

Intertextual Bastards: Mourning Literary Nationalism  
in Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient*

by

Aaron Mauro

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
The University of Manitoba  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of  
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**MASTER OF ARTS**

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## Abstract

In her 1969 text *Semeiotikè*, Julia Kristeva coins the term *intertextualité* which functions to displace intersubjective relations between literary authors. The form and structure of a book, within Kristeva's estimation, enacts a specific political ideology. As such, between the beginning and end of a novel is an analogy to the author's life and death, which irrevocably links the author as the guarantor of meaning for any given text. By extension, between the bounds of a book and the borders of a nation, literary nationalism manifests the sovereignty of the nation and the authority of the author based on a family structure. By contrast, accepting the movement of intertextuality as beyond the authority of an author, as an extension of Kristeva's thought, literary nationalism must be redefined beyond the sovereign authority of the nation. This thesis seeks to demonstrate how a genealogical family structure, and the resulting hierarchies found in paternity, patriotism, and national identity, continues to support a familiar form of national literary tradition. By reading the intertextual structure of a text, a dismantling of the genealogical model may then be effected. In the words of Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*, nations are *of the connections*, not outside and beyond them.

Thus, I will read Michael Ondaatje's two interlinked novels, *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient*, which dismantle familial structures and genealogical literary tradition through an open set of intertextual relations. Where a national gathering is defined as movement, there is no fixed or permanent space to be *of connection*, not even in the intertextual text where citations are gathered. At stake within this model of intertextuality as movement, and of internationality as intertextuality, is an abyssal thought of relations which does not inflict violence upon texts or peoples.

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## Table of Contents

### Chapter 1:

Introduction.....	1
-------------------	---

### Chapter 2:

“Otherwise They Were Just Men From Nowhere”: Beginnings, Family Ties, and Saving Traditions in <i>In the Skin of a Lion</i> .....	34
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

### Chapter 3:

“Destroy Not Thy People and Thine Inheritance”: Mourning, the Rogue’s Gaze, and Intertextual Bastards in <i>The English Patient</i> .....	70
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Works Cited.....	110
------------------	-----

## Chapter 1: Introduction

“Never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one.” So Michael Ondaatje begins his novel *In the Skin of a Lion* with a citation from John Berger’s novel *G*. (133). With the addition of a citation from the epic of *Gilgamesh*, what bearing do these epigraphs have on a reading of *In the Skin of a Lion* and Ondaatje’s fiction in general? In a novel that is decidedly political, how is Berger’s statement, and Ondaatje’s citation of it reflected in the politics of the novel? Is a citation, a restatement from another text, necessarily a political statement? Texts, whether they are plays, poems, essays, newspapers, or novels, are clearly able to act within and with the political field; but then few forms of writing are without politics. As the foundation of the cultural study of literature, such an assumption about writing informs the study of national literatures, which are read as agents in the formation of nations, national identities, and nationalisms.

However, the form and structure of a book enacts a specific political ideology. Between the bounds of a book and the borders of a nation, literary nationalism manifests the sovereignty of the nation and the authority of the author based on a family structure. In his *Imagined Communities*, historian Benedict Anderson describes the history of nations as a “family history” (201). The sovereignty or independence of nation-states, like the distinction of their cultural products (such as literature) from that of other nations, has become the foundation of both political and cultural inheritance: “and, *as an inheritance*, it was compelled to enter a genealogical series” (196), says Anderson. Thus, literary and national histories seem to be modelled on the hierarchical structures of the family, which Anderson identifies as being disseminated and homogenized through the spread of “print-

capitalism.” Such printed forms, along with the authority of national authors, are a means of distilling or summarizing a national identity within a common language and ideology. As I hope to demonstrate, citations, references, and allusions, which open the whole field of intertextual relations, disrupt the “natural” genealogical, familial series that structure many of the hierarchies seen in the modern nation and novel.

