

**“Speculated Communities”: The Contemporary Canadian
Speculative Fictions of Margaret Atwood, Nalo Hopkinson, and
Larissa Lai**

Laura Hildebrand

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the MA in English Literature

English Department
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

© Laura Hildebrand, Ottawa, Canada, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Chapter 1: “Speculated Communities”: Speculative Fictions and the Changing Nature of Communities under Globalization.....	1
Chapter 2: Interpersonal Relationships and Independent Autonomies in Margaret Atwood’s <i>The Year of the Flood</i>	27
Chapter 3: Serving versus Using the Spirits: Disparate Models of Community in Nalo Hopkinson’s <i>Brown Girl in the Ring</i>	48
Chapter 4: Contaminated Community: The Sonias, Evie, Miranda, and the Globalized Future World of Larissa Lai’s <i>Salt Fish Girl</i>	71
Conclusion.....	92
Works Cited.....	96
Works Consulted.....	103

ABSTRACT

Speculative fiction is a genre that is gaining urgency in the contemporary Canadian literary scene as authors and readers become increasingly concerned with what it means to live in a nation implicated in globalization. This genre is useful because with it, authors can extrapolate from the present to explore what some of the long-term effects of globalization might be. This thesis specifically considers the long-term effects of globalization on communities, a theme that speculative fictions return to frequently. The selected speculative fictions engage with current theory on globalization and community in their explorations of how globalization might affect the types of communities that can be enacted. This thesis argues that these texts demonstrate how Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's notion of "cooperative autonomy" can be uniquely cultivated in the conditions of globalization – despite the fact that those conditions are characterized by the fragmentation of traditional forms of community (*Empire* 392).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Blair, for her insightful and dedicated assistance with this project. Thanks also to the Graduate Studies Supervisor Dr. Victoria Burke and Dr. Anne Raine for their generous provisions of support and guidance. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Diana Brydon – with whom I had the pleasure of taking several classes in my undergraduate degree at the University of Manitoba – for introducing me to two of the authors whose works are featured in this thesis.

This thesis is dedicated to my partner Aaron Donachuk and to our families for all their love and support.

CHAPTER 1

“Speculated Communities”: Speculative Fictions and the Changing Nature of Communities under Globalization

As is demonstrated by the title of this thesis – “Speculated Communities: The Contemporary Speculative Fictions of Margaret Atwood, Nalo Hopkinson, and Larissa Lai” – this project pays homage to Benedict Anderson’s influential and ground-breaking work on the role of the imagination in the construction of national communities in his book *Imagined Communities*. In one of the most frequently quoted passages of this text, Anderson writes: “Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (15). Bringing together Anderson’s work on the relationship between the imagination and community and Arjun Appadurai’s work on the necessity of the imagination to understanding the processes of globalization, this thesis contends that in the contemporary age of globalization, the role of the imagination in community building is becoming increasingly important. This study focuses on speculative fictions because, as exercises in imagination, they take on an important role in the context of the contemporary social and political conditions of globalization. The title of this thesis also alludes to Phillip E. Wegner’s book *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*, in which Wegner focuses on the relationship between Anderson’s work and speculative fiction. Wegner argues that in its exploration of exciting and innovative imaginary communities, the genre of speculative fiction generates “the cognitive space around which new kinds of lived experiences and theoretical perceptions form” (xx). This thesis looks at speculative fictions in the specific context of globalization. It demonstrates

how the speculative fictions it discusses create such a “cognitive space” by investigating the question of how Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s paradoxical notion of “cooperative autonomy” can be uniquely cultivated in the contemporary conditions brought into being by globalization (*Empire* 392). Cooperative autonomy is autonomy defined at the level of the community rather than at the level of the individual. More specifically, it refers to a community’s ability to exert agency and act on its own behalf. The notion of cooperative autonomy is paradoxical because, under current neoliberal conditions, individual forms of autonomy have become ubiquitous, and thus it is difficult to think about autonomy outside of that frame. In other words, autonomy is always associated with the individual, so that an autonomy that is at the same time cooperative seems like a paradox. In a form of community where cooperative autonomy is cultivated, individual autonomies do not cease to exist, but rather, gain meaning when put to use in service of the group. In *Empire*, one of their works in which they analyze globalization, Hardt and Negri argue that while “Empire recognizes and profits from the fact that in cooperation bodies produce more and in community bodies enjoy more, [...] it has to obstruct and control this cooperative autonomy so as not to be destroyed by it” (392). It is imperative to the neoliberal organizations that have gained power under globalization to impede the development of forms of cooperative autonomy. This is because, although bodies both enjoy and produce more in communities, and in this way serve neoliberalism, community formations – in their ability to exert cooperative autonomy – possess the capacity to destroy those organizations. In order to avoid being overcome by forms of cooperative autonomy, neoliberal organizations encourage the development of individual forms of autonomy. It is in this sense that the cultivation of cooperative autonomy

performs a direct intervention into the power held by the supranational corporations and governing bodies that are becoming increasingly important in today's globalizing world.

Speculative fiction is a genre that features stories of imagined, that is, speculated, future worlds and contains elements of science fiction as well as elements of various other genres. Although speculative fictions are set in future worlds, what they are most concerned with is the present. This is because the future worlds presented in speculative fictions are invariably the results of extrapolations or accelerations of present social and political trends. Authors often use this genre to warn their readers about some of the possible ramifications of present social and political trends, and this is the case in each of the selected texts. This genre is gaining increasing visibility in the contemporary Canadian literary scene as various authors who do not self-identify as science-fiction authors write works that can be classified as such (Wilson 17). Although Margaret Atwood has worked previously in this genre with her well-known *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), her "simultaneouels" *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Year of the Flood* (2009), as well as Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998) and Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl* (2002), are part of an influx of speculative fictions in the Canadian literary scene today (Atwood qtd. in Gatehouse 67).¹ While speculative fiction is by no means a new genre, one reason that it is currently on the rise is that it represents a way in which authors and readers alike are able to work through their thoughts about and experiences of the processes of globalization. Hardt and Negri assert, "One of the central and most urgent political paradoxes of our time [is that] in our much celebrated age of communication, *struggles have become incommunicable*" (*Empire* 54, emphasis in the

¹ In an interview with Jonathon Gatehouse, Atwood refers to her novels *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* as "simultaneouels" rather than as sequels presumably because they feature the same temporal and geographical setting as well as many of the same characters.

original). As this quotation emphasizes, despite the fact that the present time is one characterized by proliferating communication, knowledge, and travel networks established and maintained by the processes of globalization, it is difficult for individuals to speak of their experiences and struggles with those processes. Thus the genre of speculative fiction, in its ability to engage critically with social and political trends of the present, represents one mode of engagement and communication that is appealing to readers and authors alike.

Scholars of divergent academic backgrounds have recognized the importance of the question of globalization's impact on communities, and this question is central to the novels upon which this thesis focuses. This thesis builds on Diana Brydon and William D. Coleman's work in their book entitled *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Contexts*, which focuses on the influence of globalization on communities, to argue that the forces of globalization simultaneously affect communities in two different ways. While various long-standing forms of community are fragmenting, new types of communities in which forms of cooperative autonomy can be uniquely cultivated are also in the process of developing – and these impulses are adroitly and creatively demonstrated in the focus texts. As contemporary authors see the way long-standing forms of community – such as some traditional religious groups as well as the nuclear family unit – are fragmenting under globalization, they sometimes turn to the genre of speculative fiction to explore how those same conditions of globalization might simultaneously foster the development of new forms of community. Speculative fictions that explore questions such as these are important in the sense that they imagine directions in which new and alternative forms of community might develop. By providing specific examples of the types of

communities that might form under the conditions of globalization, these texts extend and enrich the works of various critics, which in many cases lack particular examples.

Central to the issue of the changing nature of community under globalization is the concurrently shifting notion of autonomy. As Brydon and Coleman explain, “The conditions in which a person or collectivity can exercise autonomy appear to be changing, partially as an effect of living in an interconnected world” (12). In today’s globalizing world in which neoliberal corporations and supranational governing bodies are gaining increasing amounts of power, autonomy is often defined at the level of the individual rather than at the level of the community. David Harvey explains in his book *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* that “while personal and individual freedom in the marketplace is guaranteed [under neoliberalism], each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being” (65). Under current conditions, individual forms of autonomy have become ubiquitous, and this is something that is demonstrated by the extent to which the term “cooperative autonomy” seems paradoxical. This thesis will show, however, that cooperative autonomy – which is a form of autonomy that works at the level of the community rather than at the level of the individual – is not antithetical to individual autonomy; rather, cooperative autonomy occurs when individuals put their autonomies in the service of the group. Conversely, the development of individual autonomies over and above that of cooperative autonomy makes the development of cooperative autonomy very difficult, and in most cases, impossible. As was explained above, it is imperative to the neoliberal organizations that have gained power under globalization to impede cooperative autonomy in order to avoid being overcome by it, and one way in which they do so is by encouraging the development of individual forms of autonomy. Influential philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy

emphasizes in his book *The Inoperative Community* the extent to which the development of individual autonomies is incompatible with that of cooperative autonomy. He writes, “Community is not the work of singular beings, nor can it claim them as its works, just as communication is not a work or even an operation of singular beings, for community is simply their being – their being suspended on its limit” (Nancy 31). Cultivating forms of individual autonomy is counterproductive to the development of cooperative autonomy because community is not the work of individually defined beings; rather, community is a form of being unto itself that does not reduce to the level of individuals. This is something that will be explored at length in the following paragraph. Despite the fact that long-standing forms of community are being fragmented as a result of the current emphasis on defining autonomy on the level of the individual, the contemporary social and political conditions brought into being by globalization are also ones in which unique forms of cooperative autonomy can be cultivated.

The “speculated communities” featured in the focus texts engage in various ways with the idea that cooperative autonomy can be developed not through enforcing a rigid set of membership criteria setting the parameters for exactly who can participate in any given community, but rather by enacting as closely as possible the notion of what Nancy famously refers to as “being in common” (xxxviii). Hardt and Negri’s notion of cooperative autonomy bears much in common with Nancy’s work on what he refers to as the “inoperative community” as well as Giorgio Agamben’s work on what he terms the “coming community.” Nancy and Agamben, however, do not situate their works in the specific context of globalization while Hardt and Negri do. By putting the works of these theorists in dialogue with each other, this thesis demonstrates how it is that Nancy’s and Agamben’s works might

be particularly relevant in the context of globalization, while also establishing some of the important links between Hardt and Negri's work and contemporary theory on community. Nancy defines "being in common," something that is central to his inoperative community, as follows: "Being *in common* means [...] *no longer having, in any form, in any empirical or ideal place, such a substantial identity, and sharing this (narcissistic) 'lack of identity'*" (xxxviii, emphasis in the original). A community characterized by being in common is one in which members define themselves in terms of a shared lack of identity, values, or actions – that is, in terms of the concept of human potentiality rather than affirmed identity. In a community such as this, as Agamben explains in his book *The Coming Community*, members share nothing other than their existence as human beings, which can be understood as their potentiality. He writes: "There is in effect something that humans are and have to be, but this something is not an essence nor properly a thing: *It is the simple fact of one's own existence as possibility or potentiality*" (Agamben 42, emphasis in the original). The models of community outlined by Nancy and Agamben are by definition non-exclusionary, because they are defined by their inability to exclude members on the basis of their not sharing the identifying values or beliefs of the group.

As was stated above, this thesis argues that the selected novels demonstrate how communities can develop unique forms of cooperative autonomy within the social and political conditions ushered in by globalization. No longer joined by what noted globalization theorist Saskia Sassen refers to as "traditional sources of identity, such as the nation or the village," these communities "engender new notions of community, of membership, and of entitlement" (xxxvii). Contemporary forms of community such as the ones depicted in the focus texts are not only made possible by the changing social and political conditions of

globalization, they also represent a unique form of resistance to the governing bodies that have gained power under those processes. Agamben writes about the relationship of alternative forms of community to the contemporary governing apparatus: “What the State cannot tolerate in any way, however, is that the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging (even in the form of a simple presupposition)” (85). Forms of community that cultivate cooperative autonomy are important in the sense that they demonstrate how globalization does not totally foreclose upon individuals’ opportunities to participate in communities, but also because by the very fact of their existence they represent an intervention into the structures of power that undergird the processes of globalization. The impact of globalization on communities is not purely negative, and this is something that the selected texts clearly demonstrate. To understand the vital political work accomplished by the selected novels, it is necessary to look at some of the important concepts in the scholarship devoted to globalization and the nature of contemporary communities as they relate specifically to this study. The following two sections of this chapter are devoted to this task. The third section defines the genre of speculative fiction as it will be considered for the purposes of this thesis, and the last looks briefly at how each of the selected focus texts engages with the key topics discussed in the previous sections.

Globalization and its Effects on Communities

This thesis defines globalization as a process in which transplanetary communications, knowledge, and travel networks are proliferating in various realms, albeit at uneven rates, connecting the world’s citizens and the communities in which they participate

in unprecedented ways (Brydon and Coleman 8). This is not to imply that globalization affects each individual in the same way, but rather, to emphasize the fact that globalization is a process working on a global scale to connect the world's citizens in new ways. As is acknowledged by academics working in diverse fields, the precise meaning of the term "globalization" continues to be under rigorous debate. Timothy Brennan describes the variety of contemporary theoretical positions on globalization taken up by academics, ranging from stances that deny the very existence of globalization to those that not only accept that the term means something, but welcome the process as a "political promise" for change (41). Clearly, many theorists fall between these two spectrums of thought on globalization, as does this thesis; it is important, however, to recognize the extent to which globalization theory is debated among theorists. In his book *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Appadurai defines globalization in terms of the growing interconnections between the spheres of the local and the global; he writes, "Electronic mediation and mass migration [...] create specific irregularities because both viewers and images are in simultaneous circulation. Neither images nor viewers fit into circuits or audiences that are easily bound within local, national, or regional spaces" (4). The movement of people and images between local and global spheres that characterizes globalization is changing the nature of those spheres and having a direct impact on the ways people perceive their relationships with others. Brydon and Coleman also refer to the changing nature of human relationships under globalization in their work: "Contemporary communication and information technologies and economic, social, and political relations are [...] changing how human beings understand their relations to others" (2). Human relationships are changing under globalization as people become less restricted in terms of geographic mobility, and as

their access to other individuals increases due to their uses of new communication and information technologies. This aspect of globalization is the one with which this thesis is most intimately concerned.

Globalization theorists are not in agreement, however, about how these widely recognized changes in human relationships under globalization are affecting communities. As Brydon and Coleman explain, there is considerable discrepancy among scholars and writers working in the area of globalization studies regarding whether or not the processes of globalization push predominately toward “greater fragmentation of longer-standing communities or toward the formation of communities on a global scale” (5). It is vital to note how this question is further complicated by the fact that globalization affects individuals differently based on a myriad of situational factors including, but not limited to, gender, class, ethnicity, occupation, and access to mobility. Bearing this in mind, this thesis contends, with Brydon and Coleman, that the forces of globalization work in both directions simultaneously: while various long-standing communities are splintering, new communities in which innovative forms of cooperative autonomy can be cultivated are developing (5). The texts on which this thesis focuses demonstrate these dual impetuses in their depictions of speculative future worlds. The development of community is a process and communities are continually being renegotiated “both internally and in relation to external forces” such as globalization (Brydon and Coleman 26). In their article about the changing nature of contemporary communities, Vijay Devadas and Jane Mummery also emphasize the importance of conceiving of community as a process, that is, as something that is continually evolving (par. 7). Although globalization indubitably forecloses upon individuals’

participation in certain forms of community, it simultaneously presents opportunities for individuals to negotiate and participate in innovative and alternative forms of community.

To understand the contemporary fragmentation of many long-standing communities, it is necessary to look at how the role of the individual is changing under globalization as individuals strive to achieve individual as opposed to cooperative autonomy. The interest among individuals in acquiring individual autonomy is something that can be traced directly to the neoliberal governing bodies gaining increasing amounts of power under globalization. Under neoliberalism, the individual gains responsibility for her or his own financial and social well-being. However, by obtaining the autonomy to achieve this well-being, she or he ultimately enters into a competitive relationship with other individuals. Harvey explains how neoliberalism privileges competition: “Competition – between individuals, between firms, between territorial entities (cities, regions, nations, regional groupings) – is held to be a primary virtue” (65). As is pointed out by Hardt and Negri, neoliberal corporations and governing bodies recognize the fact that they must inhibit the development of cooperative autonomy in order to maintain their power (*Empire* 392). This thesis demonstrates, in its examination of the focus texts, that one way corporations and governing bodies maintain this power is by encouraging the cultivation of competing individual autonomies. The way power is organized in communities that cultivate cooperative autonomy is antithetical to the form of power exerted by neoliberal governing bodies. If individuals think of themselves less as competitive individuals and more as integral parts of communities, their drives to define themselves as individualistic consumers are drastically reduced. This simultaneously reduces the extent to which they participate in and drive a neoliberal free-market economy. By

encouraging the development of individual as opposed to cooperative autonomies, globalization is implicated in the widespread fragmentation of long-standing communities.

Just as some long-standing forms of community are splintering under globalization, various new and alternative forms of community are developing that allow their members to cultivate a notion of cooperative autonomy that is indebted to the changing ways that humans relate to each other under globalization. Under globalization, “persons and images often meet unpredictably, outside the certainties of home and the cordon sanitaire of local and national media effects” (Appadurai 4). As people meet in unforeseeable ways through electronic mediation and mass migration, they are starting to form communities that in some cases are based on less restrictive and exclusionary membership criteria than communities have sometimes had in the past (Appadurai 4). No longer joined by what Sassen refers to as traditional sources of identity – examples of which include the nation and the village – these communities generate new and alternative notions of communities and what it might mean to be a member of those communities (xxxvii). This thesis looks for forms of community characterized by new notions of membership and of entitlement as they are depicted in the selected speculative fictions. More specifically, it looks at the ways the alternative religious and activist communities in Atwood’s *The Year of the Flood* and Hopkinson’s *Brown Girl in the Ring*, as well as the cyborg community in Lai’s *Salt Fish Girl* communicate to readers different aspects of what it might mean to participate in communities made possible by the changing social and political conditions of globalization. Using the theoretical framework set out by various renowned philosophers of community, this thesis shows how these textual communities engage with contemporary ideas about the social and political significance of

being part of a community based on the notion of what Nancy refers to as “being in common” – a concept with which the next section of this chapter engages (xxxviii).

