sinhalese staff, but she also contributes to giving a new life to the Sinhalese child on whom Gamini operates.

Moreover, the hierarchy of knowledges that reigns in conventional communities is disturbed in the alternative community as Gamini does not only resort to the knowledge he garnered from a university education. He also relies on the indigenous knowledge he found in a song sung to him by his Tamil ayah as a child. Gamini tells us about the failure of the knowledge garnered from a western-style medical school to help cure a "girl who could hold nothing down, not her mother's milk, not even water and she was dehydrating" (Ondaatje 240). Faced with this failure, Gamini suddenly remembers "something and got hold of a pomegranate and fed the child the juice it stayed down" (Ondaatje 24). The narrator, then, tells us about the song that allowed Gamini to heal the little girl:

> Something he'd heard about pomegranates in a song his ayah had sung… It was legendary that every Tamil home on Jaffna peninsula had three trees in the garden. A mango, a murunga, and the pomegranate. Murunga leaves were cooked in crab curries to neutralize poisons, pomegranate leaves were soaked in water for the care of eyes and the fruit eaten to aid digestion. The mango was for pleasure. (Ondaatje 240)

Thus, Tamil indigenous knowledge supplements western medical knowledge and helps save the life of an ailing Sinhalese child. The relationship between the two knowledges is not one of superiority or inferiority, but one of complementarity.

The figure of the Tamil ayah not only testifies to the multi-ethnicity and absence of hierarchies characterizing the alternative community but also serves to denaturalize the bond between citizens and their normative communities. In fact, in normative communities mothers are not only called upon to sacrifice their children

for the glory of the nation, but they are also used discursively to signify the naturalness of the bond between citizens and the national community. This bond is denaturalized by the introduction of the figure of the ayah as a surrogate mother. The ayah unaligns the alternative community and the national one. This unalignment is due to the fact that the naturalness of the ties between citizens and nation conveyed through the trope of the mother is undermined by the importance given to the surrogate mother—the ayah. Using the ayah (alongside the mother) as a metaphor for the relation between citizens and their nation signifies an acquired and conscious attachment rather than a natural one into which the citizen is (supposed to be) born. This naturalness is expressed through the metaphorical and idiomatic translation of the relation between citizens and nation "either in the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, Vaterland, patria) or that of home (Heimat or tanah air [earth and water, the phrase for the Indonesians' native archipelago]). Both idioms denote something to which one is naturally tied," as Anderson puts it (143). However, the naturalness of the tie connecting the national community to the nation does not apply to all groups constituting the national body[85]. The ideological and disciplinary machines of the nation-state turn the illusion of the naturalness of the above-mentioned ties into reality, thus producing fatally exclusive communities in the postcolonial world. Out of such coercive imaginings of community ensue genocides (like those which took place in Rwanda) and the civil war which ravaged Sri Lanka for almost thirty years.

(IV) Touch: An Alternative Medium of Communication

[85] Anderson alludes to this when he says: "As we have seen earlier, in everything 'natural' there is always something unchosen. In this way, the nation-ness is assimilated to skin-colour, gender, parentage and birth-era—all those things one can not help […] they have about them a halo of disinterestedness (143)."

The role of the ayah in the alternative community is all the more crucial as she devises an alternative medium of communication for that community. Indeed, in the absence of a common linguistic ground between herself and Anil, Lalitha, the ayah, resorts to touch in order to make for “the lost language between them” (Ondaatje 22). Anil does not speak Tamil and Lalitha forgot Sinhalese. To bridge the linguistic gap between them, Lalitha “put her hands out and ran them over Anil’s hair” (Ondaatjee 22). In response to that Anil “held her arms” (Ondaatje 23). Likewise, communication between Anil and Ananda, the artistic healer of the scarred community, is also reached thanks to this alternative medium of communication. Although they are both Sinhalese, Anil’s residence abroad for fifteen years made her forget the very thing upon which the Sinhalese conceive their collective identity, i.e. Sinhala. This makes her unable to communicate verbally with Ananda. When she hears about the story of the disappeared Sirissa, Ananda’s wife, and gets to know where the expression on Sailor’s rebuilt face came from, Anil feels empathy for Ananda and starts weeping. It is her sympathetic response to his story (in the form of weeping) that paves the way for their unique moment of communication. I call it unique as it is normally thanks to Sarath’s translations that Ananda and Anil get to understand each other. When Ananda saw Anil weeping he

> moved two steps forward and with his hand creased away the pain around her eye along with her tear’s wetness. It was the softest touch on her face. His left hand lay on her shoulder as tenderly and formally as the nurse had on Gamini that night in the emergency ward, which was why, perhaps, she recalled that episode to Sarath later. Ananda’s hand on her shoulder to quiet her while the other hand came up to her face, kneaded the skin of that imploded tension of weeping as if hers

> too was a face being sculpted though she could tell that wasn't in his thought. This was a tenderness she was receiving. Then his other hand on her other shoulder, the other thumb under her right eye. Her sobbing had stopped. (Ondaatje 187)

This healing touch translates one person's understanding of another's sorrow and establishes communication in the alternative community.

The recourse of the agents of the alternative community to touch as a medium of communication is reminiscent of Mark Paterson's elaboration of the phenomenology of touch in *The Senses of Touch*. In his work, Paterson stresses the primacy of touch over vision and its importance as a medium of communication. At the beginning of his book, he contends that

> on the one hand, to write about touch is to consider the immediacy of our everyday, embodied tactile-spatial experience. The feeling of cutaneous touch when an object brushes our skin is simultaneously an awareness of the materiality of the object and an awareness of the spatial limits and sensations of our live body. Reaching out to touch and caress an animate object, such as familiar cat or a warm-cheeked lover, the immediacy of sensation is affirmatory and comforting, involving a mutual co-implication of one's own body and another's presence. On the other hand, *touch can cement an empathic or affective bond, opening an entirely new channel of communication*. (3 italics mine)

It is this affective bond that the agents of the alternative community forge through touch.

Touch, the medium of communication for the alternative community in *Anil's Ghost*, can also be read as a response to the normative, destructive touch associated with the warring parties in Sri Lanka. The impact of this normative touch can be

seen through its traumatizing effects on Lakma, Palipana's niece. "The shock of the murder of the girl's parents, however, had touched everything within her, driving both her verbal and her motor ability into infancy. This was combined with an adult sullenness of spirit. She wanted nothing more to invade her" (Ondaatje 103). It is in response to this destructive touch that the alternative touch is proposed in Ondaatje's novel. Instead of the traumatizing, violent touch associated with the warring parties, the alternative community proposes a healing touch that communicates in the absence of words and common languages. While the normative touch robs people of their ability to communicate (as is the case of Lakma) and isolates them from others, the alternative touch provides them with means of communication and bonding with the other.

All the healers in the novel (mothers, surrogate mothers, doctors and artists) are united through their recourse to this highly communicative and healing touch. Ananda's healing touch is implicitly linked with Lalitha's touch, Anil's mother's touch and Gamini's touch. Comparing the quality of communication between herself and people resorting to this tactile medium, on the one hand, with verbal communication, Anil notices that the latter kind of communication results in her being "adjacent" to rather than touching the person to whom she is speaking. The importance of touch as an alternative medium of communication adds an affective dimension to it. It places communication at the intersection between body and mind. The message resulting from cognition, rather than being expressed through words, is communicated through touch. Although this may be seen as evidence of Ondaatje's modernist penchant, a tendency to favour a conception of community where the signifier colludes with the signified, I read it as an integral part of the conception of the alternative community proposed in *Anil's Ghost*. In fact, it allows people (Tamil

and Sinhalese alike) who do not share a common language to communicate. It allows them to communicate without using a language that would give more advantage to one ethnic group over another.

The tactile communication between the agents of the alternative community shows media of communication for what they are; that is, simply media of communication. A language, be it Sinhalese or Tamil, as a medium of communication, has to allow people to communicate and understand each other. This tactile medium of communication is a communal strategy that helps the alternative community in its attempt to avoid the hierarchies characterizing normative communities. The alternative community is inherently inimical to hierarchies—be they hierarchies between different types of knowledges or those between languages, as it is upon those hierarchies that exclusive and supremacist imaginings of community are based. Being based on touch rather than language, the alternative community is radically opposed to the Tamil and Sinhalese community as the coherence of the latter derives from their respective languages.

Denaturalizing the linguistic means of communication and seeing it simply as a means of communication does not imply that languages are politically, socially and historically undifferentiated. The anti-colonial struggles which gave "birth" to nations like Sri Lanka make it obvious that languages and cultures are fields of power and loci of contestation and negotiation. In fact, they are crucial for independence as they are for the stability of the nascent postcolonial countries. Denaturalizing the linguistic medium helps us discern when a language (with its history and cultural affiliation) is used not as a medium of communication but as a means to a political end, as a means of establishing hierarchies and legitimizing claims to sovereignty and power. In the Sri Lankan context, the warring parties (at

least the Sinhalese, the Tamils and the government) and the government marshalled history, literature and language to serve their political ends. This resulted in a long civil war that terrorized and scarred the Sri Lankan people.

The tactile approach to communication, in general, and language, in particular allows us to discern the radical difference between the national imagined communities studied by Anderson and the alternative community in *Anil's Ghost*. The following quote from Anderson's chapter significantly entitled "Patriotism and Racism" illustrates this very well:

> What the eye is to the lover—that particular, ordinary eye he or she is born with—language whatever language history has made his or her mother-tongue—is to the patriot. Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with at the grave, pasts are restored and, fellowships imagined, and futures dreamed. (154)

If the Sinhalese group whose identity revolves around Sinhala restores pasts and imagines fellowships and futures, its conceptions of the past and fellowships will necessarily privilege everything Sinhalese and exclude and oppress those belonging to other groups. With the rise to power of the Sinhalese-Buddhist majority, the oppression of Tamils became institutionalized. Somasundaram refers to this oppression in the educational sphere and contends that

> At first a disproportionate number gained admission to higher education, particularly the professional courses in the university. It was therefore not surprising that the gradual restrictions imposed on admission of Tamils to higher educational institutions [...] by successive 'Sinhalised' governments through standardisation and

> other systems was perceived with increasing alarm by Tamils, particularly the youth, as threatening their very livelihood. (312)

The alternative community aims at avoiding this kind of oppression by choosing a medium of communication that does not favour any ethnic group at the detriment of the other.