With the globalization of communication, travel, and immigration, many writers have commented upon the breakdown of national, economic, cultural, and geographical territories. As a result, a national author or an author from a nation (which is merely a privilege of birth) is less able to summarize the national experience. Canadian literature, and in particular the works of Michael Ondaatje, tend to foreground the heterogeneous nature of nationalism. For Ondaatje, the relationship between writing and the political is a discourse on relations and relationships, connections and communities, and inheritance and heritage. As Edward Said says, speaking as an Arab-American in *Culture and Imperialism* on the “question of our relationship to [...] other cultures, states, histories, experiences, traditions, peoples, and destinies,” we “are, so to speak, *of* the connections, not outside and beyond them” (55). In the works of Ondaatje, such connections of texts, cultures, lovers, and friends become enmeshed, intertextually, with the political. In short, intertextuality becomes a program for living internationally.

Intertextuality may be understood simply as movement; it is a movement between texts. These *intertextual territories* gesture towards relationships or, perhaps, *relations*. Intertextuality addresses relations between one and the other territory, text, or nation. However, an intertextual reading upsets the familiar structure of tradition by which one author begets the next. The lineage of one writer “begetting” another has been the basis of

all relations in the Western tradition. The linear genealogy of texts, which favours chronological priority of fathers over sons, guides our notion of inheritance from one text to the next. Under such a familial structure, texts are genetically related to each other, while remaining dependent, through family lines. If the relationship between authors is determined by place of origin (or birthright), the gathering of a canon, library, or corpus is akin to the gathering of a nation-family. The idea of the nation, in general, belongs to a discourse of the gathering of people, much as a library is a gathering of texts. There is, however, the possibility of another logic by which nations and texts are gathered and may relate intertextually. By reading texts through, by, and within *other texts*, the politics of friendship and the material body become the primary guide by which readers assess relationships between texts. This thesis aims to demonstrate how a genealogical family structure, and the resulting hierarchies of paternity, national identity, and ethnocentrism, continues to support a familiar form of national literary tradition. By reading the intertextual structure of cultural gathering, both politically and textually, a dismantling of the genealogical model may then be effected. Thus, I will read Ondaatje's two interlinked novels, *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient*, which, hand-in-hand, dismantle familial structures and linear literary tradition. I also wish to open possibilities of the work of more reading to come with Ondaatje's most recent novel *Divisadero* (2007). The relationship formed between these texts attempts to open a strange space in order to understand the place of friendship and love within and without nations.

Indeed, notions of the stranger, or what Julia Kristeva calls "le discours étranger" ("Poésie et Négativité" 255), are at play throughout her *Semeiotikè*, the text in which she coined the word *intertextualité*. The neologism arose from Kristeva's translation and



interpretation of Mikhail Bakhtin's work on the dialogic novel, which attempts to remove the hierarchies implicit in the referent-signified-signifier of Saussurian linguistics. While he is regarded as a member of the Russian Formalist thought of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Bakhtin's writing is also compared to the texts of Jacques Derrida and other "postmodernists" (Holquist xxi). In part, Bakhtinian intertextuality appealed to Kristeva as a means of acknowledging the feminine "excluded middle" of linguistics and philosophy. She understood that the traditional novel propagated binary thinking by virtue of having a definite beginning and ending. Between these two points there lies an analogue of life and death, which aligns the author's work and life within the bounds of the book; this is the "ideology of the novel" Kristeva undermines with the help of Bakhtin.<sup>1</sup> However, if this "thematic loop [la boucle thématique]" is upset, through an (ostensibly) endless series of intertextual connections, an implicit thematic return to origins and binary oppositions is rendered inert. Within the intertextual novel, the narrative yarn becomes "a concatenation of deviations oscillating between two opposite poles" and results in a "carnivalistic play" of others ("The Bounded Text"/ "Le Texte Clos" 43).