The Changing Nature of Contemporary Communities

This thesis defines contemporary community against what the notion of community has represented in the past, as do many theorists of community. In his influential book *The Inoperative Community*, Jean-Luc Nancy comments on the importance of recognizing the troubled history of community: “The first task in understanding what is at stake here consists in focusing on the horizon *behind* us. This means questioning the breakdown in community that supposedly engendered the modern era” (9, emphasis in the original). What Nancy refers to here is the history of communities defining themselves in terms that implicitly exclude individuals on the basis of their not sharing the identifying values or beliefs of the group – often defined in terms of one or more of the following: race, ethnicity, political affiliation, faith, and nationalism. One extreme historical example of a community that defined itself in rigid terms that excluded others occurred, as Nancy explains, in fascism. In fascism, Nancy sees the destructive nature of humans’ desire for communion manifesting itself in a dramatic and frightening way (17). Nancy elaborates on the problematic nature of a model of community that seeks after communion by contrasting it to one wherein members share a lack of identity: “Being *in* common has nothing to do with communion, with fusion into a body, into a unique and ultimate identity that would no longer be exposed. Being *in* common means, to the contrary, *no longer having, in any form, in any empirical or ideal place, such a substantial identity, and sharing this (narcissistic) ‘lack of identity’*” (xxxviii, emphasis in the original). Communion is problematic for Nancy in large part because it involves at its heart a

fusing of identities into “a unique and ultimate identity” that implicitly excludes those unwilling or unable to join their identities to those of others in this way. In contrast with this model, however, is a notion of community wherein members no longer possess a shared identity, but rather, share a lack of identity. In a community such as this, members share only their potentiality as human beings – as opposed to sharing a defining identity or a common ethics or belief system. This contemporary model of community is by definition less exclusionary than a more traditional one – that is, one characterized by a desire for communion – because it is defined by its inability to exclude members.

While this model of community wherein members share a lack of identity is intriguing, it is difficult to imagine because it seems to take the community out of community, so to speak. This difficulty is recognized by Vijay Devadas and Jane Mummery, who, in their analysis of what they refer to as “community without community,” write how “community in this sense calls for a continual unworking of totalizing and exclusionary myths of collectivity upon which community is formed. As an activity, community calls for the opening up of other possible and potential networks of relations, of living and being with others” (par. 7). Devadas and Mummery’s reading of Nancy’s work is useful because it emphasizes the importance of conceiving of the redefinition of contemporary communities as a process. While unworking the myths of communion upon which communities have traditionally defined themselves is something that will inevitably result in new ways of living and being with others, it is something that will only happen gradually. The works upon which this thesis focuses illustrate the nature of contemporary community building as a process; while none of the communities presented in the selected texts enacts a model of community without some notion of shared identity, each grapples in its own way with the notion of

defining itself in terms of the less exclusionary concept of being in common. One reason why the authors of these texts are drawn to this model of community is that it is particularly suited to the current social and political conditions brought into being by globalization. In a world where communities joined by shared immobility or shared occupation of geographical space are fragmenting, a model of community defined by a shared lack of identity is particularly appealing.

One of the most important contemporary texts that situates the notion of community in the specific context of globalization is Hardt and Negri's *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. Although Hardt and Negri do not use the word "community" in their analysis of the political potential of what they term the "multitude," their conception of the multitude is an example of the type of community that can be formed under the unique social and political conditions brought into being by globalization. The notion of the multitude is a provocative one to pair with Nancy's model of community defined by "being in common" because it speaks to a similar set of concerns, although it does so from a different academic and political space. While one could argue that Hardt and Negri's multitude is not located geographically in the same way community tends to be, when community is defined by a shared lack of identity, it is no longer necessarily characterized by members' physical proximity to each other in the way it may have been in the past. Hardt and Negri define the multitude as being a type of social organization structured in a network form in which "differences can be expressed freely and equally" (*Multitude* xiii-xiv). They elaborate on this structural diversity as follows: "The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity – different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labour; different ways of

living; different views of the world; and different desires” (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* xiv). It is here where the works of Hardt and Negri and Nancy most compellingly meet: one way that Nancy’s difficult concept of being in common through a shared lack of identity can be differently articulated is through a model of innumerable differences that cannot be reduced to a single identity. Although Hardt and Negri explicitly situate their concept of the multitude in the contemporary processes of globalization, Nancy does not contextualize his work on community in the same way. As is demonstrated by the selected texts, however, communities characterized by changing relationships between individuals and increasingly global travel, communication, and knowledge networks are uniquely positioned to define themselves in terms of their internal differences or by what Nancy refers to as “being in common.”

Perhaps surprisingly, the novels upon which this thesis focuses demonstrate how contemporary communities defined by internal differences are uniquely situated to cultivate Hardt and Negri’s paradoxical notion of “cooperative autonomy” – which is autonomy defined at the level of the community rather than at the level of the individual (*Empire* 392). Central to the idea of cooperative autonomy is what Giorgio Agamben refers to in his book *The Coming Community* as “solidarity that in no way concerns an essence” (17-18). He writes: “Decisive here is the idea of an *inessential* commonality, a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence. *Taking-place, the communication of singularities in the attribute of extension, does not unite them in essence, but scatters them in existence*” (Agamben 17-18, emphasis in the original). In contemporary forms of community wherein members are joined not by a shared source of identity but rather by a shared lack of identity, a form of solidarity that does not rely on shared identity, but rather, inessential commonality, is vital. This new form of solidarity is integral to the notion of being in common, and more particularly, to the

development of unique forms of cooperative autonomy under the contemporary social and political conditions brought into being by globalization.

What in the World is Speculative Fiction?

Forms of communities characterized by Nancy's concept of "being in common" are difficult to imagine. However, imagining alternative forms of community is just as important as, if not more important than, enacting those communities. Again, as Anderson writes, it is "the style in which they are imagined" that is so significant (15). Hardt and Negri write at length about the difficulty in communicating experiences of globalization – and this is something that extends to difficulties imagining alternative forms of community that might develop through globalization. The genre of speculative fiction, however, allows both authors and readers to explore what alternative communities in the social and political conditions brought into being by globalization might look like. Speculative fiction is a genre that originated with Thomas More's *Utopia*, published in 1516 (Wegner xvi). Since then, authors have engaged with some of the most important and meaningful questions of their times through this genre. Notable examples of speculative fictions disseminated in the last century include Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) as well as George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), both of which have become classics of the genre. Texts such as these are significant not only because they engage meaningfully and provocatively with contemporary issues of their respective times, but also because they were "deeply influential in their particular times and places, contributing to, and often directly shaping, debates over a wide range of social and cultural concerns" (Wegner xix). Historically, speculative fictions have played an important social and political role, and they continue to do so in the present

conditions of globalization, in which the imagination is becoming increasingly significant. One of the most remarkable qualities of the critical literature on speculative fiction, both historical and more recent, is its considerable ambiguity regarding terminology, something that is demonstrated by the fact that critics often use terms such as “speculative fiction,” “utopia/dystopia,” and “science fiction” to designate similar sets of qualities in texts. Most critics who employ the term “speculative fiction” use it to signify works that, as Pilar Cuder-Domínguez explains in her analysis of *Salt Fish Girl*, appear to concern themselves realistically with the future but are in fact “most concerned with the current moment of history,” and represent that moment in an estranged way (116). These types of fictions, however, are sometimes classified more specifically as utopic or dystopic or more generally as science fiction. This thesis does not make use of the terms “utopia” or “dystopia” to differentiate between ideal and apocalyptic future worlds respectively. This is because, as is pointed out by Jayne Glover in her reading of *Oryx and Crake*, many contemporary speculative fictions intentionally blur the line between utopia and dystopia (50). In fact, part of what makes contemporary speculative fictions so interesting is the widespread recognition among authors working in that genre that the elements of utopia and those of dystopia are not as different from each other as they were once perceived to be. Instead of differentiating between utopic and dystopic speculative fictions, this thesis defines speculative fictions as being “important cultural forms that lay bare [the] temporal possibility located in any cultural present” (Wegner 20). The temporal possibilities illustrated by the texts upon which this thesis focuses are noteworthy not because they present best or worst case worlds, but rather because they engage thoughtfully and provocatively with social and political concerns of the present.

Although speculative fiction is often classified as a type of science fiction, it is more accurate to describe speculative fiction as containing elements of science fiction as well as elements of various other genres. Darko Suvin defines the prototypical science fiction text in his canonical *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* as follows:

A fictional tale determined by the hegemonic literary device of a *locus* and/or *dramatis personae* that (1) are radically or at least significantly different from the empirical times, places, and characters of “mimetic” or “naturalist” fiction, but (2) are nonetheless – to the extent that SF differs from other “fantastic” genres, that is, ensembles of fictional tales without empirical validation – simultaneously perceived as *not impossible* within the cognitive (cosmological and anthropological) norms of the author’s epoch. (viii, emphasis in the original)

While the genre of science fiction is limited to texts that contain times, places, or characters that are significantly different from those of mimetic fiction, yet still perceived as being possible, the genre of speculative fiction is not limited in the same way. For example, in some cases, speculative fictions draw on fantasy to create elements that may not seem possible in conventionally accepted ways to a large majority of their readers. This aspect of speculative fiction is illustrated in *Brown Girl in the Ring*, wherein the protagonist, Ti-Jeanne, relates to figures of Caribbean spirituality in ways that, as Jerrilyn McGregory explains in her analysis of the novel, may require “Westernized readers to suspend their usual connectivity to logic” (par. 4). While science fictions and speculative fictions both depict times, places, and characters significantly different from those of mimetic fiction, speculative fictions are free to draw on elements of the fantastic in those depictions. The presence of both science fiction and fantastic elements in speculative fiction has led critics such as Ingrid

Thaler to refer to speculative fiction as an “umbrella term” that encompasses genres traditionally seen as disparate (2). The unique composition of speculative fiction allows authors working in that genre to explore what some of the consequences for local communities of current social and political trends might be in innovative and daring ways using generic elements that are not available to authors of traditional science fiction texts.

In addition to being a unique genre through which to explore social and political concerns of the present, speculative fiction is a genre that has since its inception performed important and particular social and cultural tasks. Although he uses the term “narrative utopia” in his analysis, many of Wegner’s insights regarding the social and political role of the genre are relevant to the selected texts of this thesis. In his analysis, Wegner focuses on the results of introducing into the world times, places, or characters that are significantly different from those of mimetic fiction, even to the extent of being not yet possible. Wegner writes, “By inserting something heretofore unknown in the world – an original conception [or] figure [...] – the narrative utopia generates the cognitive space around which new kinds of lived experiences and theoretical perceptions form” (xx). Speculative fictions often feature times, places, and characters that are not yet possible in current conditions, and it is in this way that they generate the cognitive space Wegner celebrates. This ability to generate new cognitive space has become particularly important in the contemporary context of social and political globalization. In his analysis, Wegner poses several important questions with which this thesis is also concerned: “If our social and cultural space is now global, what will be the nature of our communities, the subjects of history, that will operate within it? How do we imagine such a space?” (xvii). The genre of speculative fiction represents a particularly useful means through which questions regarding the changing nature of community under

globalization can be explored, questions that are not always satisfactorily answered by more theoretically-oriented works. It is within this context that the focus texts' explorations of cooperative autonomy become particularly meaningful.

As a genre that seems to transcend national boundaries, speculative fiction is not typically treated as taking on different qualities in different national settings. In fact, relative freedom from the traditional literary restrictions of national as well as temporal boundaries is one of the strengths of an approach that focuses on a particular genre. As Wegner writes, "The institution of a genre is one that circulates both within and across the very different institutional identities of national culture, periodizations, and canons" (7). Most critics that focus on genre share Wegner's position that genres are not restricted temporally or geographically. Irene Sywenky, however, in her article on contemporary Canadian speculative fiction, puts forward some ideas about what might characterize a particularly Canadian approach to speculative fiction. While this thesis remains wary of generalizing about what constitutes a specifically Canadian speculative approach, Sywenky's work is worth investigating if only to give the reader an idea about why it is that speculative fiction is gaining popularity in the Canadian context. Sywenky argues that contemporary Canadian speculative fiction manifests the following characteristics: "It serves as an expression of postcolonial (centre/periphery) dichotomies and tensions [and] it reflects the general tendency within Canadian culture to articulate [a particularly Canadian] sense of identity" (140). These characteristics have been ones critics have identified as being central to Canadian literature in different ways since the cultural nationalist and postcolonial periods since the Confederation era in literary Canada; however, what is important about Sywenky's work is its emphasis on the currency of speculative fiction for tackling these questions today.

Canadian identity itself has always been something difficult to imagine – in large part because of Canada’s struggle to identify itself against American and British Imperialism – and so Sywenky’s point about the utility of Canadian speculative fiction resonates with Appadurai’s work on the effects of globalization on the imagination. In an era of globalization, a genre that draws on elements of science fiction and fantasy has become useful for identifying and working through shifting national concerns. Appadurai writes that the forces of globalization “seem to impel (and sometimes compel) the work of the imagination,” and it is in this world that speculative fictions are able to speak to current conditions in a way unlike any other (4).

A Brief Look at the Selected Speculative Fictions by Atwood, Hopkinson, and Lai

The second chapter of this thesis, “Interpersonal Relationships and Independent Autonomies in Margaret Atwood’s *The Year of the Flood*,” looks at Atwood’s most recent novel, which was published in 2009. Reviewers and critics have treated this novel ambivalently, just as they did *Oryx and Crake*; however, in the case of *The Year of the Flood* this ambivalence is due in large part to their uncertainty regarding how to respond to the religious environmental community of the God’s Gardeners that lies at its heart. This chapter looks at this community in terms of cooperative autonomy and suggests that its social and political effectiveness is limited by its conventional approach to defining itself. Although Adam One, the leader of the God’s Gardeners, recognizes the effects of globalization at work upon the community, he and the other leaders attempt to build a community defined in terms of the older notion of shared essence and actions rather than cultivate a new form of community. Many individuals in this community have trouble identifying with the

theological principles that frame these actions, however, and instead of working to develop the autonomy of the group, they struggle with coming to terms with their own autonomies. These struggles for independent autonomy manifest themselves in the interpersonal relationships that, as many critics have pointed out, are central to this novel – particularly the ones between Toby, Ren, and Amanda. This text’s interpersonal relationships do not work to cultivate autonomy at the level of the community. Rather, they meet the emotional and psychological needs of various individuals, thus developing individual autonomies. This chapter argues that while the community of the God’s Gardeners demonstrates some of the important ways the processes of globalization might affect individuals and communities, its inability to define itself more in terms of being in common and less in terms of shared identity precludes it from demonstrating the extent to which its unique situation might allow for political and social innovation. Although the God’s Gardeners do not develop a unique form of cooperative autonomy, *The Year of the Flood* is nonetheless useful in terms of this thesis because it demonstrates the changing nature of communities under globalization as well as what some of the limitations of defining contemporary communities in older terms might be.

This study’s third chapter, “Serving versus Using the Spirits: Disparate Models of Community in Nalo Hopkinson’s *Brown Girl in the Ring*” focuses on Hopkinson’s first novel, published in 1998, which explores the question of how communities might be changing under globalization by looking at how some of the long-term effects of current political and social policies might affect communities at a local level. While many critics have commented at length on the community centred on Gros-Jeanne, this chapter suggests that there are in fact two disparate forms of community presented in this text, one headed by

Mami Gros-Jeanne Hunter and the other by her ex-husband Rudolph Sheldon, and that while the former illustrates the changing nature of community under globalization so also does the latter. These models of community are marked as being disparate most clearly by their approaches to the eight African spirits. As is alluded to in the title of this chapter, the form of community centred on Gros-Jeanne serves the spirits, whereas the form led by Rudy uses the spirits. These differing attitudes to the spirits typify Gros-Jeanne's and Rudy's attitudes towards the individuals that compose their respective communities. Gros-Jeanne takes advantage of the social and political conditions brought about by globalization to build a form of community that, through its service of the African spirits, cultivates a unique form of cooperative autonomy. Rudy, however, takes advantage of the opportunities afforded him by the removal of governing bodies from the City of Toronto to use the African spirits to deny "various levels of freedom to an entire community" (Rutledge 35). This chapter argues that it is in this sense that this novel demonstrates the dual influences of globalization upon local communities. Where Rudy is unable to think about community outside the frame provided him by neoliberalism that privileges the individual and conceives of autonomy only in that frame, Gros-Jeanne and her followers imagine and enact an alternative form of community that develops a unique form of cooperative autonomy through its cultivation of solidarity that does not rely on shared identity. *Brown Girl in the Ring* is useful in the context of this thesis because it engages with the question of how globalization is changing communities by extrapolating from the present to investigate two examples of communities that might form in a speculated globalized setting.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis, "Contaminated Community: The Sonias, Evie, Miranda, and the Globalized Future World of Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*," focuses on

Lai's second novel, published in 2002, which provides an example of a socially and politically innovative form of community that might develop under the unique conditions ushered in by globalization. *Salt Fish Girl* is a novel that critically engages with much contemporary feminist and postcolonial theory, and this is something that many critics have pointed out. Various critics have used Donna Haraway's influential work "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s" in their responses to this novel. This chapter builds on these Haraway-inspired analyses by using some of the contemporary terms and ideas in the scholarship devoted to globalization and the nature of contemporary communities to contextualize this text in terms of the current debates on the effects of globalization on communities. While the two storylines in this text, that of Nu Wa and that of Miranda, feature characters who desire to participate in community in different ways, this analysis focuses predominately on the community enacted in the globalized future world of the Unregulated Zone by the Sonias, Evie, and Miranda – characters this chapter reads as cyborgs. Despite being characterized by a homogeneity that is a result of the processes of globalization, this illegal cyborg community chooses to define itself in terms of contamination, defined as impurity – or the mixing of incompatible elements. This chapter contends that by channeling the powers of contaminated physical bodies and objects, this cyborg community cultivates a unique form of cooperative autonomy, which is manifested most clearly in its ability to reproduce through a form of queer reproduction outside the confines of both sexual and artificial reproduction. In its exploration of the social and political potential of cyborg bodies, this text provides what Diana Brydon refers to as "a way to define differences that do not depend on myths of cultural purity or authenticity but that thrive on an interaction that 'contaminates' without homogenizing" ("White" 99). The

cooperative autonomy cultivated by this community is relevant within the frame of this thesis because it is made possible by the community's refusal to define itself in terms of a shared identity and by its emphasis, instead, on the cultivation of a form of alternative solidarity that involves a contaminated origin rather than a pure essence. *Salt Fish Girl* is an appropriate novel with which to end this thesis's discussion of cooperative autonomy in the context of today's globalizing world because it presents a community that does not look back on previous models of community with nostalgia. Rather, the cyborg community featured in this text embraces the political possibilities of the social and technological developments that characterize its speculated future world – developments which are, of course, extrapolated from those of the author's present. In their extrapolations of social and political trends of the present, Lai, Atwood, and Hopkinson engage with the question of what some of the long-term effects of globalization might look like at the level of the local community, thus exploring questions deeply relevant to readers in the present world.