(V) Ananda's Reconstruction Project

Contrary to the other cross-ethnic manifestations of the alternative community, the one we come across in the last chapter of the novel features Sinhala Buddhist people only. Indeed, the project around which the alternative community emerges in "Distance" consists in the reconstruction of a Buddha statue. Rethinking community around an element that is so much connected to the Sinhala Buddhist revivalism[86] responsible for the injustices suffered by Tamils. The centrality of this Buddhist element to rethinking community in the last chapter of the book is reminiscent of the Sri Lankan president's conception of peace and reconstruction in Sri Lanka after the official end of the war on May 17, 2009. On May 19, 2009, "Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa […] delivered a victory address to parliament, declaring that his country had been 'liberated' from terrorism. 'Addressing parliament in the Tamil language, Rajapaksa said the war was not waged against Tamil people. 'our intention was to save the Tamil people from the cruel grip of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). We all must now live as equals in this free country. We must find a home-grown solution to this conflict. That solution should be acceptable to all the communities. We have to find a solution based on the

[86] Situating Sinhala Buddhist revivalism historically and referring to the important role it played in the formation of a Sinhala national identity, Tambiah says: "there is no doubt that Sinhala Buddhist revivalism and nationalism, in the form we recognize it today, had its origin in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is in this earlier period that we see most clearly the contours and impulsions of a movement that acted as a major shaper of Sinhala consciousness and a sense of national identity and purpose" (5).

philosophy of Buddhism" (Chamberlain and Weaver par 5-7 italics mine). Although the president addresses parliament in Tamil and emphasizes the importance of finding local solutions, he insists that they should draw their inspiration from the philosophy of Buddhism.

Relying on the eye-painting ceremony and the reconstruction of the Buddha statue in a project related to reconstructing community, thus, seems to offer a solution to the Sri Lankan conflict that is quite similar to the one president Rajapaska offers. Heike Härting, Joseph Slaughter and Qadri Ismail examine the affiliation of the reconstruction project, in general, and the eye-painting ceremony, in particular, with Sinhalese Buddhist Revivalism. They also underline the responsibility of Sinhalese Buddhism in crimes perpetrated against the Tamil population and justified, to a large extent, by a Sinhalese Buddhist communal ideology. Härting succinctly mentions the danger inherent in the reconstruction scene: "similarly, by giving primacy to the traditions of rural Sinhalese craftsmanship and popular Buddhist ritual, *Anil's Ghost* risks constructing Sri Lanka's present through the burden of its past" (14). It is this potentially tragic affiliation of the alternative community with an exclusionary conception of the past that are to be taken into account when rethinking the configuration of community in the aftermath of the civil war.

Although the dangers of reinscribing the conception of an alternative community in an exclusionary conception of the past are to be heeded, we cannot discard Buddhism out of hand. Nor can we reduce Buddhism, as a religion that preaches peace, to the politicized Buddhism used by the Sinhalese-Buddhists in Sri Lanka to serve their own interests. The way the past may be used to heal a community or destroy it, Buddhism can be used to make peace or make war depending on the objectives of the party using it. The imbrication of the

reconstruction project in the broader multi-ethnic and multi-religious project of rethinking being in common in a counter-normative way, along with a number of other indices, dissociate the reconstruction project from the dominant discourse. Indeed, the small community emerging around the reconstruction project is connected to the other manifestations of the alternative community through the tactile medium of communication and the use of the image of triage which evokes the central locus of the alternative community, namely the hospital.

Tactile communication is at the heart of Ananda's reconstruction project—the focus of the last chapter, "Distance." At the end of the novel, Ananda is commissioned by the Archaeology department to reconstruct a fragmented Buddha—a statue that was blown up during the war but not for political reasons[87]. The narrator refers twice to the absence of linguistic communication during the eye-painting ceremony carried out by Ananda and his nephew, when he says "there was no talking" and "they still did not speak" (Ondaatje 306). Communication in this scene, like the communication established between Lalitha and Anil and Anil and Ananda, is based on a touch that conveys a tactile message of understanding, concern and love. It is precisely this message that Ananda gets when "he felt the boy's concerned hand on his. This sweet touch from the world" (Ondaatje 307). The reliance of the small alternative community emerging around the reconstruction project on tactile communication connects it to the larger project of imagining being together in the novel. Furthermore, the two communities are figuratively connected through the image of triage. Like Gamini who works at the head of the triage at the Kynsey Road Hospital, Ananda is at the head of the triage of the reconstruction site.

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[87] The narrator tells us "this was for once not a political act or an act perpetrated by one belief against another. The men were trying to find a solution for hunger or a way to get out of their disintegrating lives (Ondaatje 300).

He supervises his community's sorting out the fragments of the exploded Buddha statue in "a hundred-foot long coffin" (Ondaatje 301).

Although the project of the reconstruction of the Buddha statue is commissioned by the Archaeology Department, Ananda manages to use the institutional grounds available to him to protect civilians from the government and forge an alternative community. Like the Sinhalese doctors who use the institutional grounds provided by the hospitals to forge an alternative community, Ananda uses the institutional grounds provided by the Archaeological Department. Using institutions (hospitals and the Archaeology Department) as the ground upon which an alternative community is formed has its limits.[88] It may actually entail the cooption of that community by the nation-state as the former will have to comply with the demands of the institution in question to guarantee its existence. However, faced with the traumas and horrors of the civil war as the characters of *Anil's Ghost* are, the latter take up and use (with caution) any space that may allow them to alleviate the pain of their fellows and carry out their projects of communal healing. Through involving villagers in collaborative work, Ananda is able to protect them from the military machine of the government under whose very supervision the project is carried out.

> Ananda brought in some of the villagers to work, ten more men. It was safer to be seen working for a project like this, otherwise you could be pulled into the army or might be rounded up as a suspect. He got more of the village involved, women as well as men. If they volunteered he put them to work. They had to be there by five in the morning and they packed it in by two in the afternoon. (Ondaatje 301-2)

This collaborative community project led by the artistic healer of the alternative community, thus, uses the very institutional space provided by the Archaeology

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[88] Anil's failure to reach the truth and achieve justice through institutional means alerts us to the limitations of working with institutions when one's project can compromise those institutions as well as those in power.

department to provide a space of security and protection for the villagers. The latter would, otherwise, likely be recruited by the army or added to the lists of those disappeared in the offices of the human rights organizations in Geneva.

Gathering the fragments of the exploded Buddha statue and sorting them out, the villagers are used to the terrifying and common sight of beheaded corpses and heads on sticks and are given the opportunity of symbolically healing the wounds of the nation. The account of the "final stage of knitting it [the statue] together" justifies reading the fragmented body of the Buddha statue as the fragmented body of the nation. In fact, the statue is described as having "giant red veins," limbs and "red metal sliding into the path incised within the body" (Ondaatje 303). This artistic participation of the community in healing the wounded body of the nation not only aligns it with the larger alternative community in the novel, but also shows the importance of art to overcoming trauma. Somasundaram underscores the important role of art as a way of overcoming trauma in Sri Lanka and contends that

> Artistic expression of emotions and trauma can be cathartic for individuals and the community as a whole. Art, drama, story-telling, writing poetry or novels (testimony), singing, dancing, clay modelling, sculpturing, etc., are very useful emotive methods in trauma therapy. The traumatised individual is able to externalise the traumatic experience through a medium and thereby handle and manipulate the working-through outside without the associated internal distress. (302)

Through their sorting out of the fragments of the exploded Buddha statue, the alternative community indirectly deals with the bodies of their murdered relatives or the memory of the burnt corpses strewn on the erstwhile " 'neutral' and 'innocent' fields" (Ondaatje 300). Moreover, the alternative community's participation in the Netra Mangala ceremony with all the drumming and singing highlights the importance of art in the healing of scarred communities. It also reminds one of the importance Somasundaram gives to rituals as means that allow communities to cope

with trauma. In his chapter on the management of trauma in Sri Lanka, he says that "rituals have a very special place in third world communities. They can be a source of strength, support and meaning" (302).

(VII) The Alternative Community and Sinhala Buddhism

Although any mention of ceremonies associated with Sinhala Buddhism in a project that aims at healing wounds it inflicted on a large number of Sri Lankans cannot but make us wary of the project, there are many instances in the novel which dissociate all the manifestations of the alternative community from the Sinhalese Buddhist communal ideology. In fact, Ananda, the artificer in charge of the reconstruction project, denies any ties to the Buddhist religion, although he is named after one of the most revered disciples of the Buddha. Just before relating the Netra Mangala ceremony, the narrator tells us that "as an artificer now he [Ananda] did not celebrate the greatness of a faith. But he knew if he did not remain an artificer he would become a demon. The war around him had to do with demons, spectres of retaliation" (Ondaatje 304). It is, thus, as a way of coping and helping people cope with trauma that Ananda leads and participates in the reconstruction project. Moreover, the fragmented statue of the Buddha is even seen as deprived from its divinity. Near the end of book, the narrator says:

> the eyes, like his at this moment, would always look north. As would the great scarred face half a mile away, which he had helped knit together from damaged stone a statue that was no longer a god, that no longer had its graceful line but only a pure sad glance Ananda had found. (Ondaatje 307)

Last but not least, there is a central statement about religion in the novel around which the community of marginalia criminals working at the hospitals in the northeast revolves (Slaughter 193). The sentence occurs in a book about Jung and says: "*Jung was absolutely right about one thing. We are occupied by Gods. The*

*mistake is to identify with the god occupying yo*u. Whatever this meant, it seemed a thoughtful warning, and they let the remark seep into them" (Ondaatje 230-31, italics in original). Understood in the context of the civil war, we can see why the doctors see a warning in the quotation from the book about Jung. In fact, the quotation hints at the dangers inherent in turning religious identity into a politicized identity that would legitimize the persecution and massacre of people who have a different religion. The problem, thus, does not lie in belonging to a particular religious group as such, but in the political use of religion. After all, at one point Gamini is said to touch a Buddha statue before starting to work, but this does not in any way make him adhere to the Sinhalese Buddhist communal ideology. On the contrary, he helps forge a community that hospitably heals all (Hindus and Buddhists alike).

The reconstruction scene also articulates the relationship of the alternative community to the past in terms of what Chakrabarty calls the "historical wound" (*History and the Politics* 77). He defines the "historical wound" as a particular "mix of history and memory" (*History and the Politics* 77). Distinguishing itself from historical truths—"the synthetic generalizations based on researched collections of individual historical facts" (Chakrabarty, *History and the Politics* 77)—by the fact that while the latter are "amenable to verification by methods of historical research," the former is not (Chakrabarty, *History and the Politics* 78). Healing plays a crucial role in dealing with the historical wound which further justifies reading the alternative community's relationship to the past in the terms outlined above. In fact, the reconstruction scene can be read as a symbolical way of healing the wounds inflicted on the psyche and body of the Sri Lankan national community. Seen as Ananda's way of recording a painful episode in Sri Lankan history and a warning to the generations to come against the devastating effects of reductive identity politics,

the reconstructed, fragmented Buddha statue represents a first step on the path of recovery for the Sri Lankan community. The first step is made possible thanks to a collaborative, artistic expression of the wounds plaguing a whole nation.