Reading and writing are thus conflated with the end and origin of texts in *Semiotikè*, much in the same way that Bakhtin's notion of writing performs "a writing where one reads the other [une écriture où on lit l'autre]" (68/149). "This implies," Kristeva explains within a section on the ambivalence of writing, "that the minimal unit of poetic language is at least *double*, not in the sense of the signifier/signified dyad, but

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<sup>1</sup> This anxiety for origins and ends is surely an anxiety about the looming influences of Oedipus and Freudian thought. Indeed, Roland Barthes explains how the Oedipal pleasure of any text stems from the desire to know "the origin and end" (*Pleasure* 10). Without the ideology of the novel, there is no desire to return to origins or seek totality and wholeness of meaning within the psychoanalytic mother discourse. However, at the risk of too greatly limiting my discussion, I will gesture to the psychoanalytic discourse, while not speaking of it directly.

rather, in terms of *one and other*" (69/150). Similar to the trope of the carnival, which Kristeva returns to so often, the writer dons a second author, narrator, or character's mask with which to write. For Kristeva, the "writer" is always one and the other, or the self and the mask. This ambivalent writer, which breaks any binary ideology, is simply defined as the "nondisjunctive function" of the novel. For this reason, Kristeva identifies "figures of [the] traitor, scoffed-at sovereign, vanquished warrior, and unfaithful woman [which] stem from this nondisjunctive function found at the novel's origin" (48/128). So, the discourse of the novel, from its very inception, has carried a dual logic of binaries and ambivalent nondisjunction. Not surprisingly, Kristeva's writing itself performs this nondisjunctive function; between her interpretation, translation, citation, and paraphrasing in French of Bakhtin's work in Russian, Kristeva constructs an intertextual relationship between textual surfaces. Bakhtin's polyphonic novel and Kristeva's intertextual novel are thus not only intertextually related, but also international in scope. Within the very tissue of intertextual theory there lurks an international field of thought, which is also a discourse on the stranger; Kristeva reads Bakhtin, as "one reads the other," across cultures, languages, and national identities.

And so, through performing this international bridging across cultures, Kristeva is able to coin the term intertextuality. Yet, there are several instances where Kristeva could be understood as "defining," and thus limiting, intertextuality. For many theorists, the definition found in her essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel" is both too broad and too narrow a description. She prefaces her definition by admitting it is, in part, a paraphrase of Bakhtin's words. That is to say, "what appears as a lack of rigor is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin," which is followed by what is normally cited as

the definition of intertextuality: “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*” (“Word”/“Le Mot” 66/146). On the one hand, she limits intertextuality to only a mosaic of *quotations*, at the risk of excluding more subtle allusions, paraphrases, and plagiarisms. On the other hand, the syntactic construction of “tout texte est absorption et transformation d’un autre texte,” implies that *all texts* are, or at least have the possibility of being, an absorption and transformation of another. Kristeva’s “definition” delimits the text by instilling the term with the torsion of being “read as at least double,” which is the very structure of intertextuality.

A supplement to this oft-cited “definition” of intertextuality is found within “Le Texte Clos.” Here, another double movement guides her definition of text as “productivity”: first, the text displaces or redistributes language; secondly, the text intersects with other texts. As Kristeva explains, “[t]he text is therefore a *productivity*, and this means: first, that its relationship to the language in which it is situated is redistributive (deconstructive-constructive), and hence can be better approached through logical categories rather than linguistic ones”; secondly, a text is “a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another” (36/133). For Kristeva, a text is simultaneously composed of two relationships, which brings her discussion of negativity and linguistics closer to Bakhtin’s theory. A text is thus inter-related by the language and the cultural context in a constant dialogue within the writer’s own consciousness. On the other hand, the text itself is in dialogue with other texts and cultural constructions beyond any

authority. In short, as movement, the text passes through and redistributes social, national, and cultural languages. Implicit within this redistribution of languages and cultural contexts is a profound questioning of authority.