CHAPTER 2

Interpersonal Relationships and Independent Autonomies in Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*

Margaret Atwood's most recent novel, *The Year of the Flood*, which was published in 2009, is a work of speculative fiction that has been referred to by Atwood as being a "simultaneous" to the novel that preceded it, *Oryx and Crake*, which was published in 2003 (qtd. in Gatehouse 67). Sharing the same globalized apocalyptic world and some of the same characters, *The Year of the Flood* in many ways tells the same cautionary story as *Oryx and Crake*, but from the perspective of underprivileged pleebland residents as opposed to that of the privileged denizens of the Compounds. Although *The Year of the Flood* was shortlisted for the 2010 Trillium Book Award, reviewers and critics have treated it ambivalently, unsure in most cases how to respond to the religious environmentalist community of the God's Gardeners that it features. The God's Gardeners is an alternative form of community for individuals whose previous interpersonal bonds have been damaged as an indirect result of the rise of the corporations that have taken over the functions of governance in the world of this text. This chapter argues that although this community demonstrates some of the important ways globalization might impact human relationships and communities, it is unable to cultivate cooperative autonomy due its conventional approach to defining itself. Adam One, the head of the God's Gardeners, recognizes the fragmenting effects that globalization has on the community. He and the other leaders, however, attempt to build a community defined in terms of the older notion of shared essence and actions rather than cultivate a new form of community based on human potentiality or the notion of being in

common. Many individuals in this community have trouble identifying with the theological principles that frame these actions, and instead of working to develop cooperative autonomy, they struggle with coming to terms with their own autonomies. These struggles to achieve independent autonomy manifest themselves in the interpersonal relationships that are central to this novel. Various reviewers such as well-known science fiction author Ursula K. Le Guin and also Jared Bland have commented on the strength of the relationships between several of the characters in this text – most notably the ones between Toby, Ren, and Amanda. In the context of these interpersonal relationships, individuals do not learn how to put their own individual autonomies to the service of the group in an effort to cultivate cooperative autonomy. Rather, they learn the importance of looking after themselves in a community that defines itself in religious terms with which many of the characters are uncomfortable and to which they never fully commit. Although the God’s Gardeners do not develop a unique form of cooperative autonomy, *The Year of the Flood* is nonetheless useful to examine in this thesis because it demonstrates the changing nature of communities under globalization as well as what some of the limitations of defining contemporary communities in older terms as a response to these changes might be.

The Year of the Flood features two female protagonists: Toby and Ren, both of whom are, at one point, members of the God’s Gardeners, the group of religious environmental activists mentioned briefly in *Oryx and Crake* and featured in *The Year of the Flood*. The pre-apocalyptic world of this text is characterized by what Fredric Jameson refers to as a “new [...] multinational stage of capitalism, of which globalization is an intrinsic feature” (54). In this novel, corporations have taken over many government functions, something that is made possible by the growing power of corporations in a world where both knowledge and

people are able to move more quickly than ever. The novel opens in a post-apocalyptic time after the lethal JUVÉ virus embedded in the BlyssPlus pills created and spread around the world by Crake and his associates has destroyed much of the world's human population. Both Toby and Ren survive this pandemic; Toby cloisters herself in the AnooYoo Spa she managed and Ren is quarantined inside the Sticky Zone of Scales and Tails nightclub awaiting test results after being bitten by a client. Moving back and forth between the stories of these characters, both past and present, this novel tells the tale of the God's Gardeners leading up to and following the occurrence of the global pandemic that they anticipate and refer to as the "Waterless Flood." The narrative also provides information regarding Toby and Ren's various experiences with community before and after the time they participate in the God's Gardeners' community together. Most notably, after they leave the God's Gardeners, Ren and her mother Lucerne rejoin Ren's father in the Compounds where she meets Jimmy and Crake, two of the protagonists of *Oryx and Crake*. At the end of the text, Toby, Ren, and the other surviving members of both the God's Gardeners and MaddAddam, a rebel faction determined to destroy the planet's infrastructure and later forced by Crake to work on his project, come together and attempt to, as Ren explains, "rebuild the human race" (Atwood 389). It is at this point that this community must decide how to relate to the Crakers, genetically engineered beings designed by Crake to replace humans after the global pandemic. The novel's ending is open, as it is in *Oryx and Crake*, leaving the reader to wonder how it is that the survivors will rebuild their community and how that community will treat the Crakers.

Many of Atwood's works, both early and contemporary, are concerned with what has become her signature question of survival. In her treatise on Canadian literature published in

1970 entitled *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, Atwood uses the notion of survival as a trope to understand some of the major differences between Canadian and other national literatures. In her more recent works, however, Atwood reorients her concern with the issue of survival to focus on how people will survive the processes of globalization. Indeed, both *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* are concerned with how the human might be endangered by the social and political processes of globalization, something that, by definition, transcends national borders. Roger Davis writes of the relationship between *Survival* and *Oryx and Crake*: “*Survival* helped established [sic] the viability, vitality, and vibrance of [Canadian] literature. Therefore, as Canadian Literature arguably flourishes at the publication time of *Oryx and Crake*, it is not surprising that Atwood reorientates her question of survival towards larger concerns of humanity, namely technology, globalisation and progress” (239-40). The status of the nation – something that is deeply important in Atwood’s earlier writings, especially in *Survival* – gives way in her contemporary texts to a focus on new types of state and communal organization. This shift also occurred more generally in the field of Canadian literature between the mid- to the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Wegner explains how speculative fictions engage concurrently in various dialogic relationships “with the broader literary and intellectual presents they inhabit, with their variously situated readers; and, finally, with the concerns of the larger cultural and social realities in which they [...] appear” (5). In its exploration of what some of the impacts of changing global practices might be on communities, *The Year of the Flood* engages in a dialogue not only with some of the important concepts in the scholarship devoted to globalization and the nature of contemporary communities, but also with the concerns of

many of its present-day readers.² The present chapter looks first at the way this text depicts the shift between “heavy” and “light” communities that is representative of globalization – that is, between communities in which membership is a matter of tradition and communities in which membership is a matter of choice (De Beer and Koster 74-75). It then moves to a discussion in a subsequent section of the way the light community depicted in this text, the God’s Gardeners, does not cultivate cooperative autonomy despite many of its members’ troubles identifying with the theological principles that lie at its core. This chapter concludes with a brief comparison of the communities of the human survivors and the Crakers in order to demonstrate the way this text privileges the notion of the autonomous human individual.

The Shift under Globalization between Heavy and Light Communities

Globalization is most often seen as having a negative effect on communities. This is because it causes the fragmentation of various long-standing forms of community, which include some traditional religious groups as well as the nuclear family unit. This thesis, however, contends that globalization pushes simultaneously towards the fragmentation of certain forms of long-standing communities and to the development of new and alternative forms of community. In their book *Sticking Together or Falling Apart?: Solidarity in an Era of Individualization and Globalization*, Paul De Beer and Ferry Koster explain the changing nature of communities under globalization in terms of a shift between “heavy” and “light”

² While the following statement by Atwood regarding the genre of *Oryx and Crake*, and presumably, *The Year of the Flood*, oversimplifies the relationship between speculative and science fiction, it is useful in the sense that it emphasizes the fact that these novels speculate about social and political trends and developments already set in motion. She writes: “*Oryx and Crake* is a speculative fiction. It contains no intergalactic space travel, no teleportation, no Martians. [...] It invents nothing we haven’t already invented or started to invent” (“Writing” 330).

communities. They write that “what might be called ‘heavy communities’ increasingly give way to ‘light communities,’ the membership of which is not given by tradition but is a matter of choice” (De Beer and Koster 74-75). These terms are useful in that they provide an alternative means of articulating and understanding the contemporary shift between long-standing forms of community defined by shared identity and newer forms of community defined instead by being in common. *The Year of the Flood* demonstrates this shift in its depiction of the fragmentation of the nuclear family unit and the simultaneous development of the God’s Gardeners. This section looks first at the fragmentation of the family unit in this text and then at the way the God’s Gardeners provide a form of community for those whose previous interpersonal bonds, particularly those of family, have been severed. De Beer and Koster write about the process of individualization that is central to the fragmentation of long-standing forms of community under globalization, something that concurs with much of the current thought on the contemporary rise of neoliberalism. They explain that one way to understand the process of individualization is to look at it in terms of detraditionalization, which refers to “the gradual loss of adherence of individuals to traditional institutions” (De Beer and Koster 55). De Beer and Koster refer specifically in their explanation of detraditionalization to the disintegration of the family unit: “Families are still to be found, but the nuclear family has become an ever more rare institution” (Beck qtd. in De Beer and Koster 55). One of the effects that globalization has on local communities is a loosening of the bonds of individuals to traditional institutions such as the family, and this is something that *The Year of the Flood* clearly illustrates.

The breakdown of the family unit is one of the most noticeable social characteristics of the world of *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*, as is evidenced in the families of

all the protagonists of these novels: Jimmy, Crake, Oryx, Toby, Ren, and Amanda. The breakdown of the family unit in these texts is a global rather than a local phenomenon, manifesting itself in locales ranging from the unnamed Asian region in which Oryx is born to the North American pleeblands where Toby, Ren, and Amanda live and the privileged and cordoned off Compounds where Jimmy and Crake grow up. Michael Spiegel elaborates on the global quality of the breakdown of the family unit in these novels: “The power of the global market [...] does not immunize the world within the Compound walls against the same social fragmentation that occurs within Oryx’s village. In fact, this social fragmentation, like that of Oryx’s village, is manifested through the family. [...] Compound brats Jimmy and Crake share a similar familial fragmentation to that of Oryx” (124). The global breakdown of the family unit is illustrated in these texts by the predominance of single-child and blended families, and more generally by a marked “absence of loyalty to the family as a unit” (Spiegel 124). In *The Year of the Flood*, Toby becomes an orphan as a young adult when her father commits suicide after her mother’s death. Although Toby has memories of an idyllic childhood, after her parents’ deaths she is without family: she is an only child, she has no extended family, and she later becomes unable to bear children. Ren, the other protagonist of *The Year of the Flood*, is similarly isolated. When she is a young child, Ren’s mother Lucerne takes her from Ren’s father Frank when she leaves him for her lover Zeb. Although Lucerne and Ren eventually return to Frank, Ren’s mother abandons her later when she begins a domestic partnership with a different lover after Frank’s death. At this point, Lucerne informs Ren that her partner cannot afford to support his own children as well as Ren, which results in Ren’s having to drop out of college. Although both Toby and

Ren mourn the losses of their connections to their families, they each look elsewhere for support and care as neither is able to intervene in her familial situation.

The breakdown of the family unit in *The Year of the Flood* is explicitly linked to the rise of the corporations that have gained control in the globalized future world of this text and more particularly to the CorpSeCorps, their security force that takes over the role of the police. The fragmentation of the family unit in this novel works not only to illustrate the changing nature of communities under globalization, but also to demonstrate the extent to which the economic sector has gained control in the world presented in the novel and shapes relationships in that world. While citizens are initially pleased with the rise of the CorpSeCorps because it is a police force for which they are not fiscally responsible, this changes when they realize the way the CorpSeCorps protects and maintains the interests of the corporations often in blatant disregard of those of the citizens. The CorpSeCorps is invested in breaking down the family unit in an attempt to ensure that all loyalty goes to the corporations. The reader learns in *The Year of the Flood* that the CorpSeCorps actively encourages family members to betray each other. After Bernice and Veena report Burt's private and unsanctioned superweed sales from the "gro-op" he fronts for the CorpSeCorps, Amanda explains to Ren: "The CorpSeCorps encouraged you to do that – to turn in your neighbours and family members. You could even get money for it" (Atwood 152). This text makes clear the fact that this breakdown is a direct result of the processes of globalization by emphasizing the connection between the rise of the CorpSeCorps and the breakdown of the family.

The Year of the Flood demonstrates the way new forms of community are becoming possible at the same time as many long-standing forms of community splinter under

globalization through its depiction of the God's Gardeners. The community of the God's Gardeners is, to use De Beer and Kerry's terminology, a "light community" in the sense that membership in the group is the result of individuals' personal preferences rather than convention (74-75). While this novel's narrative seems to focus more on the characters of Toby and Ren than on the God's Gardeners' community as such, it emphasizes the importance of this community in other ways. Many critics have commented on the unlikely number of God's Gardeners that survive the global pandemic. For example, Robert Charles Wilson sardonically points out: "Some clumsy plotting undermines the story. A plague that eliminates much of the human species coincidentally spares an extraordinary number of the book's main characters, who run across one another in the wasteland with startling regularity" (17). While allowing so many of the God's Gardeners to survive the Waterless Flood may seem like a heavy-handed way of emphasizing their importance, it is made clear within the frame of *The Year of the Flood* that this community is one to which the reader should pay close attention.

The God's Gardeners provide a community for several characters who, like Toby and Ren, have lost their families. One of the most moving scenes of this novel occurs when Toby first joins the God's Gardeners at their Rooftop Garden:

Toby couldn't remember being hugged by a child. For the children it must have been a formality, like hugging a distant aunt, but for her it was something she couldn't define: fuzzy, softly intimate. Like being nuzzled by rabbits. But rabbits from Mars. Nevertheless she found it touching: she'd been touched, in an impersonal but kindly way that was not sexual. Considering how she'd been living lately, with Blanco's the

only hands touching her, the strangeness must have come in part from that. (Atwood 42)

This passage is important because it emphasizes the fact that Toby's experience with the community of the God's Gardeners is different from her previous experiences of community. More particularly, it is different from both the familial bonds she knew as a child and from her recent abusive relationship with Blanco, the manager at the Secret Burgers restaurant where she worked before joining the Gardeners. Although this passage references the familial relationships of nieces and nephews to an aunt, it does so only to illustrate how the relationships within this community are based not on the family but on a model Toby is unable to define. As is demonstrated by this passage, one of the functions of the God's Gardeners' community is to provide a space in which new and alternative relationships might be enacted. Another of the functions of this community, as is pointed out by Hannes Bergthaller in his analysis of *The Year of the Flood*, is to provide meaning to the survival of its members: "This is the insight behind the [...] ritualized activities around which the Gardeners' communal life is organized: at the same time that they impart useful ecological knowledge and habitualize the group's members to environmentally responsible behaviour, they also create a symbolic order within which their survival can become meaningful" (740). The ritualized activities participated in by the God's Gardeners work not only to express their spiritual and environmental values, but more importantly, they also work to create a space within which the participation of each member is meaningful. The God's Gardeners is one example of a light community that might form under the changing social and political conditions ushered in by globalization because it is one in which members choose to take part. In this community, members are able to participate in meaningful ways in relationships

unlike those of the traditional nuclear family – and it is in this sense that this community offers an alternative to the older model of the heavy community.

The God's Gardeners and Individual versus Cooperative Autonomies

As a form of community made possible by the conditions of globalization, the God's Gardeners' community is marked by the fragmentation of individual identities that is a hallmark of globalization. Despite the fact that the God's Gardeners' community defines itself on the basis of shared religious and environmental belief, many of the members of that community do not seem to identify with this belief system as strongly as one might suppose. This is another aspect of the novel about which several critics have commented. In his review of the novel, Marcel Theroux comments: "Both Ren and Toby have been drawn toward the sect for nonreligious reasons" (119). Katarina Labudová writes in more detail: "Atwood does not portray the members as pure and devoted believers. They are not noble heroes but doubting, desperate, and frustrated and (seemingly) powerless people" (137-38). Although various members of the God's Gardeners including Zeb, Ren, Amanda, Lucerne, and Rebecca exhibit, to varying degrees, divergence from the group's theological norms, the narrative focuses on Toby's lack of belief. Toby's difficulty accepting the theological principles of the God's Gardeners is made most clear when Adam One, the leader of the God's Gardeners, asks her if she would like to become an Eve – one of the leaders of the group. Toby responds:

"I'd be honoured," she said at last. "But I can't accept. To be a full-fledged Eve ... it would be hypocritical." She'd never managed to repeat the moment of illumination she'd felt on her first day with the Gardeners, though she'd tried often enough. [...]

Toby chose her words carefully: she didn't wish to hurt his feelings. "I'm not sure I believe in all of it." An understatement: she believed in very little. (Atwood 168)

The lack of belief on the part of various members of the God's Gardeners, including Toby, is one of the effects of globalization as manifested at the level of the individual. Spiegel writes of the "social and political schizophrenia" brought into being by globalization that "requires multiple and often contradictory loyalties that can only be reconciled through the fragmentation of the collective, continuous self into a patchwork of distinct and dissociated identities" (26). The God's Gardeners' community reflects the effects of globalization in the sense that it is composed of many individuals whose identities are splintered in this way – something that is demonstrated most clearly by their inability to identify fully with the belief system that lies at the heart of this community. It is vital to note, however, that these members' difficulties accepting the theological principles that undergird this community could in fact be the source of a new community formation. It is not necessary that an individual possess complete self-coherence to participate in a light community; in fact, inability on the part of individuals to have such a sense of self-coherence is one of the conditions of possibility of new and alternative forms of community. A community defined by a lack of shared identity in this way could meaningfully contest the main power structures of globalization. Unfortunately though, this community does not recognize what the social and political value of defining itself in such non-exclusionary terms might be.

While the scene in *The Year of the Flood* where Adam One asks Toby if she would like to become an Eve is important because it highlights Toby's lack of belief, it is also significant because in it, Adam One reveals his attitude, and by extension, that of the other Adams and Eves, to belief and action. Adam One responds to Toby's hesitations about

becoming an Eve as follows: “In some religions, faith precedes action. [...] In ours, action precedes faith. You’ve been acting as if you believe, dear Toby. *As if* – those two words are very important to us. Continue to live according to them, and belief will follow in time” (Atwood 168, emphasis in the original). Adam One recognizes the fragmentation of individual identities in the group and the difficulties various members have in identifying with the religious environmental belief system that lies at its heart – both of which are effects of globalization. This, however, does not lead him to question the value of defining community on shared belief. Instead, it leads him and the other Adams and Eves to define shared identity more in terms of actions than beliefs, thus maintaining the traditional emphasis on shared essence or identity rather than cultivating a new form of community. It is in this way that the group’s potential to be socially and politically innovative is limited. Nancy explains that defining community in terms of shared beliefs or actions has often been problematic; a newer, less exclusionary way to define community involves Nancy’s notion of being in common. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, one way of working towards being in common involves cultivating what Giorgio Agamben refers to as a solidarity that is not based on an essence. This, however, is extremely difficult, if not impossible, in a community that defines itself by shared actions decided upon not by individuals themselves but by the leaders of the group (17-18).

Perhaps ironically, the God’s Gardeners’ focus on shared actions works to fragment the group. Many individuals in this community have trouble identifying with the theological principles that frame these actions, and thus instead of working to develop cooperative autonomy, struggle with coming to terms with their own autonomies. These struggles for independent autonomy manifest themselves in the interpersonal relationships that are central

to this novel. Various critics have commented on the significance of interpersonal relationships to this text – most notably the ones between Toby, Ren, and Amanda. Jared Bland, for example, writes in his review of *The Year of the Flood*, “The novel’s greatest strength is the quiet picture it offers of [Toby and Ren’s] fraught but tender relationship, especially after their paths intertwine” (75). In the context of these interpersonal relationships, individuals do not learn how to put their own individual autonomies to the service of the group in an effort to cultivate cooperative autonomy. Rather, they learn the importance of looking after themselves in a community that defines itself in religious terms with which many of the characters are uncomfortable and thus to which they never fully commit. In her insightful analysis of *Oryx and Crake*, Alessandra Capperdoni writes, “Although the text problematizes the assumed distinction between the virtual and the real world, technology and humanity, the subject remains rooted in the autonomous consciousness that is guarantor of the creation of these structures of knowledge, thus deflecting the potential of a radical critique” (51). In a similar way, *The Year of the Flood*’s emphasis on the individual means that it is unable to conceive of autonomy outside of that frame – thus limiting its potential to present a meaningful alternative to traditional forms of community. This text’s emphasis on the importance of developing forms of individual autonomy is demonstrated most clearly in its depiction of the characters of Toby, Ren, and Amanda and the ways they relate to each other, something with which the following paragraphs are concerned.