The link between the historical wound and healing is made clear by Chakrabarty at the beginning of his article when he says: "I work with the same idea of "wound" but I assume that, for a person or group so 'wounded,' to speak of the wound or to speak in its name is already to be on the path of recovery" (77). When taken in the multicultural context, for instance, the historical wound may or may not have, depending on the circumstances, a favourable configuration of the mainstream social consensus that will allow the group expressing the historical wound to ask for retribution and find a cure to their wound (Chakrabarty 78). However, when it comes to considering the manifestations of the historical wound in *Anil's Ghost*, that favourable configuration of mainstream social consensus is yet-to-come. Speaking of the wound of the community necessitates a viable public sphere from which the claims of that community may be made, hence the importance of negotiating such overlapping territory as the one Ananda uses for the reconstruction project. Ananda uses the space that the Archaeology department gives him to rebuild the Buddha statue in order to protect people from being recruited by government and guerrilla armies. He also subversively uses that overlapping territory to knit together an embryonic alternative community that challenges modernity's only legitimate community, namely the nation.

(VIII) Anil's International, Non-Governmental Quest for Justice and *Anil's Ghost* as a Ghost Story

So far I have been studying local Sri Lankan ways of healing the wounds inflicted by the civil war. Although it is true that the most important agents of

healing in the novel (Gamini the doctor and Ananda the artificer) are Sri Lankans, the role played by Anil, the western-trained diasporic forensic specialist originally from Sri Lanka is also crucial. Her failure to achieve justice for those killed or made to disappear by the government does point to the shortcomings and failure of the global non-governmental attempts at achieving justice. However, her failure to back up the results of her investigation with the evidence that would incriminate the Sri Lankan government in the "Armoury Auditorium" is not the most important thing in Anil's quest as an agent of global justice in the novel as ghost story.

Focusing on *Anil's Ghost* as a ghost story fosters a better understanding of the role she plays in healing the wounds of Sri Lankans and building an alternative community. First, it is worth noting that ghost stories and narratives of possession are a mechanism of coping with trauma and achieving justice in the south of Sri Lanka which was affected by the insurgency and counter-insurgency terror. Sasanka Perera studies the emergence of these narratives at the beginning of the 1990s.[89] The emergence of such narratives is also directly related to the failure of the secular apparatus of justice. Perera foregrounds the people's need for alternative ways of achieving justice behind the emergence of these narratives and says: "the construction of ghost stories and the experience of possession as a narrative of terror and unnatural and violent death have to be placed in a context where the normal processes of mourning as well as law and order have completely failed" (168). Spirit mediums, in the south, help people cope with their uncompleted grief when no information is provided by the police as to the whereabouts of the person in question. This incomplete grief is the starting point of Anil's investigation into the crimes

[89] These narratives «were published in the Sinhala weekly *Irida Lakadipa* in the latter part of 1992. Others have been collected from the field." (Perera 158).

perpetrated by the government. After Anil gets the four skeletons on which she will base her investigation, the narrator says:

> in a fearful nation, public sorrow was stamped down by the climate of uncertainty. If a father protested a son's death, it was feared another family member would be killed. If people you know disappeared, there was a chance they might stay alive if you did not cause trouble. This was the scarring psychosis in the country. Death, loss, was 'unfinished, so you could not walk through it. There had been years of night visitations, kidnappings or murders in broad daylight.' (Ondaatje 56)

Anil is no spirit medium who can divine what happened to the disappeared, whether they were killed or imprisoned for instance, the way the spirit media do to free the relatives of the disappeared and thus help them reconstruct their future. But, she eventually combines her knowledge with the reconstruction work carried out by Ananda to free the relatives of Sailor.

Revealing the fate of the disappeared person—no matter how tragic that fate is—frees his/ her relatives and allows them to come to terms with the traumatizing situation by making sense of it. Understood as a ghost story, in Perera's sense, *Anil's Ghost* helps "the working-through process so that the traumatic event can be integrated into the self-system" (Somasundaram 294). Identifying Sailor as the skeleton of Ruwan Kumara, a toddy trapper (Ondaatje 269), helps his relatives to accept his death, grieve, incorporate the traumatizing event into their psyches and carry on with their lives. It is through providing this kind of knowledge—explosive as it is for it leads to Anil's rape and Sarath's death—that Anil contributes to the alternative community. Although Anil reveals the identity of the sailor through

secular media, the importance of religion in dealing with trauma in the Sri Lankan context is not to be underestimated as Somasundaram and Perera tell us. This may be the reason for the inclusion of the Buddhist religious element in the reconstruction project. Somasundaram holds that

> when methods are culturally familiar, they tap into childhood, community and religious roots and thus release a rich source of associations that can be helpful in therapy and the healing process. Further, mindfulness and meditation draw upon hidden resources within the individual and open him to dimensions that can create spiritual healing and give meaning to what has happened (301).

It is also worth noting that, in his last chapter on the management of war trauma, Somasundaram foregrounds the importance of religious rituals (Hindu and Buddhist) to relaxation, the working-through process and people's quest for alternative ways of achieving justice[90].

Anil's membership in the alternative community is made even stronger through the tactile medium as well as her commitment to the cause of the victims of the civil war at the end of the novel. Indeed, Anil's western manners, clothing, outlook and convictions are transformed through her friendship with Sarath and Ananda. The narrator uses the verb "citizened" to signal Anil's transformation. She is citizened by the friendships of Ananda and Sarath as is mentioned above. She is also citizened by Ananda's touch—her only act of direct communication with him. The narrator refers to this citizening through friendship and the tactile movement and says: "still, on this night, without words, there seemed to be a pact" (Ondaatje 171).

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[90] Perera points to the importance of religion as a means of achieving justice for those victims of violence in the south in his study of Tilaka's quest for justice through religious means and concludes: "Talika's last words to me were, 'justice is something only the gods can deliver. The government cannot do it. As you can see, the god Suniyam has punished those responsible for my husband's death. He will continue to look after my daughter and myself"

The citizening of Anil here, although it connects her to other Sri Lankans, does not align her with the normative, national community; it aligns her with those Sri Lankans who were kidnapped, killed and tortured during the civil war.

When she first arrives in Sri Lanka for the investigation, Anil is clearly not a member of the alternative community. On the contrary, she is yet another westerner who does not take into account the specificity of the local context in her attempt to understand the conflict in Sri Lanka. Gamini refers to the limitations of such an approach to the conflict and says:

> the American or the Englishman gets on a plane and leaves. That's it. The camera leaves with him. He looks out of the window at Mombasa or Vietnam or Jakarta, someplace now he can look at through the clouds. The tired hero. A couple of words to the girl beside him. He's going home. So the war, to all purposes, is over. That's enough reality for the West. It's probably the history of the last two hundred years of Western political writing. Go home. Write a book. Hit the circuit. (Ondaatje 284-5)

At the beginning of her stay in Sri Lanka, Sarath even compares her to "visiting journalists" (Ondaatje 27), who fail to give an appropriate and just account of the conflict as they see the war from their comfortable epistemological positioning. In addition to that, Anil's absolute confidence in the tools provided by western knowledge and her fundamental belief in evidence and truth further align her with foreigners and alienate her from the local context. Her conviction that "the truth shall set you free" recurs throughout the novel (Ondaatje 102).

Although her relationship with Sarath and Ananda does not change her belief in truth and its liberating power, she voices her belonging to the Sri Lankan

community victimized by the civil war when she reads her report in the Armoury Building. Anil literally utters a transnational alternative community into being at the end of the novel when she says: "I think you murdered *hundreds of us*" (Ondaatje 272, italics mine). It is a transnational alternative community given the diasporic status of Anil and her affiliation with the international human rights organization in Geneva. Sarath, the character who has repeatedly aligned Anil with foreigners, realizes her transformation and points out her bonding with Sri Lankans. The narrator refers to this when he says: "Sarath in the back row, unseen by her, listened to her quiet explanations, her surefootedness, her absolute calm and refusal to be emotional or angry. It was a lawyer's argument and, more important, a *citizen's evidence*" (Ondaatje 271-2, italics mine). The transnational dimension of the alternative community is strengthened by the bond the relatives of the disappeared establish with the foreigners receiving their "requests" and "evidence" (Ondaatje 42) in the offices of Human Rights organizations in Geneva. It is true that neither Anil nor the foreign specialists (who chose not to come because of the political turmoil) participate in the community-building/ reconstruction project at the end of the novel. But it is made possible thanks to Anil's medical skills as she is the one who saves Ananda's life when the latter attempts to commit suicide.

Conclusion

Now that the Sri Lankan civil war has come to an end, thinking community beyond the wounds of the war becomes of paramount importance. Although *Anil's Ghost* was written before the end of the war, it articulates an alternative configuration of community. The alternative community suggested in the novel attempts to avoid the pitfalls of the modern modular imaginings of community, as outlined by Anderson in *Imagined Communities*. The alternative community is

informed by hospitality and the centrality of healing, hence the importance of hospitals for the alternative community. Furthermore, rather than adopting a linguistic medium to ensure communication between its members, the alternative community favours a tactile medium of communication. The importance given to touch as a medium of communication does not only serve to underline the unprecedented communion between members of different linguistic groups, but also to foreground what matters about any medium of communication. The tactile medium of communication denaturalizes verbal communication and shows the potentially dangerous establishment of hierarchies that can ensue from it. Moreover, as ghost story, the novel frees Sailor's family by revealing his identity, allows it to grieve and cope with trauma. Although the perpetrators of the crime are not punished at the end of the novel, Anil uses the institutional grounds made available to her by the international non-governmental organization to help at least a family (and by extension, according to her own logic, all the other victims) from the burden of incomplete grief and mourning. Her use of the institutional grounds available to her is similar to the use the other healers of the alternative community make of institutions. Here I am referring to the use the Sinhalese doctors affiliated with the alternative community make of hospitals and the use Ananda, the artistic healer of the nation, makes of the reconstruction project commissioned by the Archaeology Department.