A similar double movement occurs within Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*. Patrick, Ondaatje's protagonist, asserts that characters are necessarily free from their authors. "Patrick never believed that characters lived only on the page," explains the implied narrator (*Skin* 143). The play of signifiers within a text occurs for Patrick because "[characters] altered when the author's eye was somewhere else. Outside the plot there was a great darkness, but there would of course be daylight elsewhere on earth. Each character had his own time zone, his own lamp, *otherwise they were just men from nowhere*" (143, my emphasis). While Ondaatje's observations on the play of texts outside authorial intention is more narratological and "writerly" than either Derrida's "grammatology" or Bakhtin's "dialogic imagination," the subversion of authorial power by a play of texts and characters is clearly important for the plot of *In the Skin of a Lion*. Also of importance in this passage is Ondaatje's emphasis on readers and characters living "elsewhere on earth." These strangely "transitional men" from nowhere are internationals who are carried throughout the world with their readers.

However, on the same page, the text opposes this elision of the author. An image of a cyclist, or what Patrick ironically calls a "blur of intent" (27), signals the blurring of authorial intentions within the novel. Just as Patrick sits "in the Riverdale Library looking for any reference to the building of the Bloor Street Viaduct" (143), Ondaatje must have also researched the topic of his novel. Patrick's fascination with "a picture of a cyclist racing across" the bridge is, in a sense, Ondaatje's own fascination. In an interview,

Ondaatje explains the research undertaken for writing *In the Skin of a Lion*: “I did an enormous amount of reading—about the Bloor Street Viaduct for example. I even had some friends help me with research on the book; I’ve never done that before” (Turner 21). Within such a heavily researched novel, the question of “who is he speaking as now” is critical, but not in terms of defining a single speaker. Within Bakhtin’s dialogical novel, any character is necessarily a “hybrid construction” between the author’s intention and the heteroglot language of society, culture, the nation, and, in Ondaatje’s case, that of friends (“Discourse” 304). Consequently, the varying degrees between author and character will never be discerned and always be, in a sense, ambivalent. The progenitor of a text, while his traces remain, is inevitably absent.

Following Kristeva’s model of an intertextual dialogue, the movement between texts guides the movement of this thesis. While *In the Skin of a Lion* acknowledges the difficulty of determining paternity, *The English Patient* mourns the death or loss of fathers. Indeed, this will be the structure of my thesis. Within my second chapter, I will read *In the Skin of a Lion* following the themes of paternity, inheritance, mourning, and friendship as they relate to the movement between the political and the literary. The third chapter will follow the family structure as it relates to empire and the nation within *The English Patient*. Linking these two novels and the movement from one chapter to the next is Hana. Hana is a representation, though it may be premature to state it, of the “excluded middle” of Kristeva’s intertextuality and a model of relationships outside the traditional family structure. Hana is the character appearing in both novels who acts as an intertextual liaison. She is the character who most fully embodies being, in Edward Said’s terms, *of* the connections. Just as people can come to reside outside the context of their national

origin, texts may come to live as citations in new contexts. In the words of the culturally and nationally ambiguous English patient, “We are communal histories, communal books” (*English* 261). Texts become communal and communities become intertextual. Thus, constructing a narrative of interlaced stories, histories, and books imagined from many parts of the world becomes a political statement, but not in any traditional sense. The English patient impresses this upon Caravaggio when he says, “Words, Caravaggio. They have a power” (234). As citations, words are set in movement between the original and intertextual contexts, which undercuts the central, sovereign power of the author. In short, the political real and the textual are inter-related because one is founded upon the other.

Yet, the ability of texts to exist within a political sphere, without an author’s protection from misinterpretation is dependent upon a text becoming removed from its home or place of origin. The ability of texts to become separated from an author’s intentions, and to speak without the author’s presence, is what gives Roland Barthes license to declare “The Death of the Author.” While radical thought on authority was growing in France throughout the decade of the 1960s when Kristeva wrote *Semeiotiké*, Barthes produced a less nuanced subversion of authority: “cut off from any voice, borne by a pure gesture of inscription (and not of expression), traces a field without origin – or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins” (“Death” 146). By Barthes’ estimation, texts are removed from an author’s voice and are therefore cut off from putative origins. A text is not a product of an author, but rather a product of a vast cultural field of texts and the polysemy inherent in language. In contrast, Kristeva quietly announces that intertextuality replaces

intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is simply the relationship between authors in a tradition. Kristeva's intertextuality displaces intersubjectivity by removing the single author and his nationality from any place of privilege. Kristeva's thought, while illuminated by Barthes', is more pragmatic and will not wholly remove the author from production of a text.