In Toby and Ren’s relationship, Toby regularly exhibits uneasiness over Ren’s reluctance to display independent autonomy and encourages her development of that type of autonomy where possible. Early in their relationship, Toby, in her role as a teacher to the

God's Gardeners children, reflects with concern: "Ren was overly pliable – she risked being always under somebody's thumb" (Atwood 176). Toby and Ren's relationship is intriguing because although they are not biological family, they nonetheless form a kind of family bond in the sense that each demonstrates concern for the well-being of the other. This is particularly meaningful as each has been isolated from her family in permanent ways. The culmination of Toby's investment in Ren's independent autonomy occurs in an important scene at the end of the novel. In this scene, Ren decides that she will go look for Amanda, who, along with Ren, was captured and sexually abused by two escaped Painballers. After it seems that none of the survivors are willing to accompany her, Ren declares, "Okay, I'll go alone then" (Atwood 399). At this point Zeb tells Ren that if she waits until he and various other male members of the group return, they will accompany her armed with sprayguns. Ren, however, refuses this proposal, which leads Toby to finally offer to go with her: "Toby pauses, then says it's the best idea she can come up with because she can't let [Ren] wander off into the woods by [her]self: it would be like murder" (Atwood 399). So Toby and Ren set off together in what looks like, by the end of the novel, a successful attempt to save a battered and exhausted Amanda. Ren clearly asserts an independent autonomy in this passage, and this autonomy has been cultivated in various ways through her long-term relationship with Toby. Not only does Toby save Ren's life when Ren joins her in the AnooYoo Spa, but Toby continues to support Ren when she offers to accompany and protect her as she searches for Amanda. While it seems to be in the best interest of the group for Ren to wait for several days to go look for Amanda, Ren refuses to wait, and is supported in this refusal by Toby. Ren's impatience and use of independent autonomy are warranted, as Amanda is in a dire state when Toby and Ren discover her. Independent autonomy is one of

the results of some of the interpersonal relationships in this text, and it is central to the survival of a character who is abused sexually and emotionally. Ren is not concerned about the well-being or best interests of the group, but rather, uses her independent autonomy to distance herself from the group and save Amanda.

Ren and Amanda's relationship is also characterized by an emphasis on the development and maintenance of both girls' individual autonomies. When Amanda first arrives at the God's Gardeners, she is quick to develop relationships with all the Adams and Eves, something that Ren finds puzzling:

[Amanda] made friends with everyone by asking them the right way to do things. [...] Even Dry Witch Toby would brighten up when she saw Amanda coming. She was the hardest nut to crack, but Amanda took a sudden interest in mushrooms, and helped old Pilar stamp bees on the honey labels, and that pleased Toby, though she tried not to show it. "Why are you sucking up so much?" I asked Amanda. "It's how you find stuff out," she said. (Atwood 84)

This passage is important because it emphasizes how Amanda develops relationships within this community to "find stuff out" rather than to cultivate meaningful emotional connections with other members of the community. It is in this sense that Amanda develops her own individual autonomy rather than that of the community. Although it seems as though Amanda is investing in the God's Gardeners' community, what she is most concerned with is consolidating her own individual autonomy within the parameters outlined by the group. Amanda is unwilling to part with her individual autonomy even in her closest relationships, for example, in her friendship with Ren. Following the Waterless Flood, Amanda returns to Scales and Tails to free Ren from the Sticky Zone in which she is imprisoned. After doing so,

Ren thanks her but, as is typical, Amanda does not accept Ren's gratitude. Ren reflects, "Whenever you thanked Amanda for something she pretended not to hear; or else she'd say, 'You'll pay me back.' That's what she said now. She wanted everything to be a trade, because giving things for nothing was soft" (Atwood 324). This passage is important not only because it shows how important Amanda's autonomy is to her, but also because it demonstrates the way Amanda encourages the development of Ren's independent autonomy. Although Ren and Amanda share a close friendship, it is clear that Amanda does not want to feel obligated in any way to Ren. It is for this reason that Amanda encourages Ren to develop her own autonomy, something that, perhaps ironically, results in Ren and Toby's rescuing her from the escaped Painballers at the end of the novel.

Amanda's comment "You'll pay me back" is also significant because it demonstrates the extent to which individuals in this text conceive of interpersonal relationships in terms of trade and the marketplace. In her analysis of *Oryx and Crake*, Danette DiMarco writes, "In [this novel] it appears that the more divided or separated or enclosed individuals become, the fewer opportunities there are for an ethics of sustenance through care to displace an ethics of flagrant profit and wide-open technological advancement" (176). Amanda is an example of a character who has internalized what DiMarco refers to as "an ethics of flagrant profit and wide-open technological advancement," and this is demonstrated most clearly through her characterization of the give and take of interpersonal relationships in terms of trade. Amanda also characterizes interpersonal relationships of a sexual nature in these terms, as does Ren, who works as a sex worker as a young adult. As J. Brooks Bouson points out, "Like postfeminist Ren, her pleeblander friend Amanda has been socialized to view sex as a commodity women can use to 'trade' or barter for goods or services" ("Using" 14). Instead

of recognizing its members' difficulties identifying with the belief system that lies at its core as being the source for a potentially new form of community, the God's Gardeners instead defines itself in terms of shared actions. This results not only in various members developing their own individual autonomies rather than cooperative autonomy but also in this community's inability to displace the "ethics of flagrant profit" that characterizes various relationships in this community including those of a sexual nature. The way in which the community of the God's Gardeners is unable to replace this "ethics of flagrant profit" with an "ethics of sustenance" illustrates most plainly its inability to exert meaningful political and social change in the world of this text.

***The Year of the Flood* and Nostalgia for the Autonomous Individual**

Although one of the major questions addressed by this text is how globalization might affect local communities, *The Year of the Flood* is limited in its expression of the possible social and political potency of those communities by its privileging of the notion of the autonomous individual. Various critics have commented on Atwood's sense of nostalgia for what she perceives as being the autonomous individual and the discrete realms of nature and science, as well as on how both *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* are undergirded by a fear of the contamination of categories such as these. Capperdoni comments on some of the limitations of *Oryx and Crake* as follows:

The nostalgia for the Human and the Subject that imbues the text is a sign of the narrative being rooted in the values of modernity and liberalism, and a notion of "life" with developmental and organic qualities. This is where the text does not exploit its potentials. Why condemn Snowman to misery only? What possibilities can

arise from hybrid formations like the pigoons? From the Children of Crake? Can their subjectivities be unlocked from the position of docile bodies? Do we need to go back to the Human and the Family of Man for a progressive politics? (55)

This quotation is useful because it points to the ways in which Atwood's most recent texts present worlds in which social and political innovation is possible, but do not satisfactorily explore this potential. Like *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* is imbued with nostalgia for the notion of the independent individual, something that points to the relationship of this text to the values of modernity and liberalism. Additionally, these texts are marked by a tangible concern about the perils of so-called genetic contamination. It is concerns such as these that limit innovation within the frame of the narrative. As Capperdoni points out, provocative questions regarding what possibilities might arise from hybrid formations such as the Crakers are not addressed in these texts. Although *The Year of the Flood* engages with many of the issues becoming important in the contemporary era of globalization, it is indebted to notions of the human individual prominent in earlier periods of critical thought and social identification. This negatively affects its ability to demonstrate the extent to which communities affected by globalization, such as that of the God's Gardeners, can be socially and politically innovative.

While the Crakers only appear at the end of *The Year of the Flood*, they are nonetheless important in the sense that they clearly demonstrate the way the text privileges individual autonomy. The community of the Crakers is a social formation in which the notion of the autonomous individual has been erased. The Crakers do not organize themselves into family units, are unable to register difference in terms of skin colour, and more generally, live, work, and play together. As Crake boasts to Jimmy in an important scene in *Oryx and*

Crake, “Hierarchy could not exist among them, because they lacked the neural complexes that would have created it” (Atwood 367). This community, however, is treated as one that is in many ways frightening in its divergence from the norms of the community of human survivors. The most striking sign of the incompatibility between the survivors’ and the Crakers’ forms of community occurs when the male Crakers smell the female humans’ estrogen and think that they are ready to mate. Ren describes one such experience: “All the men are now sniffing in my direction, as if I’m a flower or maybe a cheese. A number of them have sprouted huge blue erections. Croze warned me about this, but I’ve never seen anything like it, even at Scales, where some of the clients went in for body paint and extenders” (Atwood 410). The wry tone of this passage alerts the reader to the way Atwood simultaneously pokes fun at her not quite human creations and demonstrates the extent to which their form of community is incompatible with that of the humans. Bouson comments on Atwood’s narratorial attitude towards the Crakers: “Aware of the grave dangers posed by the ‘gene rush’ currently underway and the ‘reductionist mind-set’ of biotechnology as it heedlessly intervenes in natural processes, [...] Atwood voices her concerns for the future [...] even as she casts ridicule on the ‘surreal zoo’ of transgenic species being created by genetic engineers” (*Game* 140). The community of the Crakers is one in which the modern notion of the autonomous individual has been erased through genetic modification, and this is one of the reasons why this form of community is almost laughably incompatible with that of human survivors. Instead of engaging with the question of the political potential of beings such as the Crakers, Atwood uses them as a foil to the notion of the autonomous human individual she privileges throughout this text. By ridiculing the Crakers, Atwood

communicates to her reader the fact that a community in which the autonomous human individual has been erased is not only laughable, but also, frightening.

Atwood's most recent speculative fiction, *The Year of the Flood*, engages with many of the prominent questions in contemporary theory on globalization and its impacts on community. In its exploration of a speculative future world in which corporations have replaced national governing bodies and genetic modification is available for purchase, this text asks many important questions about what some of the long-term effects of contemporary social innovations and policies might look like. The fragmentation of the family unit and the simultaneous development of communities such as the God's Gardeners clearly illustrate the shift between heavy and light communities that characterizes globalization. Nonetheless, while the God's Gardeners enact relationships based on a model different from that of the traditional nuclear family, their emphasis on defining their community in terms of shared actions prevents them from demonstrating the extent to which they can be socially and politically innovative. *The Year of the Flood* asks important questions but relies on a conventional notion of the autonomous human individual that ultimately undermines its ability to create spaces around which new experiences and perceptions of globalization might crystallize. As Capperdoni explains, "In Atwood's textual world we still encounter the Human and the Machine, Subjects and Things, Nature and Science, as if these categories existed beyond the historical conditions which discursively produced them" (51). This thesis turns next to Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring* and Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*, both of which engage critically with some of the categories that Atwood's work leaves unproblematized.

CHAPTER 3

Serving versus Using the Spirits: Disparate Models of Community in Nalo

Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring*

Brown Girl in the Ring, Nalo Hopkinson's first novel, was published by Warner Books in 1998 as a result of Hopkinson's winning the Warner Aspect First Novel Contest for new science fiction writers. This novel is an intriguing one to pair with *The Year of the Flood* because it also features a religious community composed of members of heterogeneous backgrounds. Hopkinson's text, however, explores how this heterogeneity might be a source of strength for the community in that it allows members to cultivate a unique form of cooperative autonomy. This is different from Atwood's text, where individuals' difficulties identifying with the community's defining theological principles and actions inhibit the God's Gardeners' ability to develop cooperative autonomy – and eventually lead to the dissolution of the community. Many readers and critics have commented on the centrality of the issue of the changing nature of contemporary communities to *Brown Girl in the Ring*, and this is something with which this analysis is also concerned. In her widely quoted review of the novel, Donna Bailey Nurse writes, "What one [...] come[s] away with [...] is the suffering city's tenacious spirit of community. Without money, people barter for goods. They take over public parks and build farms. Street children protect one another and ailing individuals turn to midwives and healers like Gros-Jeanne; Hopkinson insists that even in the midst of evil and destruction one discovers alcoves of kindness" (par. 8). While many critics have commented at length on the community centred on Gros-Jeanne in this text, this chapter suggests that there are in fact two disparate forms of community in this novel, one headed by

Mami Gros-Jeanne Hunter and the other by her ex-husband Rudolph Sheldon, and that while the former illustrates the changing nature of community under globalization so also does the latter. These models of community are marked as being disparate most clearly by their approaches to the eight African spirits, or deities. As is alluded to in the title of this chapter, the form of community centred on Gros-Jeanne serves the spirits, whereas the form led by Rudy uses the spirits. These differing attitudes toward the spirits typify Gros-Jeanne's and Rudy's attitudes towards the individuals that compose their respective communities. Gros-Jeanne takes advantage of the social and political conditions brought about by globalization to build a form of community that, through its service of the African spirits, cultivates a unique form of cooperative autonomy. Rudy, however, takes advantage of the opportunities afforded him by the removal of governing bodies from the core of Toronto to use the African spirits to deny "various levels of freedom to an entire community" (Rutledge 35). This chapter argues that it is in this sense that this novel demonstrates the dual influences of globalization upon local communities. Where Rudy is unable to think about community outside the frame provided him by neoliberalism that privileges the individual and conceives of autonomy only in that frame, Gros-Jeanne and her followers imagine and enact an alternative form of community that develops a unique form of cooperative autonomy through its cultivation of solidarity that does not rely on shared identity.

Brown Girl in the Ring (hereafter *Brown Girl*) tells the story of the protagonist Ti-Jeanne, her as of yet unnamed "Baby," her grandmother Mami Gros-Jeanne Hunter who immigrated to Canada from the Caribbean as a young adult, and her mother Mi-Jeanne – all of whom live in the downtown Toronto of the future. As a result of various catastrophic events including budget cuts to the city police force, the moving of city hall to the suburbs,

and a rapid transit cave-in, the core of Toronto has become a centre of crime and poverty ruled from the CN Tower by Ti-Jeanne's despotic grandfather Rudolph Sheldon. In the world of the text, downtown Toronto, which characters refer to as the Burn, is isolated from the surrounding cities and suburbs; in fact, the only unguarded exit from the area is that of the lakefront. In this sense, what happens to Toronto in this novel is an extreme extrapolation of the globalizing process described by Saskia Sassen at work in the present in which "cities that are strategic sites in the global economy tend, in part, to become disconnected from their region and even nation" (xxvi).³ As the novel progresses, Ti-Jeanne learns medical and spiritual knowledge from her grandmother, Rudy's ex-wife who is a healer and spiritual leader who draws freely on her past training and experiences as a nurse. During this time, Ti-Jeanne is in an intermittent romantic relationship with Tony, a drug addict who works for Rudy and is the father of her baby. By the end of the text, Ti-Jeanne realizes that it is her responsibility to her family and her community to call on all the eight African spirits to help her rescue downtown Toronto from the evil clutches of Rudy and his minions. She must do so in the physical absence of her grandmother, though, because Gros-Jeanne is murdered earlier in the novel by Tony, who is bound by Rudy to obtain a human heart for transplant to the body of Catherine Uttley, the premier of Ontario. In a dramatic finale set in the CN Tower, Ti-Jeanne, the spirits, and Rudy's dead victims defeat Rudy, thus taking the first step toward reintegration with the surrounding area for the Burn.

Brown Girl clearly demonstrates the political potentiality of contemporary speculative fiction. This text warns its readers about how the long-term effects of

³ It is interesting to note that the model Hopkinson uses for downtown Toronto in this text is current-day central Detroit, something that contributes to the eerily cautionary quality of this novel (Rutledge 36).

globalization might look at the level of community in innovative ways that, as Phillip E. Wegner explains, confront readers “with all the shock of the new” despite the origins of those effects in the “concerns, desires, and contradictions” of the present (xix). This text’s extrapolation from the present is particularly engaging because it draws on elements of the fantastic in its depiction of the speculative future downtown core of Toronto. Hopkinson’s use of the fantastic electrifies contemporary audiences (Wegner xix) while simultaneously working to “culturally [enlarge their] conception[s] of what is ‘real,’ [thus] subverting Western rationalistic thinking” (McGregory, par. 3).⁴ Where Atwood uses elements of contemporary scientific knowledge to unsettle her readers in *The Year of the Flood*, Hopkinson uses both contemporary geo-political markers and elements of the fantastic to accomplish this task. *Brown Girl* communicates the centrality of the imagination to the task of understanding what some of the long-term effects of globalization might be for communities through its use of fantastical elements, which also require the use of both the author’s and the readers’ imaginations. This chapter does not endorse the values espoused by the communities portrayed in Hopkinson’s novel as being ones that ought to be emulated specifically by readers. Rather, this chapter treats the form of community centred on Gros-Jeanne as exhibiting an exemplary use of the imagination – something that is necessary if one is to make sense of the impact of globalization on human relationships and communities today and identify alternative forms of community that might arise through globalization. The following discussion looks first at the model of community with Gros-Jeanne at its

⁴ McGregor’s analysis is spot-on here, as Hopkinson herself defines speculative fiction in similar terms: “For me, spec-fic is a contemporary literature of the imagination. [...] And here I need to qualify, because all fiction is imaginative and much of it transcends the quotidian. I’m just trying to identify science fiction/fantasy/horror/magical realism as fiction that starts from the principle of making the impossible possible” (qtd. in Nelson 98).

centre and in a subsequent section compares it with the form of community led by Rudy. The final section performs a close analysis of the final scene in *Brown Girl in the Ring*, which is central to the novel in the sense that it represents a culmination of all that Ti-Jeanne learns throughout the text. In this scene, the results of Gros-Jeanne's and Rudy's leadership styles become apparent; that is, the cooperative autonomy cultivated by the community centred on Gros-Jeanne is most fully and effectively on display at this point.

“Serving the Spirits”: A Model of Community Based on Interdependence and Communal Well-Being

Brown Girl in the Ring features two diverse models of community, one centred on Gros-Jeanne and by the end of the text, Ti-Jeanne, and the other led by Rudy, which is referred to throughout the novel as his “posse.” By exploring these two models of community, this speculative fiction engages with the following question posed by Wegner: “If our social and cultural space is now global, what will be the nature of our communities [...] that will operate within it?” (xvii). The community with Gros-Jeanne at its hub cultivates a unique form of cooperative autonomy made possible by the current conditions of globalization. The power held by Rudy's posse, although facilitated by those same conditions, is based on the neoliberal conception of the primacy of the individual. The communities led by Gros-Jeanne and Rudy are most clearly depicted as being disparate within the text, however, by their contrasting approaches to the eight African spirits. The community of which Gros-Jeanne is a member serves the spirits, whereas Rudy, and by extension the members of his posse who work to extend his power, make the African spirits, as well as those of various dead individuals, serve them. Through Rudy's narration, the

reader learns that many years earlier, Rudy provoked the spirits by repeatedly calling on the Eshu in the Black Cape – an African spirit that is one of the “guardians of the crossroads” between death and life – to help him kill his enemies (Hopkinson 125). After refusing his request several times, the Eshu told him how to “deal in the dead,” thinking that it would scare him and also that a human being could not be selfish enough to use this power. Rudy, however, used the knowledge provided by the Eshu and eventually trapped his daughter Mi-Jeanne’s spirit in his calabash (Hopkinson 132). The spirit in the calabash, which is referred to as a duppy, gives Rudy superhuman strength, makes him immortal, and kills his enemies for him upon request; this duppy, however, requires a steady diet of human blood, something that Rudy must provide in order to avoid the duppy’s feeding on his own body. This text emphasizes the perversity of Rudy’s approach to the spirits and the victims whose blood he feeds to the duppy, as well as the difference between his approach to community and Gros-Jeanne’s. One way of articulating the difference between these approaches to the spirits is by using the Caribbean term “obeah,” as it is defined by Caribbean religious scholar Ivan Morrish in the following: “Obeah is concerned with the individual and his appetite as opposed to the total good and welfare of the group, tribe or society” (qtd. in Rutledge 32). Throughout the novel, Gros-Jeanne resists being labeled as someone who practices obeah because she serves the spirits rather than abuses them for her own personal advancement. Conversely, as a practitioner of obeah, Rudy embodies a desire for power and self-advancement, something that contrasts with the interdependence and communal well-being that Gros-Jeanne represents.