The Alternative Postcolonial Indigenous Society in Joseph Boyden's Through Black Spruce and Three Day Road

At the beginning of Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*, a fleeting reference is made to the Italian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Ukrainian, Pakistani, Korean and African neighbourhoods of Toronto "sit[ting] on Ojibway land" (4). However, the inhabitants of those neighbourhoods do not "know or care because that genealogy is wilfully untraceable except in the name of the city itself" (Brand 4). Brand's reference to this wilful erasure of the Ojibway genealogy of Toronto at the beginning of a novel that proposes an alternative, more empowering community in the Canadian multicultural context, makes the reader expect that her novel will approach that erasure, address it and suggest some means of redressing it. However, after the above-mentioned reference to the Ojibway genealogy of Toronto, the novel does not offer any further reference to indigenous peoples or the injustices they have suffered due to the erasure not only of the Ojibway genealogy of Toronto, but also of Indigenous cultures, languages and worldviews. This erasure results in part from the establishment of residential schools in the 1840s in Canada. Although the flag of longing and Lubaio record the desires of citizens regardless of their ethnic or religious belonging in Brand's novel, it does not include indigenous people. Even if we think that the alternative community in Brand's novel includes indigenous people as any other ethnic group in Canada's multicultural society, this can only be tantamount to erasing the specificity of this group, its claims and the injustices it suffered through a long history of harsh Canadian public policies. Daniel Heath Justice draws our attention to the potentially assimilationist consequences of such a conception of community in Canada. Analyzing Michäel Jean's statement that "Quite the contrary: we must eliminate the spectre of all the solitudes and promote

solidarity among all citizens who make up the Canada of today," Justice finds that "while ostensibly commenting on the competing sovereignties of Quebec and Anglophone Canada, Jean's installation speech casts a much wider net, one with implications that quite firmly and predictably displace Aboriginal nationhood" (144). In the last chapter of the dissertation, I examine two novels that propose an alternative conception of a Cree community in Canada. The re-imagining of community in Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* (2006) and *Through Black Spruce* (2008) is not undertaken in a multicultural context, nor is it built upon an equation of the Cree community in Moosonee with other ethnic groups in Canada. Instead, the last chapter studies how the affirmation of legal autonomy and storytelling contribute to discovering the vision that guides the Cree community portrayed in Boyden's novels in its attempt to build an alternative postcolonial community. The first part of the chapter examines the sources of oppression—both indigenous and colonial—responsible for the crisis of the Cree community. The second part of the chapter investigates the Cree community's resistance to the structures of dependence and the alternative community they attempt to forge. Central to these communal efforts are storytelling and windigo-killing. These efforts are consolidated by the writer's narrative strategies which contribute to recording indigenous heritage, or, to put it in James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson's terms, legal and artistic "ledger drawing" (Henderson 7).

Three Day Road and *Through Black Spruce* are part of a trilogy relating the saga of a Cree family living in Northern Ontario near the James Bay area. They share a number of thematic concerns as well as structural elements. Moreover, the talents and gifts of the characters in *Three Day Road* are inherited by the characters in *Through Black Spruce*. Both novels portray a dispossessed and colonized Cree

community in crisis. More particularly, they depict the structures of dependence crippling the said community (cognitive, legal and economic). However, it is worth noting that the sources of oppression in both novels are both internal and external to the Cree community. Structurally each novel consists of a narrative dialogue between two characters. In each narrative conversation, one of the narrators is unconscious. At the end of each novel, the two narrative strands merge to give way to an ending full of hope and the promise of communal healing and rejuvenation.

Unlike the alternative conceptions of community studied in the previous chapters, the alternative conception of community proposed in Boyden's novels gives priority to filiation and family ties over cross-cultural and cross-national relations. This does not mean that this alternative community excludes such relations. Rather, the indigenous worldview to which the characters in Boyden's novels adhere and the importance of indigeneous traditions and values to that worldview dictate this communal alternative in Boyden's novels. The tension between these two types of altenatives reminds us that no communal model is democratizing or empowering in itself. Any communal model (national, cross-national or tribal) can be oppressive as it can be empowering depending on the way the communal configuration represents and answers the demands of the people in question. The thin line between normative and counter-normative communal models is blurred because, on the one hand, the demands of a particular community may call for a communal model that may be seen as oppressive in other communal contexts and, on the other hand, because any counter-normative can turn into a normative community once priority is given to maintaining the status quo rather than the changing demands of the people.

Before examining the indigenized postcolonial perspective from which I will read Boyden's novels, an explanation of the rationale behind juxtaposing them is in order. Given the continuity between the two novels—not only because they relate the saga of a Cree family from the James Bay area, but also because they examine the mechanisms through which the alternative community is forged— reading them side by side allows one to better understand the idiosyncrasies of indigenous community building. Moreover, juxtaposing the two novels also gives us a better understanding of the indigenous worldview and practices informing both. This indigenous worldview becomes less clear to the reader as she follows the Whiskeyjacks and Birds from one generation to the next, from *Three Day Road* to *Through Black Spruce*. This results from the traumatizing impact of residential schools and foster homes as well as the greed of windigos belonging to the Cree community itself.

My use of the term postcolonial in this chapter does not equate postcolonial indigenous thought and postcolonial theory *tout court* (Battiste 71). Applying this term to my study of indigenous Canadian texts does not refer as much to a postcolonial situation as it is to a political objective of the text. In this regard, I take my lead from Marie Battiste whose work presents postcolonialism in the indigenous Canadian context not as the present state of affairs of indigenous peoples, but as a goal to be achieved. In *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, a decolonized context as well as cognitive decolonization (as a way of countering "cognitive imperialism" (Battiste 210) are cornerstones of the agenda informing the above-mentioned collection of essays. My postcolonial reading of the alternative community proposed in Boyden's novels is also informed by Henderson's conception of postcolonial alternative indigenous society. This communal

alternative is grounded in indigenous worldviews. It also revolves around the importance of visions, oral traditions, and a "series of teachings about a particular place and about the proper way to relate to a whole irrevocable ecosystem" (Henderson 45). Equally central to Henderson's conception of an alternative postcolonial society are strong indigenous families (Henderson 54). The importance of fighting Eurocentrism and cognitive imperialism to Henderson's vision of an alternative postcolonial society also informs Boyden's novels. Moreover, Henderson's conception of "ledger drawing" will allow me to read resistance, both legal and artistic, in Boyden's novels.

(II) Structures of dependence

A crucial part of the alternative *Through Black Spruce* and *Three Day Road* propose consists in an examination of the colonial and internal sources of oppression responsible for the crisis of the Cree community. The novels' approach to the crisis of the Cree community is reminiscent of Henderson's approach to the cognitive and physical imprisonment of Aboriginal peoples (14). Indeed, at the beginning of his "Postcolonial Indigenous Legal Consciousness," Henderson argues that "we need to understand our ideological prison before we can talk about strategies and tactics for escape, emancipation or remedy" (15). Like Henderson, Boyden focuses on the Eurocentric structures of dependence responsible for the cognitive imprisonment[91] of the Cree community in both novels, but his investigation of the problems of that community does not stop there. Indeed, he also studies the way windigos from the community exacerbate the latter's crisis.

Although *Through Black Spruce* takes place well after residential schools were closed down, the characters in general and the survivors of the residential

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[91] The residential school system, foster homes and the media are responsible for the cognitive imprisonment of the Cree community.

school system in particular are haunted and traumatized by it. Familial and communal ties are severed because of the long-lasting effects of its policies as well as those of the government backing it. The destructive impact of residential schools is persistent because this colonizing system destroys the very elements that guide any indigenous person in her relationship to the other members of her community and the environment: her worldview and language. Highlighting the importance of the worldview in shaping an indigenous person's relation to her ecological surroundings, Henderson contends that "our worldview is not an act of imagination, but a series of teachings about a particular place and about the proper way to relate to a whole and irrevocable ecosystem" (45). Residential schools guaranteed their students' loss of access to their indigenous worldviews by making them lose their languages. The use of indigenous languages was prohibited and harshly punished in residential schools. Moreover, as the students were kept at residential schools the whole year without any visits from their parents[92], they were barred from reacquiring their languages, traditions and rituals.

The indigenous children's loss of their languages, worldviews and traditions, along with the helplessness of their parents in the face of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, led to resentment, alienation, and tension between parents and children. Constance Deiter underscores the fatal consequences of this loss of indigenous resources and contends that 'the loss of language, culture, and respect of self; and finally, the loss of spiritual values have left communities in chaos" (38). *Through Black Spruce* illustrates this very well. For instance, Will tells us about the way the residential school system broke the trust between his father and himself. A certain resentment towards his father came to shape his relationship with the latter as

[92] Niska's mother told her daughter, in *Three Day Road*, that « this was so that the nuns work their spells without interruption" (84).

he left him at the residential school. Will refers to the tension and resentment between his father and himself and the breaking of the indigenous family unit ensuing from the separation of parents and children by the residential school system:

> [m]y anger at him caused a fissure in our relationship, a broken line in the trust. The people responsible, they knew the same breaking happened in every family whose children they took. They did it on purpose. They were bent on crushing the old ways in order to sow the new. And if that meant parents and children who no longer really believed one another, so be it. Generation after Generation. (104)

Will's anger and resentment toward his father is also fuelled by his conviction that his father wasted all his strength fighting the white man's war and when he needed it to resist the residential school system, his strength failed him. He spent it all fighting World War I. Further clarifying the tension between his father and himself, Will says: "we both know his failures. All the fighting in his life as a young man until it was dried up when the time to fight over me came" (Boyden 104). The resentment and tension characterizing the relationship between Annie and her mother, Lisette, is another instance of the rift between parents and children induced by the residential school system.

Looking at the depiction of residential school experiences in *Three Day Road* gives us a more detailed account of the war being fought against indigenous peoples' languages, cultures and, more importantly, unity. Niska's short experience at the residential school in Moose Factory lays bare the power dynamic at the heart of the residential school system. The assimilation of indigenous children is communicated through two major symbols in the novel: haircuts and *wemistikoshiw* (white people's) clothes. Referring to these haircuts, Niska says: "the nuns gave the children funny

haircuts, the girls' bobbed to above their shoulders so that their faces looked round like apples, the boys' cut very close to their heads so that their ears stuck out" (Boyden, *Three Day* 84). Niska's forced involvement in a residential school shows that indigenous children's hair is part of the battlefield upon which the war between indigenous people and the colonizer is fought. And, it is upon it that the victory or defeat of the parties is inscribed. Niska reveals the power dynamics at play in the hair-cutting ceremony (at the residential school) and asserts that: "they [the sisters] were going to remove the black hair that reached to my waist as a symbol of *wemistikoshiw* authority, of our defeat.