While Barthes, like Kristeva, acknowledges that "[t]he text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" ("Death" 146), he is too willing to allow the play of language, in the gesture of a "scriptor," to fill the space left by the dead author. In contrast, Kristeva explains that "translinguistics" is a dialogue between two cultural situations bridged by intertextuality. She acknowledges that the author does not entirely disappear into text-to-text relationships. The author is not pure absence but rather a haunting of intention.<sup>2</sup> "Now," in the words of Kristeva from an essay entitled "How Does One Speak to Literature," "since writing breaks the 'subject' apart into multiple doers, into possible places of retention or loss of meaning within 'discourse' and 'history,' it inscribes, not the original-paternal law, but *other* laws that can enunciate themselves differently beginning with these pronominal, transsubstantive agencies" (113). While a single author signs a text, due to intertextual references, some of which may be intentional and some unintentional, a text must undertake many "doers," which undermines "the original-paternal law" of one "sovereign" authority. Indeed, while stories are written, they may never be written as if they were the only one.

Not surprisingly, then, a certain *roguishness* is manifested in the dialogic performance of the carnivalesque that accompanies Kristeva's explanation of authority.

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<sup>2</sup> Tilottama Rajan is one of the few recent theorists to produce a rigorous interrogation of the writing on intertextuality rather than a summary evaluation of the literature. However, she assumes Kristeva has failed to "deal with the problem of intention" (Rajan 67). It is my hope that this thesis addresses her concerns.

Within “Le Texte Clos,” Kristeva describes the “writer” as both subject/author and object/actor before the reader: “In this way, the novel absorbs the duplicity (the dialogism) of the carnivalesque scene while submitting it to the univocity (monologism) of the symbolic disjunction guaranteed by a transcendence [*une instance transcendantale*]*—the author—that subsumes the totality of the novelistic utterance*” (“The Bounded Text”/ “Le Texte Clos” 44/123). In this instance, Kristeva’s essay is ill-served by her English-language translators Tom Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez. While Kristeva describes authority as a type of transcendence, she is not appealing to a transcendental signified or transcendental author-God figure. The *transcendental instance* is not the introduction of the author’s voice, but rather the moment when the reader cannot differentiate between the intersecting “textual surfaces” (or intertextuality) and the intention of the monological “writer” (“Word”/“Le Mot” 65/143). In other words, the writer “becomes an anonymity, an absence, a blank space, thus permitting the structure to exist as such. At the very origin of narration, at the very moment when the writer appears, we experience emptiness” (74/156). Thus, within Bakhtin’s dialogic, which is both a double language and a double logic, is a notion of the writer as at least double and always undecidable.

The author of an intertextual novel is constantly in motion between the traces of intention and its disappearance within the overlapping textual territories of reference, allusion, and citation. The following quotation, from Bakhtin’s essay “Discourse in the Novel,” demonstrates how closely the process of passing through these languages is associated with intertextuality. However, Bakhtin traces nothing as complicated as a complete text, but rather only a word:



The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile. (276)

Defined by their passage through language, texts are shaped by, and shape, other texts. Through a manifold process of “mergers,” “recoils,” and “intersections” new meanings and contexts arise, endlessly. Implicit within his “Discourse in the Novel” are problems of maintaining a logic that is both double and dialogical. For, without critical vigilance, even the dialogical will drift into hierarchical arrangements. Despite this risk, Bakhtin’s understanding of differing language’s inter-relationship as a form of heteroglossia<sup>3</sup> is critical for a non-oppositional understanding of intertextuality.