While this chapter refers to Gros-Jeanne in different instances as being the head of her community, it is important to recognize to what extent Gros-Jeanne aligns herself

horizontally with her community and not vertically. In her analysis of this novel, Sarah Wood writes about Gros-Jeanne's role in her community: "Gros-Jeanne's figuration as a healer and a *mamba* (a female spiritual leader) signals not only her authority to preside over religious ceremonies, but is also evidence of her standing in the community. [...] Identifying her beliefs as 'serving the spirits' Gros-Jeanne [...] aligns herself with the [members of her] community" (320). While Gros-Jeanne has achieved a certain standing in her community, this standing is qualified by the emphasis on submission that characterizes the relationships between members of this community and the spirits they serve, and by extension the relationships between the members themselves. Wood emphasizes the communal nature of spirit possession: "As a cornerstone of many Caribbean faiths, spirit possession is 'less an individual act, and more a communal event, in which the "possessed gives herself up to become an instrument in a social and collective drama"' (321). The submissive nature of the relationships of humans to the spirits by which they are possessed is elucidated by the terms Gros-Jeanne uses to refer to that relationship: when spirits possess humans, those spirits are referred to as "riding" the humans, who are not able to remember any of what has happened while they were being "ridden." This means that people possessed by spirits must rely on others to tell them what transpired while they were possessed. It is in this sense that spirit possession can be understood as being a communal event. The community of which Gros-Jeanne is a member features horizontal relationships among its members, and Gros-Jeanne's relationships are no exception, despite her status as leader of the community.

Although the submissive nature of the relationships between humans and the spirits they serve in this community is not new, this community and its relationships have been shaped in important ways by the social and political forces of globalization. The impacts of

globalization on this community are most obviously illustrated by its diverse ethnic composition. Just as mass migration is one of the hallmarks of globalization, so too is the presence of immigrants in many countries around the world. Located in downtown Toronto, this community includes members from all parts of the world, many of whom are presumably new Canadians as are the characters Gros-Jeanne and Tony, or children or grandchildren of new Canadians as are Mi-Jeanne and Ti-Jeanne. Reflecting on the past religious rituals led by her grandmother in what Gros-Jeanne refers to as the “palais,” that is, the old Toronto Crematorium Chapel, Ti-Jeanne muses on the diversity of the group: “At nights, people dressed in white would troop past the front door of their house, carrying food and drums. Ti-Jeanne could hear them speaking. Mostly Caribbean English, but some spoke Spanish and others the African-rhythmed French of the French Caribbean islands. One or two were White, and there was Mami’s friend Jenny, who was Romany” (Hopkinson 87). In their book *Multitude*, Hardt and Negri define what they refer to as “the multitude” as a type of politically important and efficacious community that can be formed under the unique social and political conditions brought into being by globalization. One of the most important characteristics of the multitude, as was explained in a previous chapter, is its internal diversity: “The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity – different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labour; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires” (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* xiv). Although the community centred on Gros-Jeanne defines itself predominantly on shared religious belief, it is composed of members with divergent ethnic and spiritual backgrounds – which is a direct result of globalization. More importantly, however, this community recognizes the source of

strength its internal diversity can be, something that accords with Hardt and Negri's work in *Multitude*.

It is important to note the extent to which this community defines itself by Nancy's notion of "being in common" rather than through a shared single identity or element. While one could argue that this community defines itself predominately through shared religious belief, this emphasis on shared belief is qualified by the way the belief system of the community contains elements of various spiritual traditions. When Gros-Jeanne first identifies and explains the natures of the eight African spirits to Ti-Jeanne, she stresses their different names. She explains, "You will hear people from Haiti and Cuba and Brazil and so call [the African powers] different names. You will even hear some names I ain't tell you, but we all mean the same thing. [...] Each of we have a special one who is we father or mother, and no matter what we call it, whether Shango or Santeria or Voudun or what, we all doing the same thing. Serving the spirits" (Hopkinson 126). This passage is important because it emphasizes the way the religious community in this text defines itself less in terms of a rigid definition of which deities it serves and more in terms of its familial and serving attitudes towards the spirits. This community is not limited, however, to serving various manifestations of the spirits listed by Gros-Jeanne; it has also incorporated elements of various members' spiritual traditions, such as that of Gros-Jeanne's friend Romni Jenny. For example, after Ti-Jeanne tells her grandmother of the visions and dreams she has been having at the beginning of the text, Gros-Jeanne consults a set of tarot cards to help Ti-Jeanne understand the significance of those visions. When Gros-Jeanne explains how she obtained the tarot cards to her granddaughter, it is apparent that the cards are not a part of her Caribbean spiritual background: "You know Romni Jenny, who does live in the old Carlton

Hotel? She people is Romany people, and she teach me how to read with the tarot cards, way back before you born. This deck is my own. Jenny paint the cards for me, after I tell she what pictures I want” (Hopkinson 49-50). Clearly, Gros-Jeanne’s spirituality, and by extension that of the community she leads, has incorporated elements of its members’ different ethnic and spiritual backgrounds. Although the religious community in this text defines itself to some extent on the basis of shared spirituality, its emphasis on shared spirituality is complicated by the way that spirituality has taken on qualities of its members’ diverse ethnic and spiritual backgrounds.

The ways this religious community adapts itself to its physical surroundings also mark it as being one that has been influenced by the same processes of social and political globalization that have changed the physical and social landscape of the downtown core. This adaptation is most clearly demonstrated by this community’s positive reuse of public space, something about which Michelle Reid comments:

Well-known Toronto landmarks ground the text in the existing geography of the city. Their reuse is in keeping with the original function of the buildings, but it is changed in accordance with the needs of the Burn community. This suggests the residents wish to take active possession of the city, but yet remain in sympathy with their surroundings. Their occupation of space depends on positive use, not vandalism and abuse. (306)

This community’s reuse of public space in this text fills two important functions. First, it grounds the text in the present physical geography of Toronto, thus establishing an “unsettlingly familiar” setting that is one of the generic requirements of speculative fiction (Nurse, par. 3). Settings such as these create a jarring effect in their readers, as they recognize

some of the elements of the speculated world as existing in the present one. Second, it demonstrates the way the members of this community take active possession of their physical surroundings through positive rather than destructive use. For example, when Mr. Reed, the self-appointed librarian who has taken over the Parkdale Library, lends Ti-Jeanne a book for her grandmother, he reminds her that if somebody else wants the book she'll have to return it: "Tell your grandmother that I can't give these outright to her. [...] If anyone else asks for them, I'll have to send for them" (Hopkinson 12). Gros-Jeanne and the members of her community do not treat public spaces and their contents, such as this abandoned public library and the books it houses, as their own property, but rather, use them to build and sustain a sense of community in the Burn. Gros-Jeanne, who lives with Ti-Jeanne in the Simpson House of the Riverdale Farm, uses its enclosure as a balm-yard in which to grow herbs and perform her role as a community healer. Similarly, Paula and Pavel trap small animals in the Allan Gardens park and grow fresh vegetables in the adjacent greenhouse to trade with Burn residents. This is a service to these residents because, as the narrator explains, "Those who lived in the Burn were still city people; most preferred to barter or buy from the couple, rather than learn how to trap for themselves" (Hopkinson 13). As these examples show, the members of Gros-Jeanne's community reuse public space not just to help their own members, but also the other residents of the Burn. The members of this community are not concerned merely with developing their own individual autonomies, but rather, they cultivate a sense of cooperative autonomy among the residents living in this area through their attention to the needs and desires of those with whom they share their physical space. Individuals such as Mr. Reed, Gros-Jeanne, as well as Paula and Pavel are concerned not only with their own well-beings, but also with the well-being of the community as a whole.

The way the religious community in this text looks out not only for its own members, but also for other residents of the Burn is most evident in the scene where Gros-Jeanne looks after one of the street kids, Susie, who has broken her leg. Susie thinks that Gros-Jeanne is a witch who eats children, so she is initially afraid of her. Gros-Jeanne, however, coaxes Susie into trusting her, at least for the time it will take to set her leg, and treats her immediately. Before treating Susie, Gros-Jeanne tells Ti-Jeanne to prepare a meal for the children who have accompanied her. The street children are a grimy lot predisposed to theft; however, Gros-Jeanne treats Susie as a matter of course in addition to welcoming the other children into her, Ti-Jeanne's, and Baby's home. Gros-Jeanne's benevolent treatment of Susie and the other children has an important impact on the storyline, as later in the narrative Josée and the street kids save Ti-Jeanne and Toby in the deserted Dundas subway station when they are being pursued by Rudy, Crack Monkey, and the duppy. This instance in which Ti-Jeanne is treated kindly can be paired with an instance earlier in the novel when a similar gang of street kids besieges Ti-Jeanne: "A knot of street kids whirled around her, a grimy rainbow of all colours, screeching with laughter and nearly knocking her off balance. [...] As they jostled her, Ti-Jeanne could smell the dirty little bodies, feel small hands quickly patting her body, looking for anything to steal" (Hopkinson 31). Clearly, Gros-Jeanne's treatment of Susie impacts the street childrens' perceptions of Ti-Jeanne, giving them reason to view her as an ally rather than an enemy, thus leading them to protect instead of pickpocket her. This gang of street children also shares with Ti-Jeanne a desire to defeat Rudy, which is another reason that they are motivated to save her. As is revealed later in the text, Rudy often targets the street children in his attempts to find sources of nourishment for his duppy. Alcena Madeline Davis Rogan explains: "As they reveal in this scene [in the Dundas subway station], the

children are the regular victims of Rudy's thirst for blood, a thirst inspired by the capitalist and sexist uses of his powers of obeah" (94). The community of which Gros-Jeanne is a member has adapted to the way the social and political forces of globalization have shaped the physical landscape of the Burn by reusing physical spaces to help not only its members but also the other residents of the Burn. The cooperative model of community enacted by these community members contrasts throughout the text with the competitive model enacted by Rudy and his posse, who take advantage of citizens, using them to feed the duppy's thirst for blood, and more particularly, Rudy's desire for limitless power.

“Using the Spirits”: Rudy and His Posse's Despotic Control of the Burn

In the absence of government, commerce, and investors brought about by the processes of globalization in this text, Rudy and his staff, that is, his “posse,” police the residents of the Burn from the official headquarters they have created in the CN Tower. As Rudy explains to Douglas Baines, the employee of the Angel of Mercy transplant hospital who comes to request a human heart for Premier Uttley: “Posse ain't business with politics. Is we a-rule things here now” (Hopkinson 3). Rudy has internalized a neoliberal understanding of the individual, something that he demonstrates in the way he privileges his own autonomy even at the expense of others'. Relying on the power provided to him by his duppy, Rudy obtains and maintains his despotic rule through abuse of the African spirits, the citizens of the Burn, and his posse members. In his analysis of the relationship between capitalism and freedom in *Brown Girl*, Gregory Rutledge comments at length on Rudy's role in the narrative:

Himself the victim of the hyper-individualistic ethos capitalism fosters, Rudy becomes the source denying various levels of freedom to an entire community: economic opportunities to his family and community, a cultural heritage to Ti-Jeanne because he stole her mother's presence and influence, the freedom of association Ti-Jeanne might enjoy with the father of her child, the freedom of physical liberty he enjoys, and even the freedom of bodily integrity, which Rudy violates by farming the organs – and duppies – of the Burn's residents. (35)

This passage is significant because it emphasizes the way Rudy's power, defined in the hyper-individualistic terms provided him by capitalism, and more specifically, neoliberalism, comes at the cost of various forms of freedom to the residents of the Burn: economic, cultural, physical, and bodily. Rudy's leadership style involves stripping away individuals' freedoms so they lose their individual volitions, that is, their abilities to make decisions about and initiate their actions. Tony, one of the members of Rudy's posse, explains to Ti-Jeanne his inability to leave the posse in terms of his lack of volition: "Once you're hooked up with the posse, it's not so easy to 'done with that stupidity.' [...] Posse come in like Mafia nowadays. I can't make them think I turn Babylon on them. If I don't do what them tell me to, next thing you know, you go be bawling over a box with my body in it" (Hopkinson 23). As this passage makes clear, even if members would like to leave this community, they face death if they are caught attempting to do so. It is in this way that Rudy's individual autonomy comes at the cost of the autonomies of those with whom he chooses to surround himself. By destroying others' individual autonomies and cultivating his own individual autonomy over and above theirs, Rudy makes it impossible for his posse to cultivate a sense of cooperative

autonomy – and it is in this sense that this community contrasts with the one centred on Gros-Jeanne.

One of the fantastical elements of *Brown Girl* that demonstrates the extent of Rudy's abuse of his staff's volitions is his transformation of the character of Melba into a zombie. When Tony encounters Melba in Rudy's office at the beginning of the narrative, he puzzles at her lack of will: "Whatever hold Rudy had on the woman had to be more than just buff addiction. Her will, her *volition*, seemed to be gone. Tony knew that she would do whatever Rudy told her, and only that, until he gave her a new order or her body collapsed from exhaustion" (Hopkinson 28, emphasis in the original). This passage illustrates how Melba is unable to perform any but the simplest tasks, and this, as the reader later learns, is because in the process of being transformed into a zombie her volition was destroyed. In fact, Melba is unable to maintain even her own basic personal hygiene: she is incapable of bathing herself or combing her hair, both tasks for which Rudy's staff members are responsible. The point at which Melba's lack of volition is most graphically illustrated, however, is at the ghastly moment of her death. After not moving throughout the process of being flayed alive by Rudy, she pushes her raw neck towards his knife at his command. Rather anticlimactically, the reader later learns that Melba was transformed into a zombie by Rudy as punishment for her "holding back some of she earnings from" him (Hopkinson 212). Rudy's rule of the citizens of the Burn, as well as his posse members, is characterized by his control of those individuals' volitions, and this control extends in some cases to the extreme point of turning individuals into zombies for petty misdemeanors such as keeping some of their earnings for themselves.

Throughout *Brown Girl*, Rudy's control of the Burn is characterized by his availing himself of the individual autonomies of citizens, including those of some of the members of his immediate family. His abuse of his daughter, Ti-Jeanne's mother Mi-Jeanne, as explained above, is central to this control. It is important to recognize though that it was only after initially surrendering her will to her father that Rudy was able to use Mi-Jeanne's spirit in his calabash. As Rudy tells Ti-Jeanne, Mi-Jeanne did so because she wanted the freedom to "live only in the spirit, for she didn't want the pains of the body no more" (Hopkinson 215). Mi-Jeanne gave up her will and her volition for what she perceived as an alternative type of autonomy, that is, the ability to live only in the spirit. When Rudy attempts to lure Ti-Jeanne into becoming his duppy after she has destroyed the calabash that housed Mi-Jeanne's spirit, he once again promises this kind of freedom. Gretchen Michlitsch elaborates on Rudy's offer to Ti-Jeanne: "In his effort to capture and imprison her spirit, Rudy tempts his granddaughter with descriptions of an imagined autonomous independence, with tales of freedom from responsibility and from the heartaches of life" (par. 20). Ti-Jeanne, who feels torn throughout the text by the competing demands of her child, grandmother, and lover, feels tempted by the freedom becoming a duppy seems to represent; she reflects, "*Knife couldn't cut she, blows couldn't lick she. She could go wherever she want, nobody to stop she. Yes, is this I want for true*" (Hopkinson 215, emphasis in the original). While Rudy tempts Ti-Jeanne with an autonomous existence modeled on his own, he does not explain to her the way that she would still be under his control as a duppy. Although Ti-Jeanne would gain an alternative form of autonomy as a duppy free from the limitations of a physical body, she would lose her ability to make her own decisions, as she would be entirely under Rudy's control.

It is at this point that the differences between the community of which Gros-Jeanne was a member before her death and Rudy's posse become most visible to Ti-Jeanne. After seeing a vision shown to her by the Jab-Jab – a spirit she eventually learns is a manifestation of her father spirit Legbara – Ti-Jeanne realizes to what extent she would be giving up her autonomy rather than gaining it by submitting to Rudy. Ti-Jeanne's relationship to her father spirit in many ways parallels Toby and Ren's relationship in *The Year of the Flood* in the sense that it is a relationship in which a biological parental figure is replaced by a mentoring figure that cares deeply about the other's well-being. Giselle Liza Anatol explains how after seeing a vision of Melba being flayed, Ti-Jeanne recognizes the similarities her circumstances would share with Melba's if she were to submit her will to Rudy: "Becoming [Rudy's] duppy will mean that she has given herself over to yet another person; she will be in his control, rather than her own. She will be very much like Melba, the woman Rudy turned into a zombie and then literally flayed, who stands in the otherworld holding 'her own skin draped over one arm'" (par. 32). Recognizing the likeness between her situation and Melba's, Ti-Jeanne realizes how Rudy abuses the spirits, thus affirming her newfound loyalty to Gros-Jeanne's teachings on serving the spirits. As Michlitsch writes, Ti-Jeanne understands that "the obeah-wielding gang lord Rudy is a villain because he uses the spirits to serve his own personal quest for power, [and that she] must [...] serve the spirits responsibly to prevent further terror in the city and to avoid becoming another pawn for Rudy's evil designs" (par. 14). With the knowledge she gains from the visions shown her by the Jab-Jab, Ti-Jeanne understands that serving the spirits will mean working with others to develop cooperative autonomy, whereas serving Rudy and abusing the spirits will mean working only towards

maintaining Rudy's personal autonomy, and it is on the grounds of this realization that she makes her choice.