> She [Sister Agnes] sat me in a chair, other nuns hovering in expectation of a fight, but I sat and smiled serenely as she tugged at my hair, pulling it hard to get a reaction from me that wouldn't come. When she was done and my scalp ached, I refused to look in the mirror that they shoved in front of me. I did not want to give them the reaction of shock and sadness that they so wanted. I'd already planned my answer to their actions. (Boyden, *Three Day* 85)

Thwarting the Sisters' expectations and showing a feigned indifference to their colonizing haircut, Niska diminishes the power of the colonial inscription on her hair. Having realized that the particularly short haircut Sister Agnes gave her (Boyden, Three Day 85) was a "symbol of *wemistikoshiw* authority, of our defeat," she undoes the power of that symbol by giving herself another haircut. The haircut Niska gives herself is too short to allow any other inscription or modification by the nuns. It, thus, turns her hair into a foreclosed field beyond the nuns' inscriptional power. Relating her answer to the nuns' work, Niska says: "deep in that night when even the most vigilant nuns were sleeping, I crept down to the basement to the room

where they sheared us like sheep and found the clippers used for the boys. I cut the rest of my hair from my head so that all that was left was a stubby field" (Boyden, *Three Day* 86). Leaving no more ground for the nuns to inscribe white authority, Niska refuses assimilation and symbolically scores a victory for her people. However, most indigenous children do not end up scoring such a victory. Rather, their residential school experience leads to their assimilation in mainstream culture and their loss of access to their indigenous languages, cultures and worldviews. Elijah and Rabbit, for instance, show the ethnic cleansing that results from a residential school education.

The other symbol through which the war over the assimilation of Indigenous peoples is fought is clothing. When Niska goes to Moose Factory looking for her "mate" (Boyden, *Three Day* 153), the difference between herself as an *awawatuk* (bush Indian) and the homeguard Indians living in town is communicated through their respective clothing. Indeed, while homeguard Indians wear white people's clothes—a sign of their assimilation, Niska wears clothes made in the traditional way with animal hides. The difference between the two modes of clothing hints at the gap and absence of communication between bush Indians, on the one hand, and homeguard Indians, on the other hand. From the moment of her arrival, Niska is aware of "an invisible wall, one impossible to breach [that] lay between me and the homeguard Indians of this white town. My clothing was in the old style, a style that only few of the elders still knew how to make, most of it from the hides of animals" (Boyden, *Three Day* 155). This wall results from the assimilation of homeguard Indians and Niska's resistance to such a process as a bush Indian. The wall between homeguard Indians and bush Indians is even bigger when those homeguard Indians are staunch converts. The old Indian lady (*Kokum*) who tells Niska about the

Frenchman's (Niska's mate) "taste for red meat" alludes to this: "the Indians here know. You can't stop talk from travelling. Some of them are happy that the old ways are still alive out in the bush. But there are lots of them Christian Indians now who are not" (Boyden, *Three Day* 156). Examining the residential school experiences depicted in *Three Day Road* and the absence, if not impossibility, of communication between groups of Indians (Homeguard Indians, on the one hand, and bush Indians, on the other hand) gives us an insight into the gap separating indigenous family members, generations of indigenous people, as well as different groups of indigenous people. It gives the reader an insight into the tension and resentment between Will and his father in *Through Black Spruce*.

Along with the generation gap resulting from the assimilationist policies of residential schools comes a loss of grounding. Indeed, indigenous children's loss of their cultures, languages, and worldviews does not only lead to a generation gap separating them from their parents, but also to an inability to know where they come from. Knowing where they come from helps Xavier and Niska surmount all the problems they face. Knowing where one comes from does not only refer to a geographical location, but also, and more importantly, to the worldview, language, traditions and rituals that are associated with that location. Okanagan writer, Jeanette Armstrong, reminds us of this connection between place and worldview: "I am Okanagan. That's a political and cultural definition of who I am, a geographical definition, and also a spiritual definition for myself of who I am because that's where my philosophy and worldview comes from" (quoted in Eigenbrod 29). Elijah, for instance, does not know anything about his parents, or worldview. He does not know where he comes from and that explains, according to Xavier, why he turns windigo on the fields of World War I. He has no reference points that can help him alleviate

the pain that comes with the madness of war. He even goes so far as to "take the scalp of [his] enemy as proof. [And] take a bit of him to feed [himself]," as the French soldier Francis G. tells him during a Christmas party (Boyden, *Three Day* 188).

Being assimilated into mainstream culture and society after his residential school education, Elijah does everything so that his white fellow soldiers and superiors acknowledge his prowess. Of his indigenous culture, he only values those aspects that would allow him to get the aforementioned acknowledgement. Xavier refers to this when commenting upon their smudging ceremony: "Thompson, Elijah and I sit together, away from the others, and charcoal our faces. It's our ritual. It's what I call a *wemistikoshiw* smudging ceremony. Elijah laughs at me. No Indian religion for him. The only Indian Elijah wants to be is the Indian that knows to hide and hunt" (Boyden, *Three Day* 127). However, if we examine Elijah's war experience more closely, it becomes clear that even that Indian side he values—the Indian hunter-- is corrupted due not only to war madness, but also to his being an assimilated Indian. What matters for him is killing as many German soldiers as possible to get distinction and acknowledgement from his superiors in the army. Xavier discerns this near the end of the war and says: "I remember when he began to explore the places that aren't safe to explore. I remember him learning to love killing rather than simply killing to survive" (Boyden, *Three Day* 249). Killing to survive is a distinguishing trait of Indian hunters. One hunting scene in *Through Black Spruce* shows that survival is what motivates hunting for Indians. Having caused a moose to suffer, while hunting for survival, Will offers thanks to the animal and apologizes for the

> bad kill. From my pack I took out a pinch of tobacco and placed it on the moose's tongue. I held the mouth closed in hope it accepted my thanks, my apologies for a bad kill. I panicked, moose, but I panicked because I needed your meat to survive the winter. *Meegwetch* for your life, I whispered. I am sorry for the bad kill. I was scared you'd run off and die alone far in the bush. Your death alone would be useless, and I, too, might end up starving this winter without you. *Meegwetch* (Boyden 269).

Likewise, Xavier only kills enemy soldiers to survive, when his life or that of his fellow soldiers is at stake. He does not kill simply to increase the number of enemy soldiers he killed, the way Elijah does.

Closing residential schools did not put an end to cognitive imperialism as foster homes prove to have an equally destructive impact on indigenous children. Gordon's experience in *Through Black Spruce* is a case in point. Gordon is Annie's boyfriend. He lived in a number of foster homes before escaping to the streets of Toronto. His experience at a number of foster homes deprived him of his language, worldview and traditions.

Another important element contributing to the cognitive imperialism is television. This is shown through the influence of talk shows and Oprah, in particular, on Lisette, Annie's mother. Planning to leave the hospital before her mother comes to visit her uncle, Annie refers to this influence: "I've got to get out of here. The woman drives me mad with her talk shows and the cheap psychology she gleans from them" (Boyden, Through Black Spruce 7).

The crisis of community caused by cognitive imperialism is compounded by the illegal activities of some of its members: the Netmakers, windigos emerging from

their midst. In fact, the Netmakers destroyed the lives of people in the northern reserves by introducing two sources of dependence: first whisky, then cocaine and crystal meth. Marius, the leader of the group, is seen as "a windigo who needs killing" (Boyden 165) as he is responsible for introducing "a curse into our community, a religion that goes against the sweat lodge and the shaking tent, that promises a freedom that cannot be reached" (Boyden, *Through Black* 123). The destruction of youths and their dependence on drugs make Marius and his business prosper. In this regard, Windigo-like, his growth depends on a cannibalistic relationship to the other. This cannibalism, however, operates on a symbolic level. Although from a non-Native perspective, we can only read Will's identification of Marius as a Windigo metaphorically, it is worth noting that Ojibway and Swampy Cree stories tell us that "a windigo can take many forms—those of a giant, a wolverine or other animal, but the most fearsome is when he is in the midst of a band, disguised as a human being" (Grant 68). The windigo destroying the Cree community in the novel takes the form of a human being. Moreover, the above-mentioned windigo stories underscore the importance of killing the to ensure the survival of the community. Referring to this, Grant argues that the "Windigo must be killed before the evil spirit destroys the tribe" (68).

The dependence on smuggled narcotics reinforces the distance of the Cree community from its indigenous culture and worldview. The Netmaker clan is responsible for the spread of whisky and narcotics to the isolated northern reserves. This leads to the dependence of youths on an illusory means of escape and a fake promise of freedom that is never fulfilled. Annie refers to the way the Netmaker clan trapped native people in the net of dependence: "Marius's family started as bootleggers, sneaking whisky and vodka onto the dry reserves north of us by

snowmobile in winter [...]. In the last few years, the Netmakers discovered that cocaine and crystal meth were easier to smuggle up, and they are responsible for the white powder falling across James Bay" (Boyden, *Through Black* 22). It is worth noting here that residential schools and the Netmakers are portrayed as windigos whose prosperity depends on the destruction of indigenous peoples. In fact, the nightmare that haunts Will in his hideout associates the damage caused by the white man and that caused by the Netmaker clan with the big white building of the residential school. Remembering this nightmare, Will says:

> the big white building that I thought was finally gone came back into my nightmares again when I began to contemplate the Netmaker clan. What Marius and his friends brought into our community was more destructive than what the *wemestikushu* [white men] brought with their nuns and priests. (Boyden, *Through Black* 187)

Destructive as the religion of the Wemistikushu is, according to Will, the damage to which the dependence on narcotics led exceeds the damage of that religion.

(III) The Alternative Community

(III.i) The Alternative Community and Collective Agency

The community proposed as an alternative to the Cree community in crisis in Boyden's novels gives precedence to communal over individual agency. No matter how important the contribution of any of the characters to building the alternative community is in *Through Black Spruce*, for instance, none of them is the only hero. Only the community can qualify for that title. This refusal to single out one protagonist/ saviour is a way of restricting adherence to "the type of individualism that comes out of the new economic ideologies" denounced by Maori scholar Graham Hingangaroa Smith (214 215). Rather than basing the rebuilding of community on the western-European belief in individualism, the novel bases it on "collective solidarity" and a "cooperative relationship which is central to most

Indigenous epistemologies" (Justice 147). Rather than the much valued individual agency at the center of western-European novels, collective agency is given priority. The indigenous epistemology underlying the conception of agency and the alternative community does not marginalize the individual. Instead, it underlines the importance of the collaboration of different community members even to the most heroic of achievements. Indeed, without the community's protection, for instance, Will—the windigo killer, could have very easily been accused of attempting to murder Marius. Likewise, Annie, the healer, would not have survived her trips to Toronto and New York were it not for Gordon's protection. This protection is recommended by an elder she meets in Toronto. The conception of agency in Boyden's novel is similar to the one proposed by Basil H. Johnston in *Indian School Days*. Referring to Johnston's conception of agency, Laura Smyth Groening argues that "there is no individual hero to rescue the boys or subvert the system, and Johnston himself is not the star of his autobiographical, account; rather, *the community of boys emerge as the collective hero*" (147). Likewise, the community that emerges in *Through Black Spruce* is the hero of Boyden's novel.