In contrast, Barthes re-inscribes a dangerous binarism into the relationship between texts. Barthes explains in “The Death of the Author,” “We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (146). In contrast to Barthes, Bakhtin includes an important third term to explain the inter-relationships of words. While Bakhtin’s *merge* and *recoil* are nearly analogous to Barthes’ *blend* and *clash*, Barthes’ theory lacks a notion of *intersection*. For Bakhtin, these complex inter-relationships continue to occur simultaneously in an infinitely complex field of interaction. Barthes’ theory of intertextuality remains within the dialectical tradition of one against the other without the

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<sup>3</sup> The term *heteroglossia* [*raznorecie*], according to Bakhtin’s editor and translator Michael Holquist, describes both the individual and the constant manifold interactions between languages as a “word-with-a-loop-hole” (Holquist xxi). Kristeva’s description of the “thematic loop [la boucle thématique],” which is the closed ideology of beginnings and ends in the text, also signifies as the narrative yarn with a “loop-hole” or additional excessive meaning. This loop-hole is the intertextual extension outside the ideology of a closed work.

possibility of cohabitation through “overlapping territories.” In *The Pleasure of the Text*, he nevertheless revels in the ability of intertextuality to upset the hierarchy of chronological priority and origins. In Barthes’ example, Proust can appear to influence Stendhal, if the texts are read out of their historical order. Consequently, Barthes identifies “not an ‘authority,’ simply a *circular memory*. Which is what the inter-text is: the impossibility of living outside the infinite text” (*Pleasure* 36). While the myth of origins is laid bare, Barthes seems to stumble into a closed ontology of *text*. Similar to Derrida’s “*il n’y a pas de hors texte*,” Barthes opens any *sign* system, whether it is an image, music, or gesture, to be read and interpreted as text. By claiming an impossibility of living outside the infinite text or without an author, life itself cannot occur. Therefore, the living authority of the author is dead. Of consequence within this statement is how Barthes moves towards a text not governed by an author, which reopens meaning and possibility. The polysemy of language saves an unchanging work from meaningless repetition.

If there is no end to the textual web and no decision can be made for when to stop reading, when and how can it be possible to write? While interpreting the meaning of democracy in *Rogues*, an equally multifaceted and related term, Jacques Derrida likens the endless “hermeneutic circle” to torture or being quartered on the wheel (9). The risk of making a decision, of delimiting a field of discussion, is torture for Derrida because “[w]e do not yet know what we have inherited” (9). Recognizing the paralyzing effect this has on discourse, Derrida suggests that a *decision* must be made by an authority which is always given by and to the self. Yet, by contrast to this event of the decision, Derrida identifies the closed construction of self and the claiming of a sovereign will. Derrida names this autonomous and sovereign self-relation as *ipseity*: “By *ipseity* I thus wish to

suggest some 'I can,' or at the very least the power that *gives itself* its own law, its force of law, its self-representation, the sovereign and re-appropriating gathering of self in the simultaneity of an assemblage or assembly, being together, or 'living together,' as we say" (11). As stated previously, gathering is always a discourse on nations but is under the power of the paternal-political theogony of "the father, husband, son, or brother, the proprietor, owner, or seignior, indeed the sovereign" (12).<sup>4</sup> Those with the authority to assert a decision, a certain "I can," have the power or freedom to form limits or laws for both society and discourse in general. Rogue states, for example, both exceed and follow law. "As soon as there is sovereignty," or an authoritative "I can" which is the manifestation of freedom, "there is [an] abuse of power and a rogue state" (102). The sovereign authority of the state, or authorship (if you will), is always excessive and is the indication of a rogue state run amok. Marked by this event of the decision is a roguish excess of authority. But if no decision is made, there remains the risk of perpetuating hierarchical and violent systems.