Reading Rudy's Defeat through the Lens of Cooperative Autonomy

This chapter has argued that the emphasis on shared spirituality in the community led by Gros-Jeanne is complicated by the way that spirituality has taken on qualities of its members' diverse ethnic, spiritual, and geographical backgrounds. It is in this sense that this community develops a solidarity that does not concern an essence through its service of the African spirits (Agamben 17-18). More particularly, it is in this sense that this community cultivates cooperative autonomy. This does not mean, however, that individuals do not have any autonomy within the group, as is the case in Rudy's posse. Nancy defines community as follows: "Community is not the work of singular beings, nor can it claim them as its works, just as communication is not a work or even an operation of singular beings, for community is simply their being – their being suspended upon its limit" (31). Defining community in this way – as not being the work of individuated beings – provides the terms by which one might understand cooperative autonomy. Cooperative autonomy does not mean that individual autonomies cease to exist, but rather, that those individual autonomies only gain meaning when put to use in service of the group. This principle is illustrated in this text where individuals that use their autonomies to serve the spirits gain a certain type of collective or cooperative autonomy. Although she does not use the term "cooperative autonomy," in her analysis of community in *Brown Girl*, Michlitsch makes a similar point:

On the one hand, the author portrays a community – "the Burn" where Ti-Jeanne lives – that supports its heroine: As Ti-Jeanne makes her way home through the

market-day crowd after defeating Rudy, [...] we see the people she encounters extend their sympathy for her grandmother's death, assure her that Baby is being cared for, and give her gifts [...]. On the other hand, Ti-Jeanne makes clear to Eshu – when he jokingly reappears as Harold the goat – that she wants to decide for herself how she will use her powers in her community. (par. 25)

While Ti-Jeanne comes to participate in the form of community that was centred on Gros-Jeanne, she also learns to value her ability to decide in what capacity she will use her powers in that community. Communities that cultivate cooperative autonomy are in constant negotiation between individual and communal forms of autonomy – and this is something that this text demonstrates well in its exploration of Ti-Jeanne's relationship to the community led by her grandmother. Vibrant and sustainable community exists not when one member develops her or his individual autonomy at the cost of the autonomies of the other members of the group, but rather, when individual autonomies coexist in the service of the group's cooperative autonomy.

The scene in *Brown Girl* where the efficacy of this community's cooperative autonomy is most clearly on display is the dramatic finale wherein Ti-Jeanne, aided by the knowledge she has learned from Gros-Jeanne, the African spirits, and Rudy's dead victims, defeats Rudy in the CN Tower. This scene is important because it demonstrates most vividly the way that certain forms of community are being splintered, or in this case destroyed, under globalization while others are becoming possible. As an indirect result of a vision provided to her by the Jab-Jab, Ti-Jeanne realizes in a flash of brilliance that one way to defeat Rudy would be to use the CN Tower as an enormous centre pole by which the eight African spirits and Rudy's victims could join her from their respective realms of the heavens and the earth.

Using the knowledge of the spirits imparted to her by Gros-Jeanne, Ti-Jeanne calls upon the spirits as well as the ghosts of Rudy's victims. It is important to recognize that Ti-Jeanne's defeat of Rudy relies on her imaginative use of the CN Tower. Appadurai writes that under the social and political conditions brought about by globalization, "the imagination is [...] a staging ground for action, and not only for escape" (7). This is something that this text clearly illustrates not only on the level of the narrative through Ti-Jeanne's use of her imagination to defeat Rudy, but also at the level of genre. *Brown Girl* communicates the centrality of the imagination to action under globalization through its use of fantastical elements such as this one, which requires the use of both the author's and the readers' imaginations. Upon the arrival of the spirits and the ghosts of Rudy's victims, Rudy realizes that he is overpowered and becomes frightened of his imminent death. When he tries to escape, however, Legbara stops him short by confronting him about his abuse of the spirits. Legbara explains, "You ain't going nowhere. You try to give me all these deaths in exchange for you own, but I refuse the deal. I give them all back to you" (Hopkinson 226). As the weight of all his murders falls on Rudy, he screams and Ti-Jeanne averts her gaze. When she looks again, all that remains of Rudy is "chunks of flesh [that look] like something that should have been on a butcher's block" (Hopkinson 226). Rudy meets a fitting end, as "all of his murderous acts rebound upon him in accord with [his] core supernatural beliefs" (McGregory, par. 9). As is implied by McGregor, Ti-Jeanne does not defeat Rudy alone. Rather, she acts as a representative of a community that has cultivated cooperative autonomy through its submission to the spirits. Indeed, the spirits are pleased to be able to help Ti-Jeanne and Rudy's other victims defeat Rudy, who, in his practice of obeah, has abused them for many years. It is in this way that the members of this community demonstrate a form of

cooperative autonomy unique to the speculated future world of the text that nonetheless, as explained above, communicates some useful insights into the nature of that autonomy.

This community's pursuit of cooperative autonomy, while aided by Rudy's defeat, is also enabled by the transplant of Gros-Jeanne's heart into the body of Catherine Uttley, the premier of Ontario. While this analysis has focused predominantly on the two forms of community presented in this text and the way Ti-Jeanne uses cooperative autonomy to defeat Rudy, it is important to look at what happens at the conclusion of the novel when Gros-Jeanne's heart is transplanted into Premier Uttley's body. Shortly after the transplant, the body begins manifesting extreme signs of GVHD (Graft Versus Host Disease). The text describes this process as Gros-Jeanne's heart taking over Premier Uttley's body, something that is shown quite humourously to be the case when Premier Uttley awakes after this process thinking: "*She had worried for nothing. She was healed, a new woman. 'Stupidness,' she said, chiding herself for her unnecessary fears*" (Hopkinson 236-37, emphasis in the original). Not only does Premier Uttley begin to use terms frequently employed by Gros-Jeanne such as "stupidness," she has also developed what her policy advisor Constantine refers to as a social conscience. Discussing her reelection campaign with Constantine, Premier Uttley explains that she plans "to offer interest-free loans to small enterprises [in the Burn and] give them perks if they fix up the real estate they're squatting on" (Hopkinson 239-40). This is different from the failed approaches of other politicians who tried to revive the Burn by "providing incentives for big business to move back in and take over" (Hopkinson 239). Recognizing the importance of maintaining the cooperative autonomy of those living in the Burn, Premier Uttley, under the influence of Gros-Jeanne's heart, plans to implement laws that will cultivate that autonomy rather than obliterate it. The hybridization

of the characters of Premier Uttley and Gros-Jeanne is important because it works to connect Premier Uttley to the community of which Gros-Jeanne was a member. While Premier Uttley's ideas to reincorporate the Burn into the Greater Toronto Area are admirable, they must be understood as being the product not of her own thought process as an individual, but rather of her indirect association with the community of which Gros-Jeanne was once a member.

Engaging with some of the important concepts in the scholarship devoted to globalization and the nature of contemporary communities, *Brown Girl in the Ring* depicts two forms of community that might develop under the social and political conditions ushered in by globalization. While Gros-Jeanne and her followers imagine and enact an alternative form of community that cultivates a unique form of cooperative autonomy, Rudy is unable to think about community outside the frame provided him by neoliberalism that privileges the individual and treats his posse members accordingly. In its exploration of important concepts such as individual and cooperative autonomy in the specific context of relationships between individuals and the African spirits, this text shows its readers in a creative way the importance of individual autonomies to a community's cooperative autonomy. As Anatol explains, "For Ti-Jeanne, as well as for her larger community, [...] being alone does not mean being free; it is a supremely undesirable state" (par. 31). This text demonstrates how individual autonomy pursued for its own sake brings destruction, but also that individual autonomies put in the service of a group's cooperative autonomy lead to the development of vibrant and healthy communities. By exploring these concepts in the context of a speculated future community that serves the eight African spirits, this novel creates a new cognitive

space around which readers can think about and understand their present experiences of globalization.

CHAPTER 4

Contaminated Community: The Sonias, Evie, Miranda, and the Globalized Future World of Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*

Salt Fish Girl, which was published in 2002, is an excellent text to read in dialogue with *Brown Girl in the Ring* because it also provides a specific example of how cooperative autonomy might look in a speculative future community. Set in a world peopled by cyborgs, the community in this text channels the powers of contaminated bodies to reproduce in an innovative and exciting way different from sexual and artificial reproduction, thus manifesting a unique form of cooperative autonomy. The cooperative autonomy of this community is particularly provocative because it emphasizes the extent to which cooperative autonomy can be politically subversive, as it is in this text where cyborg bodies co-opt the reproductive technologies used initially in an attempt to deny them agency and subjectivity through which to assert their agencies. *Salt Fish Girl* is a novel that critically engages with much contemporary feminist and postcolonial theory, and this is something that many readers have pointed out. Various critics have used Donna Haraway's influential work "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s" in their responses to this novel. This chapter builds on analyses such as these by using some of the important ideas and terms in the scholarship devoted to globalization and the nature of contemporary communities to contextualize this text in current debates on the effects of globalization on communities. While the two storylines of this text, that of Nu Wa and that of Miranda, feature characters who desire to participate in community in different ways, this analysis focuses largely on the community enacted in the globalized future world of the

Unregulated Zone by the Sonias, Evie, and Miranda, characters this chapter reads as cyborgs. This illegal cyborg community chooses to define itself in terms of contamination, defined as impurity – or the mixing of incompatible elements. This is in direct defiance of the corporations who create the Sonias and treat them as homogenous clones. The present chapter contends that by channeling the powers of contaminated physical bodies and objects, this cyborg community cultivates a unique form of cooperative autonomy. This community demonstrates cooperative autonomy in its ability to reproduce and thus sustain itself through a form of queer reproduction outside the confines of both sexual and artificial reproduction. In its exploration of the social and political potential of cyborg bodies, this text provides what Diana Brydon refers to as “a way to define differences that do not depend on myths of cultural purity or authenticity but that thrive on an interaction that ‘contaminates’ without homogenizing” (“White” 99). The cooperative autonomy demonstrated by this community is relevant within the frame of this thesis because it is made possible by the community’s cultivation of a form of alternative solidarity that involves a contaminated origin rather than a pure essence. *Salt Fish Girl* is an appropriate novel with which to end this thesis’s discussion of cooperative autonomy in the context of today’s globalizing world because it presents a community that does not look back on previous models of community with nostalgia, but rather, embraces the political possibilities of the social and technological developments that characterize its speculative future world.

Salt Fish Girl tells the intertwined stories of two female protagonists: Nu Wa, a girl who lives in South China in the late 1800s and Miranda Ching, a girl who lives in the walled city of Serendipity on the west coast of North America circa 2044. As is mentioned above, this analysis focuses primarily on the segments of the narrative that take place in the

globalized future world of Serendipity and the Unregulated Zone. This is not to suggest, however, that community is not an important question in the other parts of the text.

Throughout this novel there are many examples not only of the exploitation of community for individual gain, as one sees with Rudy in *Brown Girl in the Ring*, but also of characters experimenting with their own individual autonomies, as one sees in *The Year of the Flood*.

These struggles are particularly apparent in the relationship between Nu Wa and Edwina, as well as in Miranda's early life with her family and during her time at school with her friend Ian Chestnut. This thesis focuses, however, on the speculative portions of this text concerned with the community composed of the Sonias, Evie, and Miranda. As Paul Lai explains, this world features a neoliberal state that "favor[s] the profit motive and the sovereignty of corporate entities, [and thus is] little different from corporations in their exploitation of the disenfranchised masses for the benefit of a few" (168). In this world, the basic rights of individuals such as Miranda and Evie are exploited by a state most concerned with profit margins and the maintenance of the wealth of a minority. As the story progresses, the reader learns that Nu Wa and Miranda are manifestations of the same character as their stories overlap in provocative and complex ways. Most strikingly, Nu Wa falls in love with the eponymous "Salt Fish Girl," the daughter of a salt fish merchant and Miranda falls in love with Evie, a clone also known as Sonia 113 whose genes are 0.03% freshwater carp and who emits the smell of salt fish as does the Salt Fish Girl. Although Nu Wa abandons the Salt Fish Girl, which results in an unhappy ending to their relationship, Miranda and Evie have a child together after Miranda consumes a genetically modified durian fruit offered her by Evie that impregnates her. Before this happens, though, Miranda learns that Evie is part of a community of clones referred to as the Sonias, who have escaped from the factories where

they were enslaved. As Miranda realizes later, this community of clones cultivates genetically modified durians such as the one consumed by Miranda, but also genetically modified cabbages and radishes to support the fetuses – all in defiance of the strict laws that govern and limit the production of such medical technologies. By conceiving a child with Evie through her consumption of one of these durians, Miranda participates in this community, thus satisfying the desire for community first demonstrated by the creator goddess Nu Wa when she chooses to become human at the beginning of the narrative.

Salt Fish Girl is a work of speculative fiction that draws on elements of various genres in its depiction of an imagined future world – namely, elements of science fiction as well as myth and historical fiction. It is in this sense that this novel presents what Paul Lai refers to as a “hybrid narrative” in the following quotation: “*Salt Fish Girl*’s juxtaposition of a prehistorical past, historical moments, and a speculative future creates a hybrid narrative that is at once myth, history, fairy tale, and science fiction” (169). Although this chapter focuses on the speculative sections of this text, this is not to imply that those sections operate in isolation from the mytho-historical ones. Rita Wong comments in her analysis of the novel on the relationships between its diverse components: “*Salt Fish Girl* is deeply inflected with a sense of history repeating itself, materializing in contemporary forms. The mythical, the historical, and the futuristic conjoin in the novel, making home a multiple time zone, that is, a simultaneity of past and present stories” (112). What is most useful about this quotation is its emphasis on the way the connection between mytho-historical and futuristic elements in this novel results in a story that is always simultaneously a hybrid of the past and present. On the level of the narrative, this means that the main characters of this text are able to work through recurring mytho-historical problems identified by Lai in a future world characterized by new

social and political developments and technologies. *Salt Fish Girl* is a compelling text to read as part of a study of speculative fictions because it illustrates the way the imagined worlds in this genre are extrapolations of the present, but also, to some extent, of the past – in the sense that past issues continue to influence social and political developments of the present.

Although this is something that could be argued to be the case of most speculative fictions, *Salt Fish Girl* makes explicit the way past issues influence the novel's present, that is, its speculative future world. Paul Lai asserts, "By deliberately placing freedom and oppression at the center of speculative fiction, Lai forwards science fiction as a project of imagining worlds outside the norms and systems of our contemporary world by reaching back to repressed narratives" (175). Lai's use of the past gives an especial depth and significance to the speculative world featured in her text. Exploring different temporal periods, as does *Salt Fish Girl*, enhances a text's ability to imagine innovative spaces around which new experiences of globalization might crystallize – and it is in this sense that this novel is unique among those upon which this thesis focuses (Wegner xx).⁵ The first section of this chapter is devoted to an analysis of how the bodies of the Sonias, Evie, and Miranda can be read as being contaminated, as well as to an explanation of the sense in which it is suitable to refer to these bodies, and to the community in which they participate, using Donna Haraway's term "cyborg." A subsequent section looks closely at the community of the Sonias and its development of cooperative autonomy, which is manifested through the births of its

⁵ In her article "Future Asians: Migrant Speculations, Repressed History & Cyborg Hope," Lai explains her use of the genre of speculative fiction as follows: "I think we're in the middle of massive changes at all levels of life – social, technological, financial, physical, geographical, meteorological, political – that we cannot possibly grasp from where we're standing. By extrapolating from things that are happening now and projecting into the future, we get a vantage point of sorts" (172). Lai's use of the past can also be understood as enabling her to get a "vantage point" on the present.

daughters, the Doras. The concluding section of this chapter looks specifically at the birth of Miranda and Evie's baby daughter to show how this novel presents an alternative to nostalgia through its unique form of queer reproduction.

Cloning and Contamination: A Close Look at the Sonias, Evie, and Miranda

The Sonias, an integral part of this text, are female clones whose genes are composed of 0.03% those of freshwater carp. While human cloning is illegal in the speculative future world presented in this novel, Aries William of Nextcorp and Dr. Rudy Flowers circumnavigate this law by creating individuals whose genes are in part those of freshwater carp, or in the case of the Miyako series, part cat. Not only do they use this loophole to create the Sonias however, they also consider it reason to treat the Sonias as less than human, something that is most clearly illustrated by their decision to name the Sonias using numbers. Evie, for example, is referred to as Sonia 113 in her time at the factory where she is briefly enslaved. Tara Lee writes of the way the Sonias are treated in her analysis of this novel: "Nextcorp disconnects these women from their history and assigns them numerical labels because it does not want to see them as beings capable of individual subjectivity. The cyborgs are always engaged in 'doing,' never 'being'" (101). Nextcorp's decision to name the Sonias using numbers is significant because it illustrates, first, how it treats the Sonias as inhuman, and second, how it treats them as manifesting homogeneity, and thus as being incapable of developing individual subjectivities. The Sonias are an important component of this text and this is in part because they illustrate the way the world in which they have been created to function is indeed a globalized one where corporations have taken over the

functions of governing as well as policing. Appadurai writes that the process of globalization relies on what he refers to as “instruments of homogenization”:

The globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization, but globalization involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenization (armaments, advertising techniques, language hegemonies, and clothing styles) that are absorbed into local political and cultural economies, only to be repatriated as heterogeneous dialogues of national sovereignty, free enterprise, and fundamentalism in which the state plays an increasingly delicate role. (42)

In this quotation, Appadurai provides the terms through which one can understand how the corporations use the technologies required to create the Sonias as instruments of homogenization. Although cloning produces the potential for contamination, it also works to maintain the power of the corporations that have gained control in this world, thus illustrating the way the bodies of the Sonias are implicated in the processes of globalization at work in their world.

Although the Sonias are treated at the factories as indistinguishable clones, they do not use the term “clone” to define themselves. In fact, when Evie introduces herself to Miranda, she emphasizes the extent to which she is a new life form that is characterized by contamination rather than purity: “My genes are point zero three per cent *Cyprinus carpio* – freshwater carp. I’m a patented new fucking life form” (Lai 158). As is shown somewhat humourously in the novel, Evie treats “clone” as a dirty word of sorts. When Miranda questions, “You’re telling me you’re a clone,” Evie responds shortly, “You don’t need to be so crass” (Lai 157). Evie objects to Miranda’s use of the word “clone” because she adamantly refuses to define herself in terms of her similarities to her source material and to

the other Sonias. This is made clear when she explains to Miranda how she escaped from the factory where she previously worked: “I got out the same way I got that car. Because I wanted to. We’re not designed for wits or willpower, but I was an early model. They couldn’t control for everything. Maybe the fish was the unstable factor” (Lai 158-59). However, Evie is not the only escaped clone; as she tells Miranda, “Wherever Pallas goes, there are pods of Sonias hiding out just beyond the walls of Pallas’s cities” (Lai 224). Although the Sonias are “not designed for wits or willpower,” many of them escape and build lives together outside the walls of the factories for which they were designed. Evie’s explanation of her origins is also notable because of the way she references the carp as being a possibly unstable genetic factor. In her analysis of *Salt Fish Girl*, Joanna Mansbridge writes about the relationship between clones and the concept of origin as follows: “The clone stands in opposition to the notion of a pure origin, thereby pointing towards the possibility of constructing identities based not on abjection, but on self-determination” (128). Not limited by a traditional origin, Evie and the Sonias are able to define and explain their own identities in whatever terms they choose – and they choose to do so in terms of contamination.

Through her association with Evie and the Sonias, Miranda also comes to recognize her own physical contamination. While Miranda first perceives herself as being more natural than the sordid Sonias, the symptoms she manifests of the dreaming disease connect her body to that of Evie’s, which exhibits similar markings (Lai 158). Miranda’s body manifests various symptoms of the dreaming disease or “contagion,” including the smell of the durian fruit that “hangs over [her] like a cloud,” skin trouble, occasional difficulty breathing, and fistulas (Lai 69). These symptoms are similar to Evie’s, who bears the briny smell of the Salt Fish Girl and has fistulas like Miranda does. One explanation presented in the text for

understanding the widespread occurrence of the dreaming disease is that humans have become able to contract diseases that only affected plants in the past, something that results in their bodies being able to be read as being contaminated. Although Evie is a clone and Miranda is not, their shared symptoms of the dreaming disease mark their bodies as contaminated in a way that makes what Miranda perceives as her more “natural” origins insignificant. This is something that Miranda comes to realize as she participates in the Sonias’ community.