The collective agency of the community can best be seen at work in its protection and healing of Will. Will shoots Marius in the head and goes into hiding. Before carrying out his plan, he made it known that he was soon to go trapping. Given the destructive impact of Marius's business on the community's youths, Will is convinced that Marius is a windigo. His attempted murder of Marius is his way of expressing his commitment to a better community, a community whose children and youths would be free from the fatal dependence on Marius's cocaine and drugs in general. In his hideout, Will comes to realize that when he tried to kill Marius he did it not to avenge himself (as Marius killed his sow and beat him up), but in order to

save the children, the hope of the community, from a possible dependence on Marius's drugs. Realizing this he says:

> as summer died, I came to understand that the revenge I'd sought didn't stem from my beating, from the killing of my sow, even from what Marius did to me and would have done to my family, but from what Marius was doing to damage the children, I convinced myself of it. I killed him to save children" (Boyden 187).

Here it is important to situate Will's act in relation to, first, his recurrent dreams of saving indigenous children and, second, to the significance of windigo killing in the indigenous context. In the aftermath of his residential school experience, Will is haunted by a dream in which he saves all the children from the residential school to which they are confined. As Will identifies the oppression and injustice associated with the residential school and those associated with the Netmakers' smuggling of narcotics into the reserves, his killing of Marius—the windigo—is also a way of saving the future of the community.

In *Through Black Spruce*, the Cree community understands Will's act as an attempt to save the community from the destructive powers of a windigo. Their shared indigenous knowledge allows them to identify Marius as a windigo. It also accounts for the community's protection of Will and provides an answer to his question: "why then, did so many in this town stand up and protect me, even speak up and claim I was truly gone when Marius was shot" (Boyden 309). Furthermore, the fact that the police do not acknowledge the legitimacy of this shared indigenous knowledge accounts for the jailing of Antoine who eventually kills Marius after the latter recovers from the injuries induced by Will's shot. From a non-Native perspective, the actions undertaken by Will and Antoine (attempted killing and killing of Marius respectively) can only be seen as premeditated murder. From a native perspective, Marius is a windigo feeding upon and growing at the detriment of

the youths of Moosonee. However, the indigenous view of the world allowing for that interpretation does not inform the non-native world, hence Antoine's imprisonment. In this sense, the fate of Antoine in *Through Black Spruce* is reminiscent of the fate of Niska's father in Boyden's *Three Day Road*. The radically different interpretations given to the act of killing a windigo are a function of the recognition of indigenous knowledge, law and worldview as a reliable source from which acts can be legitimized. The radically different interpretations given to the act of killing a windigo depend on the recognition of the indigenous knowledge, worldview and legal system as sources from which the legitimacy of acts can be derived.

(III.ii) Windigo Killing and the Struggle for Sovereignty

Affirming windigo killing as a necessary act guaranteeing communal survival in *Through Black Spruce* and *Three Day Road* is part of the Cree community's struggle for an alternative postcolonial society. It is a crucial component of their "vision of a postcolonial legal order" (Henderson 14). A postcolonial legal order, in this context, will not solely legitimize the acts of Niska's father, Will and Antoine, but also affirm the autonomy and sovereignty of the indigenous people in question. Indeed, sovereignty refers to the authority of a given party over a territory as well as its ability to make laws. In Boyden's novels, it is defined by that party's ability to define what a criminal act is.

Narrating the events preceding her father's arrest for windigo-killing/ murder, Niska highlights the conflicting views her people and the colonizer have of the question of sovereignty as well as its relation to space, law and social organization. Upon hearing about the hookimaw's (the chief of the tribe and Niska's father) windigo killing from a drunken member of the Cree community, the Hudson's Bay

Company men send George Netmaker to inform him that they "demanded he come to them to discuss his actions so that they might decide whether or not he should be considered a murderer" (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 43). The Cree community's response underlines their belief in their sovereignty. The general response to the Hudson's Bay Company men's message is: "wasn't it the wemistikoshiw who were on our land? Was it not they who relied on us?" (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 43). This response implies that the Cree community perceives itself not only as sovereign, but also as a host upon whose help and generosity the survival of white men depends. However, from a Eurocentric perspective, this sovereignty and dependence are not acknowledged. On the contrary, the Hudson's Bay Company's men as well as the white people managing residential schools and churches in Canada, during World War I, see that the civilization, survival and redemption of indigenous peoples depend on their generosity. Only the white man's law and sovereignty over the land is acknowledged from this perspective.

The spectacle of power staged by the North-West Mounted Police not only signals the end of the white men's dependence on the Cree, but also makes it clear for the bush Indians that they are under the jurisdiction of the Eurocentric legal system. Indeed, Niska remembers that at the beginning of their settlement on the lands of Indigenous people, white men used to depend on the help and generosity of the Cree for their survival. She refers to this episode in colonial history after the death of her father in jail:

> at the time of my birth the wemistikoshiw were still dependent on us. Like little children they came for handouts. When the winters grew too cold we gave them fur to wear against their skin and dried moose for their stomachs. When the blackflies of spring threatened to drive them mad we taught them to use the green boughs of the black spruce on their fires. We showed them where in the rivers the fish hid when summer grew warm and how to trap the plentiful beaver without driving them away forever. Like forest ticks the wemistikoshiw

> grabbed onto us, growing fatter by the season, until the day came when suddenly it was we who answered them. (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 44-5)

Three Day Road stages this second moment in the relation between Crees and the white colonizer. The reversal of the balance of power is announced not only by "the wemistikoshiw [who] came with many rifles" (Boyden, *Three Day* 44), but also metaphorically. In fact, Niska's father has to "sit *in their circle* to discuss if what he'd done last winter violated *their laws*" (Boyden, *Three Day* 44 italics mine). Sitting in the circle of the colonizer and having indigenous practices judged according to Eurocentric laws mean that the authority of indigenous customs and knowledge is not acknowledged. The Mounted Police's interpretation of windigo-killing does not recognize the existence of indigenous law or people outside the Eurocentric legal system and worldview, nor does it recognize their sovereignty.

In spite of the criminalization of windigo-killing by the Eurocentric legal system and the white man's denial of Indigenous people's sovereignty and legal system, future generations of Cree windigo killers carry on the struggle for sovereignty. Niska, "the second to last in a long line of windigo killers," and Will, Xavier' son, all heal their communities from the "sickness of the windigo" (Boyden, *Three Day* 242). The act of killing the windigo itself, like the act of a "surgeon," "carve[s] the illness from" the community in question. However, the same act doubles as an act of resistance to the legal system imposed by the white man and an affirmation of an autonomous indigenous legal system. Interestingly enough, the "sickness of the windigo" is compared to the "invisible [colonial] sickness of the wemistikoshiw" (Boyden, *Three Day* 242). The latter refers to the white man's structures of colonization, his ideologies and the sickness (in the literal sense of the word) brought to indigenous communities in North America. The parallel between

the two forms of sickness evokes the parallel between the internal sources of oppression (the Netmakers' narcotic business) and the colonial structures of dependence. More particularly, it evokes the contemporary role those sources play in the degeneration of indigenous communities. Dealing with both forms of sickness is, thus, a crucial part of the indigenous people's struggle for an alternative "postcolonial society" (Henderson 17).

(III.iii) Storytelling and Communal Healing

Important as fighting cognitive imperialism and the denial of the autonomy of the Cree community are to the struggle for communal survival in Boyden's novels, we cannot have a comprehensive understanding of that struggle without considering the crucial relationship between storytelling and healing. *Three Day Road* foregrounds the importance of the relationship between healing and storytelling as a mechanism of community building. In fact, Niska in her conversations with her nephew, Xavier, presents storytelling as food and medicine. Faced with Xavier's refusal to eat, Niska sees that her stories and words can feed and sustain him in the absence of real food. More importantly, storytelling is represented as a medicine that heals as there is "medicine in the tale" (Boyden, *Three Day* 240). This medicine does not heal Xavier's morphine addiction, but provides the missing pieces of the puzzle that allow Xavier to situate his acts in the Cree worldview. This in turn enables him to grasp the communal values of those acts. In fact, killing Elijah, when the latter turned windigo, greatly disturbed Xavier. Sensing that this was part of her nephew's problem, Niska tells Xavier about her own experience as a windigo-killer:

> [t]o try to ease him a little, I start talking again. The story is not a happy one, but something in me has to tell it. There is truth in the story that Xavier needs to hear, and maybe it is best that he hears it in sleep so that the medicine in the tale can slip into him unnoticed. (Boyden, *Three Day* 240)

In the windigo killing stories she tells her nephew, Niska insists on the inevitability of carrying out the duties of a windigo killer if one has inherited the skills and powers that enable one to heal one's community from the windigo sickness. Indeed, "fighting this role placed upon [one is …] as difficult as trying to tame a wolf or fox for a pet" (Boyden, *Three Day* 245). Through her stories, Niska tries to make her nephew understand that, even if he does not like the gift of windigo killing imposed on him, he has to kill windigos in order to honor his duties to his community. More importantly, he has to honor those duties even if the windigo is his best friend, Elijah. Moreover, Xavier's "auntie's talking solves myster[ies]" for him and contributes to his healing either by further grounding him in the Cree worldview or providing crucial information of which he was not aware. This presence of healing medicine in the tale, highlighted through the relationship between Niska and her nephew, anticipates the communal healing associated with storytelling in *Through Black Spruce.*

In *Through Black Spruce* the relationship between storytelling and community building is even clearer. Telling stories is presented as the means by which the Cree community heals and is healed. At the beginning of the novel as well as at the beginning of the two narrative strands of *Through Black Spruce*, Will is in a coma. The words of his niece, sister, friends and other relatives bring him back to consciousness. From a scientific perspective, he had almost no hope of recovering. After Will reaches "his hands up in the air," Will's friends and relatives came to visit him. Upon hearing about that, Gregor, Will's friend, realizes the healing power of words. He asks Will's friends and relatives present in the hospital room to "speak now, people, speak! We are healing him with our words" (Boyden, *Through Black* 315). Words heal because they translate the proximity, care, concern and love of the

other. Words also heal because they bridge the expanding gap between generations of native people. Through their narrative conversations, uncle and niece reveal their secrets to each other. Annie tells her uncle about her drug consumption, love relationships and sibling rivalry. Likewise, Will tells her about his residential school experience, the tension between his father and himself as well as his extra-marital affair with one of his clients. This narrative exchange of secrets symbolically draws the narrators in question closer to each other.