Miranda’s body is also contaminated through its connection to the character of Nu Wa, the creator goddess of Chinese folk legend. Nu Wa and Miranda’s narratives are intertwined throughout the text, but it is when Nu Wa explains her rebirth in the form of Miranda that their connection becomes most apparent. She narrates: “I made myself small as a worm, crawled through the tiny aperture of a barely opened bud, and coiled myself round and round its small black heart. [...] I became the seed and the seed became me. Whatever grows from it will be mine” (Lai 208-209). After she consumes this seed contained inside the durian fruit her husband Stewart offers her, Aimee Ching becomes pregnant with Miranda at the age of sixty-three, a physical feat that is incredible even in the future world of *Salt Fish Girl*. Miranda’s body can be read as contaminated because she is conceived through the means of a genetically modified fruit. To be contaminated in this text, however, is to be “natural.” Miranda has access to Nu Wa’s memory at various junctures in this text, as she is the embodiment of Nu Wa in the present. Miranda does not feel that this is strange or unnatural, although many readers may: “It [often] seemed the most natural thing in the world that I should remember things that went on before I was born, things that happened in other lifetimes” (Lai 70). Miranda is an important participant within the Sonias’ and Evie’s

community by the conclusion of the narrative, and she enriches that community by extending the definition of what it means to be contaminated beyond the limits of the human and the nonhuman into the realm of time. This novel – in a way similar to *Brown Girl in the Ring* – illustrates the potential of a genre that contains elements of various genres including fantasy in its exploration of characters that defy the rules of time and space as they are currently understood.

Although the Sonias, Evie, and Miranda do not use the word “cyborg” as such to label themselves, this chapter uses this concept to contextualize the social and political value of the contamination by which the Sonias and Miranda choose to define themselves, just as do Tara Lee and Joanna Mansbridge in their analyses of this novel. The idea of the cyborg is built on the notion of the merging or hybridization of elements that are perceived as being definitionally different from each other. In her widely disseminated “A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s,” Donna Haraway defines at length the contemporary concept of the “cyborg.” She writes: “A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. [...] By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs” (Haraway 502, 503). A cyborg is a body characterized by what Haraway refers to as leaky boundaries between the human, machine, and animal (504-507). In their analysis of globalization, Hardt and Negri refer to Haraway’s work on the cyborg: “Once we recognize our posthuman bodies and minds, once we see ourselves for the simians and cyborgs we are, we then need to explore the *vis viva*, the creative powers that animate us as they do all of nature and actualize our potentialities” (*Empire* 92). Although Haraway as well as Hardt and

Negri write that in the present time all “human” bodies can be understood as being those of cyborgs, Lai takes this claim to a new level in the future world of *Salt Fish Girl* where the process of cloning produces labouring bodies for powerful corporations and children are conceived through the means of genetically modified durian fruit. This chapter reads the notion of the cyborg, as defined by Haraway, as being an enabler of the contemporary form of community defined by a lack of shared identity written about by Nancy. It is in this sense that the “creative powers that animate us and actualize our potentialities” as cyborgs become particularly relevant within the context of globalization (Hardt and Negri, *Empire* 92).

Haraway writes that her “cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities that progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work” (506). This chapter reads the cyborg community depicted by Lai as embodying a dangerous possibility in the way it represents a challenge to the corporations that have gained control under globalization in this text and attempt to extend this control to the bodies of the Sonias.

The Production of the Doras: Contamination and Cooperative Autonomy

The Doras – the Sonias’ daughters – are an integral part of this text’s cyborg community. When Miranda first sees the Doras at the house in which the Sonias live, she reflects on their presence: “I wondered about the [Sonias] and their children, living in such secrecy so far from the inhabited parts of the Unregulated Zone. Did Pallas send security people out to look for them? Who were the fathers of these quiet children?” (Lai 223). The mystery of the Doras is solved for the reader only later in the text when Evie tells Miranda about the reproductive powers of the genetically modified durian tree that grows in the front

yard of the house where she and the Sonias live: it is the fruit of this tree that allows the Sonias to reproduce without insemination. The products of this reproduction, the Doras, are cyborgs in the sense that their bodies, just like Miranda's, are composed of both human and plant (non-human) genetic material. While each woman who becomes pregnant must consume one of the durian fruits, an act that one can perform independently, the Sonias work together to cultivate the durian tree, thus emphasizing the communal nature of this form of reproduction. Even consumption of the durian fruit sometimes happens because of and through relationships with others. Miranda, for example, is reluctant to eat the durian Evie offers her because she feels that there is something cannibalistic about eating it; nonetheless, because she trusts Evie and the Sonias, Miranda accepts and partakes of the gift of the fruit. In her analysis of the Sonias, Robyn Morris emphasizes what she reads as being the chance nature of their form of reproduction. She claims that it is "their chance discovery of the reproductive capacities of the durian seed [...] that allows the Sonias a sense of freedom and a chance of longevity that is denied to them on the factory production lines" (Morris, "Human" 90). As Evie explains to Miranda, the Sonias working in the factories knew about the possibility of such a tree and looked actively for one of its kind: "There were rumours, even at the factories. Of course, we had no means to find any validation, but it was a dream of ours that moved up and down the assembly line. We planned our escape and the search for a tree by writing on the inside faces of soles" (Lai 257-58). To emphasize the chance nature of the Sonias' discovery of the durian tree is to undermine the community effort that went into locating such a reproductive boon. The Sonias work together, both inside and outside the factories, to make possible this alternative form of reproduction.

By channeling the powers of contaminated physical bodies and objects, this cyborg community is able to cultivate a unique form of cooperative autonomy, something that is manifested most clearly in its ability to sustain itself through a form of queer reproduction that is different from sexual reproduction and also forms of artificial reproduction. The cyborg community in the speculated future world of this text cultivates cooperative autonomy predominately through its refusal to define itself in terms of a shared identity. Instead, it characterizes itself in terms of contamination, which is, as Dr. Flowers condescendingly informs Evie, “neither natural nor controllable” (Lai 256). Choosing to be unafraid of what Dr. Flowers refers to as the “monstrosities” that could result from their use of genetically modified durians, the Sonias, Evie, and Miranda become able to reproduce and thus, to sustain their community (Lai 256). In her article discussing Lai’s debut novel *When Fox is a Thousand*, Morris writes about Lai’s politics of representation, something that also pertains to Lai’s more recent work: “Erasing boundaries that would demarcate or mark out a centre is essential to Lai’s politics of representation, and the call for the recognition of a transient and permeable sexualized and racialized hybridity pervades the narrative” (“Re-visioning” 76). Read specifically in the context of cooperative autonomy in *Salt Fish Girl*, this quotation is useful in that it underscores Lai’s emphasis on erasing boundaries that would mark out a centre or an origin, particularly in this text’s cyborg community. Embracing the uncertainty of genetic contamination, this community is unique in the way it relinquishes control over its members’ identities and instead defines itself in terms of a “transient and permeable hybridity.”

In its emphasis on defining its members in terms of their “shared singularities” rather than their shared genetic origin, this community embodies some of the principles outlined by Nancy. In the following quotation, Nancy comments specifically on the concept of origin:

A like-being resembles me in that I myself “resemble” him: we “resemble” together, if you will. That is to say, there is no original or origin of identity. What holds the place of an “origin” is the sharing of singularities. This means that this “origin” – the origin of community or the originary community – is nothing other than the limit: the origin is the tracing of the borders upon which or along which singular beings are exposed. (33)

A particularly compelling passage to read in dialogue with the community of clones presented by Lai in *Salt Fish Girl*, this quotation emphasizes how contemporary forms of community might be defined not by an origin but rather in terms of their members’ shared singularities – something reminiscent of Nancy’s concept “being in common.” While one could argue that the Sonias share an origin in their genetic source materials, they identify themselves as individuated beings who share resemblances with each other rather than as copies of an original. This is most clearly demonstrated when Sonia 14 goes to look for the corpses of the Sonias after their hideout is discovered by Pallas: “She recognized Sonia 148 by her hand, still wearing a ring cut from a bit of copper pipe. She recognized Sonia 116 by a mole on her heel, which also emerged early from the soil. After that, she couldn’t bear to look any further” (Lai 250). Despite sharing an origin in their genetic source material, the Sonias develop a way of defining themselves in terms of singularities based on their life experiences and perceptions of each other, thus focusing more on their differences than their similarities. This passage is important because it documents what Morris refers to as a

“poignant inscription of subjectivity” on the bodies of the individual Sonias and emphasizes the way they have become “more human and more individual than those who manufacture or hunt them down” (“Human” 90). In many ways walking a precarious line between shared identity and solidarity through difference, this cyborg community, facilitated as it is by the processes of globalization, is uniquely situated to cultivate an innovative and provocative form of cooperative autonomy.

The cooperative autonomy demonstrated in this text is especially significant because it also represents an intervention in the forces of globalization at work in this novel. By reproducing, the Sonias effectively co-opt the power of the most influential and wealthy corporations of their globalized world as well as establish their own agency and sustainability. The reader first learns of the nature of the power at work in this text through Evie, who explains the situation to Miranda: ““You ever hear of a firm called Johnny Angel?’ ‘Sure. They’re seed designers.’ [...] ‘Designers. Okay. You ever hear of a shoe company called Pallas?’ ‘Of course, everyone that can afford them owns a pair of Pallas shoes.’ ‘And they both belong to Aries William of Nextcorp fame. They’ve been making people for years’” (Lai 157). The power to produce commercial objects is linked in this text with the power to produce clones, which points to the commodity status of the clones. What is provocative about the Sonias’ intervention into their commodity status is their use of the same technologies that were used in their creation. Evie explains how the durian fruits used by the Sonias developed:

It’s all conjecture, but Sonia 14 says it started a century ago. They were implanting human genes into fruit as fertility therapy for women who could not conceive. And of course the pollen blew every which way and could not be contained. And fertilized

the fruit of trees bred for other purposes – trees bred to withstand cold climates, trees bred to produce fruit that would strengthen the blood. Perhaps some natural mutations were also involved. (Lai 258)

The Sonias' intervention is not one that involves a return to what is often termed "natural" reproduction: sexual reproduction by an adult heterosexual female and male, or even artificial reproduction, which uses the same genetic components as sexual reproduction. Instead, this intervention relies on the same technologies that are exploited by the powerful corporations that created the Sonia and Miyako series. Lee writes, "Ultimately, Lai proposes a fertility where commodities can produce autonomously, not just be reproduced. [...] The body thus becomes a tool of resistance" (95). Instead of distancing themselves from the technologies that were used in their creation, the members of the cyborg community in this text co-opt these technologies to reproduce, ironically employing the technologies used initially in an attempt to deny them agency and subjectivity to assert their agencies.

The Sonias' reproduction is not the only form of intervention presented in this novel. In fact, this mode of intervention clearly contrasts with a form of resistance that ends disastrously for the Sonias: their sabotage of the soles of the Pallas cross-trainers that they refer to as "sabots." When Evie and Miranda return to the Sonias' house after being released from prison, Miranda learns that Evie and the Sonias had been producing moulds for the sabots in the basement of their house: "Some told the stories of individual Sonias' lives, some were inscribed with factory workers' poems, some with polemics, some with drawings" (Lai 249). Unfortunately, as Evie and Miranda learn from Sonia 14, someone betrayed the Sonias and they were ambushed with "months' worth of moulds in bags and boxes" (Lai 249). As a result of this discovery, the Sonias and Dora 6 are brutally massacred; Sonia 14

and the other Doras remain alive only because they were hidden under the floorboards of the Sonias' house. Although this innovative attempt at resistance is imaginative and daring, it is limited in efficacy. This is because it accomplishes little of lasting value and most of its participants are massacred. Lee comments in her analysis on the Sonias' attempt at sabotaging Pallas: "The Sonias fail in their endeavour, not because resistance is always doomed, but because they resort to old tactics of resistance that existed when power functioned in a much more unified and coherent manner. [...] Their seizing of the factory ignores the complexities of biotechnological production and mistakes the machinery within the factory for the locus of power" (107). The Sonias' attempt at "seizing the factory" is shown to be misguided and ultimately futile, as it does not take account of the complex way power is organized in the globalized world in which the factories function. In the narrative, the attempt at sabotaging Pallas is paired with the birth of Miranda and Evie's child, an event that happens shortly afterwards. This birth moment, which is explored in detail in the following section, results in a new life as opposed to the terminated lives that are the result of the attempted sabotage – something that points to the continuing vitality and sustainability of this form of intervention.

Reading the Birth of Miranda and Evie's Child as "An Alternative to 'Nostalgia'"

Once Miranda learns of the Sonias' ability to reproduce, she understands the condition of her growing body that has been a mystery to her over the past few months: she is pregnant. Miranda describes the extraordinary moment of conception: "I scooped the yellow creamy flesh into my mouth, felt its taste and odour merge with my own. It gave me a very peculiar sensation, as though I'd bitten my own tongue. And yet it was delicious. I gobbled it

down and held the plate out for more” (Lai 224). This quotation is important because it emphasizes the similarity between how Miranda was conceived and how she herself conceives. Miranda’s act of reproduction demonstrates her participation in the cooperative autonomy cultivated by the community composed of the Sonias, Evie, and herself that allows it to sustain itself despite the fact that it is deemed to be illegal by its very existence. It also illustrates the way relationships, particularly those in the traditional nuclear family unit, might be reconfigured under the political and social processes of globalization – something that both *The Year of the Flood* and *Brown Girl in the Ring* also demonstrate. In her analysis of the role of fathers in Lai’s novels, Morris quotes Haraway’s observation that “illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential” (“Human” 84). For the purposes of this chapter, the conception and birth of Miranda and Evie’s child is significant in the sense that it communicates to the reader one way in which the family unit is reconfigured in this cyborg community. More specifically, both the biological and gendered roles of mothers and fathers have shifted in the speculative future world of *Salt Fish Girl*, something that shows the way this novel illustrates how human relationships might change in accordance with the larger political and societal changes ushered in by the forces of contemporary globalization.

What is perhaps most noteworthy about the community presented in the future world of *Salt Fish Girl* is the way it represents what Lee refers to as an “alternative to ‘nostalgia’” (108). Marked by its embrace of contemporary and alternative values, this text, while taking account of the way past issues and concerns continue to affect those of the present, looks to future developments and technologies for means through which to deal with those concerns. While this may seem like something that would hold true generally for speculative fictions,

as *The Year of the Flood* demonstrates, this is not always the case. As was argued in a previous chapter, *The Year of the Flood* is imbued with nostalgia for the notion of the independent individual, something that points to the relationship of this text to the values of modernity and liberalism. Although *The Year of the Flood* engages with many of the issues becoming important in an era of increasing globalization, it is indebted to the modern liberal notion of the individual, and thus is unable to show the extent to which communities affected by globalization, such as that of the God's Gardeners, can be socially and politically innovative. In her analysis of *Oryx and Crake* and Lai's long poem "Rachel," Alessandra Capperdoni writes about the relative positions of Atwood and Lai: "Although Atwood and Lai address similar concerns, a critical reading of their texts cannot be divorced from the writers' different positionalities within Canadian culture" (50).⁶ While this thesis is reluctant to attach undue importance to the relative positions of Atwood and Lai in the field of contemporary Canadian literature, *The Year of the Flood* and *Salt Fish Girl* are nonetheless intriguing texts to put in dialogue with each other. *Salt Fish Girl* is not limited by nostalgia in the same way as *The Year of the Flood*. In fact, as Lee explains, "This novel provides an alternative to 'nostalgia' with the birth of a child that neither retreats into nature, nor glorifies a purely scientific body" (108). Lai's emphasis on the present is something that Nicholas Birns also comments on in his analysis: "Lai's genuine interest in actual diversity means that [*Salt Fish Girl's*] critique of technology is a decidedly postmodern one. It never become[s] atavistic or [...] actively seeks a pre-industrial sanctuary as Romanticism did, or mourn[s] its

⁶ In an interview conducted by Robyn Morris, Lai refers to what she perceives as her role in the field of Canadian literature: "What my project is about is making a narrative mythological landscape for people like myself so we have something to hang our hats on when we come into the world" (22). Clearly, Lai characterizes herself as someone who speaks from the periphery rather than the centre of the field as it stands today.

inaccessibility as Modernism did” (173). Although this chapter does not read *Salt Fish Girl* as critiquing technology as such, this quotation is nonetheless useful because it emphasizes how this novel refuses to display nostalgia for earlier times. This text speaks to the concerns it raises in innovative and intriguing ways because it engages directly and meaningfully with the possibilities inherent to the technologies and social developments of the present moment.

While this thesis contends that the genre of speculative fiction works outside the perceived limitations of national boundaries, the “speculated community” explored in *Salt Fish Girl* is nonetheless relevant in the specifically Canadian context. Similar to Hopkinson’s *Brown Girl in the Ring*, this novel can be read as coming from the perspective of one of the voices that Himani Bannerji claims Anderson does not address in *Imaginary Communities*, his seminal analysis of the nation and nationalism. Bannerji contends that Anderson “does not ask about the type of imagination at work in this project. He does not ask either *whose* imagination is advanced as the national imaginary or what this has to do with organizing practical and ideological exclusions and inclusions within the national space” (290, emphasis in the original). By telling a story that focuses on cyborg bodies, this text expands the ways it is possible to imagine Canadian communities, and specifically those of resistance, within the context of globalization. That is, communities such as these do not have to be premised on what Diana Brydon refers to in her analysis of contamination as a literary strategy as “myths of cultural purity” (“White” 99). *Salt Fish Girl* illustrates what contamination without homogenization might look like in the specific context of a futuristic cyborg community. Paul Lai, in his reading of *Salt Fish Girl*, comments on the values espoused in this work: “Lai’s embrace of messy origins and futures inevitably disrupts generic categories, offering a hybrid mythological future that questions assumptions of scientific progress and Western

modernity embedded in conventional science fiction narratives” (184). By presenting a set of alternative values that question and problematize the assumptions that undergird the ideals of progress and modernity, Lai’s work extends the range of possible communities that can be imagined not only in the speculative fiction genre, but also in the framework of the Canadian nation under globalization.

Salt Fish Girl is a valuable text to read in the context of this thesis because it engages with many of the important issues in contemporary theory on both globalization and community. This text provides an example of a unique form of community that might develop under the conditions brought into being by globalization in its exploration of some of the social and political capabilities of a speculated futuristic cyborg community. By channeling the powers of the contaminated bodies of the Sonias, Evie, and Miranda as well as the genetically modified durians, this cyborg community manifests a unique form of cooperative autonomy in its ability to reproduce through a form of queer reproduction different from both sexual and artificial reproduction. This cooperative autonomy is important in the sense that it is a direct result of this community’s decision to define itself in terms of contamination rather than the homogeneity by which Pallas defines its members. The community presented in this speculative fiction is particularly provocative because it is an alternative form of community that is a product of globalization and yet challenges its dominant power structures. *Salt Fish Girl* is a fitting novel with which to end this thesis’s discussion of cooperative autonomy in the context of today’s globalizing world. This is because it presents a community that does not look back on previous models of community with nostalgia, but rather, embraces the political possibilities of the social and technological developments that characterize its speculative future world.

CONCLUSION

Speculative fiction is a genre taking on greater political urgency in the contemporary Canadian literary scene as Canadian authors and readers alike search for a means through which to explore their experiences of what it means to live in a nation that is implicated in and affected by globalization. In their explorations of how globalization might affect the types of communities that can be imagined and enacted in the future, the selected speculative fictions engage with current theoretical ideas on both globalization and community. This thesis argues that the “speculated communities” featured in the selected texts demonstrate in various ways how Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s notion of cooperative autonomy can be developed within the conditions brought into being by globalization by enacting as closely as possible what influential philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy famously refers to as “being in common” (xxxviii). In their engagements with these admittedly difficult concepts, these texts generate what Phillip E. Wegner aptly refers to as a “cognitive space around which new kinds of lived experiences and theoretical perceptions might form” (xx). As part of a genre concerned primarily with, to quote Nalo Hopkinson, “making the impossible possible,” the selected texts allow their readers to consider their own past, present, and future experiences of globalization in the light of characters and social formations perhaps not yet possible in today’s world (qtd. in Nelson 90). It is in this sense that these texts perform an important literary function, and for that reason, represent a significant accomplishment in the field of contemporary Canadian literature.

Each of the selected speculative texts engages with these important questions in a different way, emphasizing various nuances of some of the major ideas in contemporary

theory on globalization and its effects on local communities. Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* explores in imaginative and meaningful ways the changing nature of contemporary communities under globalization through its depiction of the religious environmental activist community of the God's Gardeners. While this text investigates the important shift between heavy communities, in which membership is a matter of tradition, to light communities, in which membership is a personal choice, it is ultimately limited in its depiction of the social and political potential of communities such as the God's Gardeners by its emphasis on defining autonomy at the level of the individual rather than at the level of the community (De Beer and Koster 74-75). Both Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring* and Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl* engage more meaningfully with the question of how cooperative autonomy might look in practice. In fact, *Brown Girl* explores what some of the differences might be between forms of community in which cooperative versus individual forms of autonomy are cultivated. This text explores two different models of community: one that cultivates cooperative autonomy through its service of the African spirits, and one that cultivates the independent autonomy of its leader through its abuse of those spirits. Hopkinson's text is useful in the sense that it illustrates the extent to which cooperative autonomy does not mean the loss of members' individual autonomies, but rather, their choosing to put those autonomies in the service of the group. *Salt Fish Girl* also provides a specific example of how cooperative autonomy might look in a speculated future community. Set in a world peopled by cyborgs, the community in this text channels the powers of contaminated bodies to reproduce and sustain itself in an innovative and exciting way different from sexual and artificial reproduction, thus manifesting a unique form of cooperative autonomy. The cooperative autonomy of this community is particularly provocative because it emphasizes

the extent to which cooperative autonomy can be politically subversive, as it is in this text where cyborg bodies co-opt the reproductive technologies used initially in an attempt to deny them agency and subjectivity to assert their agencies. Each of the works upon which this thesis focuses illustrates the nature of contemporary community building as a process. While none of the communities presented in the selected texts enacts a model of community without some notion of shared identity, each grapples in its own way with the notion of defining itself in terms of the less exclusionary concept of being in common, and it is for this reason that each was chosen.

This thesis's reading of *Salt Fish Girl* points to a significant question that lies outside the scope of this study. This thesis argues that instead of resulting solely in the fragmentation of long-standing forms of community, globalization also puts into place the conditions for the development of alternative communities in which unique forms of cooperative autonomy can be cultivated. As is depicted by *Salt Fish Girl*, these alternative forms of community might be ones that are, by their very existence, communities that resist the forces of globalization that facilitated their development. In a quotation from *The Coming Community* cited above, Giorgio Agamben writes: "What the State cannot tolerate in any way, however, is that the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging (even in the form of a simple presupposition)" (85). While this thesis has explored at length what some examples of communities that define themselves in terms of singularities without affirming a central, shared identity might look like, it has not looked in detail at how governing bodies might react to these communities, or at how these communities themselves might change or modify the conditions that facilitated their developments.

Although one of the benefits of a study that focuses on a particular genre is its relative freedom from the traditional literary restrictions of national boundaries, this does not mean that this type of study is not important to fields such as that of Canadian literature. In fact, as the status of the nation shifts under globalization, studies such as this one – that focus on new ways in which individuals might form communities – are becoming increasingly important. As one sees in the shift between Atwood’s early and more recent work, the question of the status of the nation that was so important from the Confederation period to the cultural nationalist period and onwards in Canadian literature has given way to a focus on new types of state organization. This means that individuals are no longer forming communities based on citizenship. Rather, they are forming communities based on other criteria, such as Jean-Luc Nancy’s concept of “being in common.” This thesis is deeply concerned with this shift. While criteria for membership in contemporary communities are no longer based intrinsically in the notion of the nation state, this does not mean that these criteria are not relevant within the context of a national literature. It means instead that ideas of what constitutes a national literature must be reimagined in accordance with the changing notions of what it means to participate in contemporary forms of community.

WORKS CITED

Primary Sources

Atwood, Margaret. *The Year of the Flood*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2009.

Hopkinson, Nalo. *Brown Girl in the Ring*. Boston: Grand Central P, 1998.

Lai, Larissa. *Salt Fish Girl*. Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2002.

Secondary Sources

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. Trans. Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993.

Anatol, Giselle Liza. "A Feminist Reading of Soucouyants in Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring* and *Skin Folk*." *Mosaic* 37.4 (Sept. 2004): 33-50.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996.

Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake*. N.p.: Seal Books, 2004.

---. *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996.

---. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1999.

---. "Writing Oryx and Crake." *Moving Targets: Writing with Intent, 1982-2004*. Toronto: House of Anansi P, 2005. 328-30.

- Bannerji, Himani. "Geography Lessons: On Being an Insider/Outsider to the Canadian Nation." *Sugars* 289-300.
- Bergthaller, Hannes. "Housebreaking the Human Animal: Humanism and the Problem of Sustainability in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*." *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature* 91.7 (Nov. 2010): 728-43.
- Birns, Nicholas. "The Earth's Revenge: Nature, Transfeminism and Diaspora in Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*." *China Fictions-English Language: Literary Essays in Diaspora, Memory, Story*. Ed. A. Robert Lee. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 161-81.
- Bland, Jared. "The Year of the Flood." *The Walrus* 6.9 (Nov. 2009): 74-75.
- Bouson, J. Brooks. "'It's Game Over Forever': Atwood's Satiric Vision of a Bioengineered Posthuman Future in *Oryx and Crake*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 39.3 (Sept. 2004): 139-56.
- . "'We're Using Up the Earth. It's Almost Gone': A Return to the Post-Apocalyptic Future in Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 46.1 (March 2011): 9-26.
- Brennan, Timothy. "Postcolonial Studies and Globalization Theory." *The Postcolonial and the Global*. Eds. Revathi Krishnaswamy and John C. Hawley. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. 37-53.
- Brydon, Diana. "The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy." *Sugars* 94-106.
- . "Why Community Matters." Brydon and Coleman 246-59.

Brydon, Diana and William D. Coleman. "Globalization, Autonomy, and Community."

Brydon and Coleman 1-28.

---, eds. *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Contexts*.

Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2008.

Capperdoni, Alessandra. "Feminist Progenies – Unlawful Citizenship: Reproduction,

Technology and the Spectres of the Nation in Margaret Atwood and Larissa Lai."

West Coast Line: A Journal of Contemporary Writing & Criticism. 42.3 (Fall 2008):

44-61.

Cuder-Domínguez, Pilar. "The Politics of Gender and Genre in Asian Canadian Women's

Speculative Fiction: Hiromi Goto and Larissa Lai." *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond*

Autoethnography. Eds. Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier P,

2008. 115-31.

Davis, Roger. "'A White Illusion of a Man': Snowman, Survival and Speculation in Margaret

Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*." *Hosting the Monster*. Eds. Holly Lynn Baumgartner and

Roger Davis. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 237-58.

De Beer, Paul and Ferry Koster. *Sticking Together or Falling Apart?: Solidarity in an Era of*

Individualization and Globalization. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2009.

Devadas, Vijay and Jane Mummery. "Community without Community." *Borderlands E-*

journal 6.1 (May 2007).

DiMarco, Danette. "Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained: Homo Faber and the Makings of a

New Beginning in *Oryx and Crake*." *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal*

for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature 41.2 (Spring 2005): 170-95.

- Gatehouse, Jonathon. "Sister Atwood's Travelling Salvation Show." *Macleans* 12 (Oct. 2009): 67-68.
- Haraway, Donna. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s." *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*. Ed. Diana Tietjens Meyers. New York: Routledge, 1997. 502-31.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000.
- . *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin P, 2004.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005.
- Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2007.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue." *The Cultures of Globalization*. Eds. Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1998. 54-77.
- Labudová, Katarina. "Power, Pain, and Manipulation in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*." *Brno Studies in English* 36.1 (2010): 135-46.
- Lai, Larissa. "Future Asians: Migrant Speculations, Repressed History and Cyborg Hope." *West Coast Line* 38.2 (Fall 2004): 168-75.
- Lai, Paul. "Stinky Bodies: Mythological Futures and the Olfactory Sense in Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*." *MELUS* 33.4 (Winter 2008): 167-87.
- Lee, Tara. "Mutant Bodies in Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*: Challenging the Alliance between Science and Capital." *West Coast Line* 38.2 (Fall 2004): 94-109.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. "*The Year of the Flood* by Margaret Atwood." *The Guardian* (Aug. 2009): 5.

- Mansbridge, Joanna. "Abject Origins: Uncanny Strangers and Figures of Fetishism in Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*." *West Coast Line* 38.2 (Fall 2004): 121-33.
- McGregory, Jerrilyn. "Nalo Hopkinson's Approach to Speculative Fiction." *FEMSPEC: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Journal Dedicated to Critical and Creative Work in the Realms of Science Fiction, Fantasy, Magical Realism, Surrealism, Myth, Folklore, and Other Supernatural Genres* 6.1 (June 2005): 3-17.
- Michlitsch, Gretchen J. "Breastfeeding Mother Rescues City: Nalo Hopkinson's Ti-Jeanne as Superhero." *FEMSPEC* 6.1 (June 2005): 18-43.
- More, Thomas. *Utopia*. Trans. George M. Logan. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011.
- Morris, Robyn. "Re-visioning Representations of Difference in Larissa Lai's *When Fox is a Thousand* and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*." *West Coast Line* 38.2 (Fall 2004): 69-86.
- . "'Sites of Articulation' – An Interview with Larissa Lai." *West Coast Line* 38.2 (Fall 2004): 21-30.
- . "'What Does It Mean to Be Human?': Racing Monsters, Clones and Replicants." *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* 33.91 (Summer 2004): 81-96.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. "The Inoperative Community." *The Inoperative Community*. Ed. Peter Connor. Trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1991. 1-42.
- Nelson, Alondra. "'Making the Impossible Possible': An Interview with Nalo Hopkinson." *Social Text* 20.2 (Summer 2002): 97-113.
- Nurse, Donna Bailey. "Brown Girl in the Ring." *Quill and Quire* 64.5 (May 1998): 22.

- Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Toronto: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Reid, Michelle. "Crossing the Boundaries of the 'Burn': Canadian Multiculturalism and Caribbean Hybridity in Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring*." *Extrapolation* 46.3 (Fall 2005): 297-314.
- Rogan, Alcena Madeline Davis. "Tananarive Due and Nalo Hopkinson Revisit the Reproduction of Mothering: Legacies of the Past and Strategies for the Future." *Afro-Future Females: Black Writers Chart Science Fiction's Newest New-Wave Trajectory*. Ed. Marleen S. Barr. Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 2008. 75-99.
- Rutledge, Gregory. "Nalo Hopkinson's Urban Jungle and the Cosmology of Freedom: How Capitalism Underdeveloped the Black Americas and Left a Brown Girl in the Ring." *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* 30.81 (Spring 2001): 22-39.
- Sassen, Saskia. *Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of Money and People*. New York: New P, 1998.
- Skallerup, Lee. "Re-Evaluating Suvin: Brown Girl in the Ring as Effective Magical Dystopia." *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* 37.104 (Winter 2008): 67-87.
- Spiegel, Michael. "Character in a Post-National World: Neomedievalism in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 43.3 (Sept. 2010): 119-34.
- Sugars, Cynthia, ed. *Unhomely States: Theorizing English-Canadian Postcolonialism*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview P, 2004.
- Suvin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.

- Sywenky, Irene. "‘Fables of Lonely Transcendence’: The Multicultural Eco-Voices in Contemporary Canadian Speculative Fiction." *Compar(a)ison: An International Journal of Comparative Literature* 2 (2007): 139-53.
- Thaler, Ingrid. *Black Atlantic Speculative Fictions: Octavia E. Butler, Jewelle Gomez, and Nalo Hopkinson*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Theroux, Marcel. "The Year of the Flood." *Publishers Weekly* 256.29 (July 2009): 119.
- Wegner, Phillip E. *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002.
- Wilson, Robert Charles. "A Dystopia Sketched in Crayon: Margaret Atwood Revisits the Ecological Apocalypse." *Literary Review of Canada* 17.8 (Oct. 2009): 17.
- Wong, Rita. "Troubling Domestic Limits: Reading Border Fictions alongside Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*." *BC Studies* 140 (Winter 2003-04): 109-24.
- Wood, Sarah. "‘Serving the Spirits’: Emergent Identities in Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring*." *Extrapolation* 46.3 (Fall 2005): 315-26.

WORKS CONSULTED

- Appadurai, Arjun, ed. *Globalization*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2001.
- . "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination." Appadurai 1-21.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. "Cosmopolitan Contamination." *Cultural Politics in a Global Age: Uncertainty, Solidarity and Innovation*. Eds. David Held and Henrietta L. Moore with Kevin Young. Oxford: Oneworld, 2008. 234-41.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. "Globalization." *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. New York: Routledge, 1998. 110-15.
- Atwood, Margaret. *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*. Toronto: Signal, 2011.
- Beatley, Timothy. *Native to Nowhere: Sustaining Home and Community in a Global Age*. Washington: Island Press, 2004.
- Beauregard, Guy. "A Glimpse of Something." *Canadian Literature* 181 (Summer 2004): 149-50.
- Blanchot, Maurice. "The Negative Community." *The Unavowable Community*. Trans. Pierre Joris. Barrytown, NY: Station Hill P, 1988. 1-26.
- Bocking, Stephen. "Science Friction." *Alternative Journal* 36.3 (May 2010): 8-10.
- Botta, Giuseppina. "Faustian Dreams and Apocalypse in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*." *Local Natures, Global Responsibilities: Ecocritical Perspectives on the New English Literatures*. Eds. Laurenz Volkmann, Nancy Grimm, Ines Detmers, and Katrin Thomson. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010. 243-55.
- Chung, Hyeyurn. "'Retelling Tales': The Legacy of Dislocation in Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*." *Feminist Studies in English Literature* 17.2 (Winter 2009): 41-68.

- Collier, Gordon. "Spaceship Creole: Nalo Hopkinson, Canadian-Caribbean Fabulist Fiction, and Linguistic Cultural Syncretism." *Matatu: Journal for African Culture and Society* 27/28 (2003): 443-56.
- Cooke, Grayson. "Technics and the Human at Zero-Hour: Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 31.2 (Summer 2006): 105-25.
- Davey, Frank. "Class and Power in Margaret Atwood's Suburbs and Edge Cities." *Études Canadiennes/Canadian Studies: Revue Interdisciplinaire des Études Canadiennes en France* 60 (June 2006): 97-108.
- . *Post-National Arguments: The Politics of the Anglophone-Canadian Novel since 1967*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993.
- Dean, Jodi. "Communication Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics." *Cultural Politics* 1.1 (March 2005): 51-73.
- De la Durantaye, Leland. "From Spectacle to Shekinah: *The Coming Community*." *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009. 156-99.
- Dunning, Stephen. "Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*: The Terror of the Therapeutic." *Canadian Literature* 186 (Autumn 2005): 86-101.
- Glave, Dianne D. and Nalo Hopkinson. "An Interview with Nalo Hopkinson." *Callaloo* 26.1 (Winter 2003): 146-59.
- Guffey, Robert. "Science Fiction on the Periphery: The Literary Novels of Steve Erickson, Jim Dodge, Denis Johnson, and Larissa Lai." *New York Review of Science Fiction* 17.10 (June 2005): 16-19.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 2009.

- Hopkinson, Nalo. *Midnight Robber*. New York: Warner Books, 2000.
- . *Skin Folk*. New York: Warner Books, 2001.
- . *The New Moon's Arms*. Boston: Warner Books, 2007.
- . *The Salt Roads*. Boston: Warner Books, 2004.
- Howells, Coral Ann. "Bad News." *Canadian Literature* 183 (Winter 2004): 92-93.
- . "Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Visions: *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake*." Howells 161-75.
- , ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2006.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Then You Are Them." *London Review of Books* 31.17 (Sept. 2009): 7-8.
- Johnston, Nancy. "'Happy That It's Here': An Interview with Nalo Hopkinson." *Queer Universes: Sexualities in Science Fiction*. Eds. Wendy Gay Pearson, Veronica Hollinger, and Joan Gordon. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2008. 200-15.
- Lai, Larissa. *Automaton Biographies*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp P, 2009.
- . *When Fox is a Thousand*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp P, 2004.
- Madsen, Deborah. "The Salt Fish Girl: A Novel." *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal* 36.1 (Spring 2004): 149-50.
- Miki, Roy. "'Inside the Black Egg': Cultural Practice, Citizenship, and Belonging in a Globalizing Canadian Nation." *Mosaic* 38.3 (Sep. 2005): 1-19.
- Misrahi-Barak, Judith. "Beginners' Luck among Caribbean-Canadian Writers: Nalo Hopkinson, André Alexis and Shani Mootoo." *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* 22.1 (Autumn 1999): 89-96.
- Ong, Aihwa. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2006.

Rao, Eleonora. "Home and Nation in Margaret Atwood's Later Fiction." Howells 100-13.

Sassen, Saskia. "Spatialities and Temporalities of the Global: Elements for a Theorization."

Appadurai 260-78.

Simpson, Hyacinth M. "Fantastic Alternatives: Journeys into the Imagination." *Journal of*

West Indian Literature 14.1/2 (Nov 2005): 96-112.

Sutherland, Sharon and Sarah Swan. "Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*: Canadian Post-

9/11 Worries." *From Solidarity to Schisms: 9/11 and After in Fiction and Film from*

Outside the US. Ed. Cara Cilano. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. 219-35.

Vrabel, Leigh Anne. "The Year of the Flood." *Library Journal* 134.13 (Aug. 2009): 62.

Watson-Aifah, Jené. "A Conversation with Nalo Hopkinson." *Callaloo* 26.1 (Winter 2003):

160-69.

Young, Robert. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers,

2001.