Finding herself compelled to tell stories to her uncle, Annie develops her skills as a storyteller. Her apprenticeship as a storyteller strengthens her indigenous identity given the importance of storytelling as a means of communal survival. Will, who is more of a versed story-teller than Annie, starts his story fluidly and smoothly. His niece, who is obviously less familiar with the indigenous practice of storytelling, however, finds it difficult to start the storytelling process. She starts haltingly and needs to "learn to talk" before she can tell her stories as smoothly as her uncle does (Boyden, *Through Black* 18). A whole chapter is devoted to her apprenticeship and is significantly entitled "Learning to Talk" (Boyden, *Through Black* 18). Annie's initial inability to tell stories may be due to her young age (when compared to Will), but it is also due to the impact of, what Battiste calls, "cognitive imperialism" (210). Cognitive imperialism refers to the cognitive structures through which the colonization of the minds of indigenous peoples was carried out in Canada. Annie's inability to tell stories at the beginning can be seen as a symptom of the increasing distance separating a large number of indigenous youths from their cultures. Her apprenticeship as a storyteller is a way of countering cognitive imperialism. The storytelling performed by, on the one hand, Annie and Will, and Boyden, on the other hand, reminds us of one fundamental task of native artists: to help their people

heal. Daniel David Moses states this clearly in *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature*: "One of the words that always comes up in Native gatherings, and particularly among Native artists, is that it is part of our jobs as Native artists to help people heal…".

The narrative conversation between the elder and his niece, in Boyden's novel, also facilitates the healing of the Cree community not by spelling out a solution, but by diagnosing the ills plaguing their community and the colonial structures (external and internal) responsible for the misery of the Cree community. The diagnosis of the colonial structures responsible for the dependence (intellectual and otherwise) of the community is carried out in a way that is reminiscent of a story told by Chickasaw-American scholar and educator Eber Hampton. In his "Redefinition of Indian Education," he tells us about a situation similar to the one framing the narrative conversation of uncle and niece in Boyden's story. One day, Hampton crossed an elder at a convenience store. The elder asked him if he had some time to spare. He thought the elder wanted help with carrying a box, but he just asked him (talking about the box) "how many sides do you see?" (Hampton 42). Hampton replied "one" (42). "He pulled the box towards his chest and turned it so one corner faced me. 'Now how many do you see?' 'Now I see three sides.' He stepped back and extended the box, one corner towards him and one towards me. 'You and I together can see six sides of this box,' he told me (42). Likewise, the narrative perspectives of Will (an elder) and Annie (his niece) yield a comprehensive assessment of the crisis afflicting the Cree community.

(III.iv) Legal and Artistic Ledger Drawing

Boyden's novels' engagement with legal and artistic ledger drawing complement the characters' struggle for an alternative postcolonial society. The term

"ledger drawing" is used by Henderson in his article "Postcolonial Indigenous Legal Consciousness" to refer to the acts of resistance of his Tsistsistas (Cheyenne) ancestors (Henderson 7). Henderson's Tsistsistas's ancestors used the ledger books given to them by the white man to record what they retained from the whiteman's imposed English lessons as a means of resistance. Facing the walls of their prison, they filled their ledger books with pictures of important indigenous ceremonies and rituals. Giving an account of ledger drawing, Henderson says:

> The military personnel offered my Cheyenne (Tsistsistas) relatives empty ruled accountants' ledger books as gifts so they could record their educational teachings. The ruled ledger books represented symbolically the colonial aspirations: they were the medium and tool of a capitalistic, market vision of Eurocentrism. They symbolized the economic potential of the new continent to the colonizer, underscoring their desire for abundance and purposes of economic opportunity. Little is known about how my relatives understood the ledger books; however, their efforts speak for them. They found their own use for the books within their heritage. They ignored the covert purpose and principles of the ledgers and used them instead to contain their memories of ceremonies and images of their experiences and visions. Slowly they filled the lines of financial regulation, which waited for English script and the enumeration of progress and prosperity, with drawings. Their drawings reclaimed the ancient memory of pictographic symbols on rocks, buffalo robes, parfleches or saddlebags, shields, and teepees. Their designs were similar to those that had pervaded their lives and winter counts. (Henderson 7-8)

Drawing his inspiration from his ancestors' "ledger drawing" or "ledger art" (Henderson 7), Henderson conceives of his work as well as that of "contemporary Indigenous scholars, lawyers and law students" as "ledger drawing" (Henderson 8). Developing this parallel between indigenous legal work and ledger drawing, Henderson holds that: "our diverse efforts to achieve balance and to decolonize Eurocentric law and thought all share the indomitable spirit of ledger drawers. The major difference is that rather than using ledger books, our memory of our Indigenous heritage has been drawn or scrawled on legal notepads and pleadings.

The similarities are entrenched in the art of refusing to forget or deny our heritage or languages. Also our attempts to transform the texts and symbols of constitutional and common law into different shapes are similar to the ledger drawers' use of the accountants' ledger books" (8-9). Henderson's call for and contribution to legal reform as a way of achieving decolonization and building an alternative postcolonial indigenous society is based on fighting the denial of the legitimacy of indigenous procedures and ceremonies (Henderson 48). They are also based on challenging "Eurocentric rules of judicial procedure and evidence with Indigenous procedures and ceremonies" (Henderson 48). Furthermore, the legal ledger drawing of "legal warriors" (Henderson 3) resists the Eurocentric legal system's amnesia about "its complicity in [the] colonization" of indigenous people and their heritage (Henderson 37). Like the ledger drawing of Henderson's ancestors, legal ledger drawing records the indigenous heritage around which legal reform revolves. However, rather than using ledger books, legal warriors use their legal notepads and pleadings.

In *Through Black Spruce*, Boyden uses the form of the novel to engage in legal and artistic ledger drawing in a way that echoes and complements the struggle of his characters for an alternative postcolonial society. The novel's recording of the indigenous practice of windigo-killing is an instance of its engagement in legal ledger drawing. The same thing can be said about *Three Day Road* which narrates three stories of windigo-killing. Not only do the novels record this indigenous practice, but they also make clear its enmeshment in the indigenous struggle for an acknowledgement of their sovereignty and ability to determine what counts as a criminal act—its ability to make law.

According to the Cree worldview, windigo killing is an act through which a *hookimaw* heals a community affected by the windigo sickness. The windigo

sickness is caused by "a greed for life" (Boyden, *Three Day* 242) and leads to eating the flesh of one's fellows. Under harsh circumstances (e.g., a particularly harsh winter during which game is scarce and starvation looms on the horizon), some members of indigenous bands or clans turn windigo. They "eat other people's flesh and grow into wild beasts twenty feet tall whose hunger can be satisfied only by more human flesh and then hunger turns worse" (Boyden, *Three Day* 41). Windigos threaten the well-being of their communities as the satisfaction of their needs depends on eating fellow community members. Moreover, the windigo is conceived of as "the sick one" (Boyden, *Three Day* 243). Not only is he or she determined to destroy his community, but his or her sickness may also spread to the other community members. Both situations can lead to the swift destruction of the community in question. Only the intervention of a windigo killer can stop the illness from spreading. After turning windigo, the person in question becomes a "strange man-beast," (Boyden, *Three Day* 41), loses his or her humanity[93] and acquires an incomprehensible language.[94] This acquisition of an incomprehensible language alienates this medium of communication from its major roles in the communal context: communication and cohesion.[95] It signals a radical difference between the windigo and his or her previous community as well as the alienation and exile of the former. As a response to his or her transformation, the community casts the windigo out and a hookimaw— a person who has inherited the skill to kill windigos— kills him or her to heal the community and protect it from immanent destruction. Killing

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[93] This loss of humanity is signalled through the reference to windigos as "monster[s]" (Boyden, *Three Day* 40) and "man-beast[s]" (Boyden, *Three Day* 41).

[94] Referring to the language spoken by the windigo she had to kill, Niska says «the windigo began to pant and speak in a tongue I'd not heard before" (Boyden, *Three Day* 244). Micah's wife, who turns windigo after eating from the corpse of her dead husband in the bush, uses an equally incomprehensible language. Indeed, "at nighttime her voice went hoarse so that she sounded like some monster growling in a language we did not understand" (Boyden, *Three Day* 40).

[95] Contrary to the alternative conceptions of community proposed in the diasporic novels, the conception presented in Boyden's novel highlights the importance of cohesion and strong family ties.

the windigo leads to the purging of the communal body from the fatal windigo sickness. Niska, Will and Xavier inherited the indigenous knowledge, skill and authority that allow them to liberate their respective communities from windigos. Their defiance of the Eurocentric legal system (through their respective windigo killings) protects their communities, affirms the legitimacy of windigo killing and the autonomy of their communities. More precisely, they affirm indigenous communities' power to define criminality regardless of the Eurocentric legal system and its laws.

Indigenous education plays a crucial role in Indigenous peoples' struggle for sovereignty and survival. In fact, once that education is absent, even indigenous peoples condemn windigo-killing. When Xavier first sees his aunt, Niska, killing a windigo, he asks her why she did that. Having just been rescued from the residential school, he does not yet understand the communal value of windigo killing. To Xavier's question "why did you kill that man, Auntie?" (Boyden, *Three Day* 245), Niska replies, "sometimes one must be sacrificed if all are to survive" (Boyden, *Three Day* 245). Commenting on Xavier's nodding to her answer, Niska foregrounds the importance of indigenous education to the acknowledgement and understanding of windigo killing as an integral part of an indigenous worldview and legal system: "you nodded as if you were a grown-up, even though you couldn't fully understand. I had taught you all about the physical life of the bush, and it was time to teach you about the other life" (Boyden, *Three Day* 245). Xavier cannot understand windigo killing fully at the beginning of his life in the bush because his aunt has not yet taught him what her parents taught her about the sweat lodge, the world of visions and divination as well as the customs regulating the social organization of the Cree community.

Niska's reference to the other world and importance of indigenous education reminds us of Elijah's own "other world." Elijah's indigenous education stops at knowing about "the physical life of the bush" and that is not enough to save him from the war madness. The religious, spiritual world to which Niska's teachings give access Xavier are denied to Elijah because of his residential school education. More importantly, the "other world" to which Elijah has access is not Niska's "other world" (Boyden, *Three Day* 245). While Niska reaches the "other world" of vision through prayer, the sweat lodge and the shaking tent, Elijah reaches, what he calls, the "other world" through morphine. The visions ensuing from the access Elijah and Niska have to their respective "other worlds" allow Niska to perform better her duties as a hookimaw and deepen the gap between Elijah and the Cree worldview. Moreover, the false comfort associated with Elijah's morphine addiction is reminiscent of Annie's use of drugs when she was part of the modelling industry in New York (in *Through Black Spruce)*. In order to be part of a hedonistic fringe community, she had to take a pill. Sarcastically, she called that taking communion. Elijah injects morphine to alleviate the pain that comes with war madness and later with being a windigo. His feeding upon the flesh of the German soldiers he kills and scalps reminds us metaphorically of the necessary communion Annie has to take in order to belong to the afore-mentioned white, normative community masquerading as an alternative community. In fact, he eats the flesh of his victims to guarantee that his prowess be acknowledged and that he belong to the community of distinguished soldiers. Francis G, a windigo-like French soldier, makes the relation between belonging to this community and a cannibalistic taking of communion clear. In fact, he advises Elijah to take trophies (the scalps of his victims) and "take a bit" of their flesh to secure his belonging to the aforementioned community as well as his

superiors' acknowledgement of his prowess. Recording the Cree community's struggle for the affirmation of its customs and worldview as the sources according to which the legitimacy of the community members' acts is determined, Boyden's novels participate in legal ledger drawing. Along with legal ledger drawing, artistic ledger drawing complements the characters' struggle for sovereignty and communal survival, in both novels.

The novel form is also modified in such a way as to record indigenous heritage. First of all, Boyden privileges the indigenous circular way of storytelling over the common western "linear chronological telling" (Ryan 303). This does not imply that all western stories are told in a linear way. It just refers to the difference between the typical indigenous way of telling stories (circular) and, what Boyden sees as, the typical western way of telling stories (linear). In both *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce*, Boyden adopts circular storytelling. Commenting on the structure of *Three Day Road*, Boyden tells Allan J. Ryan in an interview entitled "Writing Survivance"

> I realized that it was not finished, there was something missing, something was bothering me. And it wasn't that I was missing anything in terms of material—actually I had too much material—it was in the telling. I was giving it a very Western linear chronological telling, and I realized that it needed to be a Native telling of the story, and so I wrapped it back in on itself, began near the end, and told the circular telling. (303)

Choosing to tell the story in an indigenous, circular way, Boyden turns the fictional space into a ledger book in which he records an idiosyncratic aspect of indigenous storytelling/ art. Boyden's statement about circular storytelling is echoed by that of Will in *Through Black Spruce*. Indeed, Will foregrounds the circularity of stories which sometimes resist being told in a linear way and complains "I wanted to tell him the story straight but couldn't see it in a straight line. […] Fucking stories.

Twisted things that come out no matter how we want them" (Boyden, *Through Black* 241).

Apart from its being part of the novel's engagement in ledger drawing, the importance given to circular storytelling evokes the importance of the circle as a symbol in the novel. In fact, the two narrative strands in *Through Black Spruce* form a circle which eventually embraces the alternative community that emerges at the moment when the two strands cross paths. The circular narrative structure also anticipates the communal harmony with which the book ends. The circle symbolizes harmony as it evokes, among other things, the peace and respect associated with talking circles in indigenous cultures.

Another element contributing to artistic ledger drawing in *Three Day Road* consists in Boyden's use of the four directions of the Sacred Circle (the Medicine Wheel) to structure his text. Using the four directions of the Sacred Circle (Medicine Wheel) to structure his text not only accounts for the interconnectedness of the two above-mentioned narrative strands but also connects the act of story-telling to communal healing. Like Marie Battiste's above-mentioned collection of essays, which is also structured according to the directions of the Medicine Wheel, both narrative strands start in winter and consequently at the Northern Door. Battiste's choice of the Western Door is quite similar to Boyden's as that starting point is unusual amongst Aboriginal people. "Most aboriginal people begin their ceremonies with the East" (Battiste 215). Although Battiste and Boyden do not choose to begin exactly at the same door, their choices evoke the cold of an approaching winter (Battiste) or of winter (Boyden). Explaining her choice of the Western Door as a starting point and quoting Hampton, Battiste holds that

> the Western Door is appropriate for the theme of mapping colonialism because the west is the direction of 'Autumn, the end of summer, and

> the precursor of winter […]. The coming of the west (meaning western European), with its western forms of educations, to this continent was the autumn of traditional Indian education (Hampton 31).' (215)

Choosing to start their stories (Annie's and Will's) at the Northern Door, "the home of winter" with "long nights of darkness evoking feelings of struggle and cold" (Battiste 216), is an appropriate starting point for stories about personal and communal loss. Will not only starts his story with an account of his plane crashing in the snow, but also tells his story while he is in a coma. Annie, on the other hand, starts her story with an account of her "northern living" as a trapper (Boyden, *Through Black* 9). Both starting points are appropriate for stories mapping the wounds of an indigenous community in Moosonee. More importantly, the Northern Door is associated with challenges, endurance and survival. Underscoring the connection of the Northern Door to survival, Battiste says: "long winters are when our very survival is challenged. Indigenous peoples are challenged by winter, but from their experience they learn endurance and wisdom" (216). The survival of a Cree community plagued by internal and colonial forces of oppression is at the heart of the two narrative strands in *Through Black Spruce*.

The two separate narrative strands in *Through Black Spruce* only come together at the Eastern Door on a summer day to celebrate a healed community. The communal struggle taking place throughout the book culminates in the rebirth of community at the Southern Door. The windigos are killed and everyone remaining is at peace with the other members of the alternative community. Will is even at peace with his dead wife and children. The former blesses his relationship with Dorothy. Laughter, feasting and harmony characterize the atmosphere of the last section of the novel. It is radically different from the freezing cold reported at the beginning of the

two narrative strands, radically different from the atmosphere characterizing the Northern Door. Instead of the snow, we have the bright sun. Although Will says to himself, "I am scared all of this will be destroyed" (Boyden, *Through Black* 358), the communal happiness, survival and reunion he fears will disappear are a reality.

(III.v) The Alternative Community and Linguistic Resistance

Along with legal and artistic ledger drawing, linguistic resistance represents a crucial element through which cognitive imperialism is fought in *Through Black Spruce*. For instance, talking back to the model under whose patronage she lives in New York, Annie starts speaking Cree. Soleil offers Annie this patronage simply because the latter is an exotic prop in her parties. Annie's use of Cree in a place where no one else understands is worth examining. Indeed, she insults her patron in Cree and gives her fake translations of her statements only to get laudatory comments in return. Annie uses the very element Soleil fetishizes, her indigeneity, in order to talk back to her patron and resist commodification. Relating this to her uncle, Annie says:

> I begin speaking Cree in earnest now, the words awkward and chosen poorly, telling Soleil that her hair is green, she has small tits, that she's too skinny and needs to eat more moose meat. Oohs and aahs come from Soleil, and then from the ones around her. I know to stop my talking before she bores. (Boyden, *Through Black* 234)

This use of Cree allows Annie to withhold the actual meaning of her insults and exercises a certain power over her patron. Antoine, Will's half brother, is another character who uses Cree. He speaks it almost all the time. His use of Cree and attachment to the old ways express his attachment to his indigenous identity and culture in the face of Canadian cultural imperialism. His occasional use of English

deserves close examination. In fact, "Old Antoine doesn't speak English. At least not anything that isn't a swear word" (Boyden, *Through Black* 105). His use of English is reminiscent of Caliban's use of the same language in his relation with Prospero. The use of English in both instances is imbricated in relations of power and provides a way of negotiating them.

Unlike the alternative conceptions of community presented in the diasporic novels under consideration in the thesis, the alternative indigenous or postcolonial society envisioned in Boyden's novels stresses the importance of a strong family unit to the building of a viable community. The diasporic texts, however, move away from the alignment of alternative communities with the traditional family as a unit of social organization and trope. They are based on affiliation with the other beyond national, cultural, religious and ethnic lines of division, while the alternative community in Boyden's novels revolves around a healing of communal wounds and a bridging of gaps between community members. The alternative community presented in Boyden's novels is more focused on healing the members of the Cree community, resisting cognitive imperialism and achieving sovereignty by further grounding them in the Cree worldview. Moreover, emphasizing the difference between the alternative communities proposed in the diasporic novels, on the one hand, and the one proposed in Boyden's novels does not imply that the alternative communities proposed in the diasporic texts can be equated with one another. Rather, the alternatives the diasporic texts provide to communities in crisis revolve on the negotiation of the relation between self and other as well as openness and hospitality to the other.

Conclusion

Rethinking community through a number of diasporic novels and two indigenous novels, the dissertation engages with the alternative conception of community they propose as a response to the crisis of community in different contexts. Studying the novels' different responses to communal crises in a globalizing world foregrounds the affinities and divergences of the communities in question. The inclusion of Boyden's novels in a corpus made up of diasporic novels allows me to establish an interesting dialogue between different worldviews and the ways they read and respond to communal crises. The same can be said about the different geopolitical and diasporic contexts from which the fictional, alternative conceptions of community emerge. They give shape to political and aesthetic reimaginations of community that respond to the particularities of the historical moments and crises that called for the rethinking of community. Although the alternative conceptions of community cannot be equated with one another, they reflect common concerns with alternatives to filial communal models, unconditional hospitality and alliances across lines of cultural, ethnic and national difference.

In spite of their differences, the alternative conceptions of community aim at empowering sections of populations or entire populations suffering from the oppression and injustices associated with normative communities (be they colonial—as in Boyden's novel; postcolonial—as in Soueif and Ondaatje's novels; or, multicultural, as in Brand's novel). One limitation of the alternative communities proposed in the works of Brand, Soueif and Ondaatje is related to the tension between the alternative communities' unconditional hospitality and the precariousness concomitant with that hospitality. This tension, as the second and third chapters show, remains unresolved. Indeed, the precariousness that comes with

unconditional hospitality is part of the challenge of conceiving community away from the comfort and safety of normative, filial communities. This limitation of the alternative communities portrayed in the aforementioned novels makes one wonder whether other novels or artistic media have imagined a resolution to such a tension and whether resolving this tension makes the alternative community lose the edge of its transformative potential. Will the safety ensuing from the resolution of this tension lead to the cooption of alternative communities?

Examining the question of communal crises and alternative communities through the study of a number of novels written in English (diasporic and indigenous) and dealing with the empowering alternatives proposed there as well as their limitations, I have been haunted by the concern for the real world, the real communities in crisis. How do they respond to communal crises? How do they build alternative, empowering communities? Is there a similarity between the alternatives proposed in the novels under consideration and the alternative communities that emerge in our globalizing world? It would be productive to include case studies of emerging alternative communities from different geopolitical locations. Moreover, given the impact of popular media (movies and songs) on people all over the world—an impact that certainly surpasses that of the novels under consideration—I would also have liked to examine the way cinema contributes to or undermines the emergence of alternative communities in a number of locations. This being said, rethinking the question of community through novels contributes to the expanding body of scholarship on the renegotiation of community. At the intersection of fiction and theory, this contribution anticipates possible ways in which communities can be renegotiated and formed in a globalizing world.

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