The decision is a two-handed or ambi-valent movement for Derrida. To decide is to incise the textual field and follow one text (rather than another). This choice is the violence of privilege, but a responsible decision may also limit such discursive violence. Whether writing or reading intertextually, a decision must be made to include or exclude a

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<sup>4</sup> Derrida explains the violent potential of gathering at length in *Archive Fever* and in the essay "Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand." He describes this trope of gathering most clearly, for my purposes, in *Archive Fever*: "The gathering into itself of the One is never without violence [...] As soon as there is the One, there is murder, wounding, traumatism. *L'Un se garde de l'autre*. The One guards against/keeps some of the other. It protects *itself* from the other, but, in the movement of this jealous violence, it comprises in itself, thus guarding it, the self-otherness or self-difference (the difference from within oneself) which makes it One" (78). A gathering into nations delimits notions of self and other, which is always the binary necessary to justify war. As I will attempt in my chapter on *In the Skin of a Lion*, there may be another mode of gathering dialogically, which welcomes the endlessness of gathering or collecting the stories of another.

relationship between texts. Like Kristeva's "nondisjunctive function" of the scoffed-at sovereign in novels, the author's disappearance between the monological "writer" and polyphonic intersecting textual surfaces (the "transcendental instance" discussed earlier) is both the play and movement of a rogue. The "ideology of the text" as closed, bound, or sovereign, binds the text into a false teleology of complete meaning. Reading roguishly opens, in a nonfinite way, the vast field of intertextual relations. In an early interview with Kristeva, Derrida addresses the meeting of their theories in relation to each other. While defining his grammatology through *différance*, Derrida describes a Kristevan interweaving of texts:<sup>5</sup>

no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each 'element'—phoneme or grapheme—being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. This interweaving, this textile, is the *text* produced only in the transformation of another text. Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces. (*Positions* 26)

Just as *différance* acknowledges the open structure of the signs by which a word (which is not a word though concretized in letters) can mean in many ways, texts are not closed and will signify within an interwoven "texture" of texts. An interesting interplay between Kristeva and Bakhtin thus occurs through Derrida.<sup>6</sup> Echoes of Bakhtin's language from

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<sup>5</sup> Rajan first cites this section from Kristeva's interview in *Positions* as a means of linking reader response theory and poststructuralist theory (Rajan 62). Rajan, however, does not address the similarity of the ambivalent *différance* and intertextual relations.

<sup>6</sup> An early and important theorist on intertextuality, Michael Riffaterre, echoes Kristeva in *Text Production* (1983) and the essay "Syllepsis" (1980): "In a nutshell, the very idea of textuality is inseparable from and founded upon intertextuality" ("Syllepsis" 625). He works towards aligning Derrida's work on syllepsis to intertextuality. While syllepsis contains an analogous double logic like many of Derrida's terms, such as pharmakon, *différance*, supplement, hymen, or tympan, "syllepsis consists in the understanding of the same word in two different ways at once, as *contextual meaning* and as *intertextual meaning*" (637). The meanings of texts are found for Riffaterre in the movement between these two different spaces of meaning. Consequently, he is careful not to limit intertextuality to mere allusion, quotation, or a new name for intersubjective influence among authors. His definition of intertextuality assumes open limits: "The intertextual

“Discourse on the Novel” (cited above) are clear in Derrida’s words. This interview appears to be a strange intertextual moment, when Kristeva’s dialogue with Bakhtin’s texts, which are expressed in *Semiotikè*, are now externalized in dialogue with Derrida’s early work on *différance*. Indeed, Kristeva’s claim, “when the writer appears, we experience emptiness” (“The Bounded Text”/ “Le Texte Clos” 74/156), complements Derrida’s suggestion that nothing, including authority, is simply present or absent. While Derrida responds to Kristeva’s question about his work, his authority disappears into an intertextual web of relations through Kristeva to Bakhtin and beyond.

Through these changing contexts, then, we may read the polyphonic novel which is always intertextual and, quite often, international. Any definition of intertextuality is caught between Bakhtin, a Russian exile and accused political subversive, and Kristeva, a multilingual Bulgarian immigrant to France. Interwoven amongst these discursive threads is Derrida, a Jewish Algerian (derogatively termed “un pied noir”) immigrant to France.<sup>7</sup> For Bakhtin, the author is invariably an immigrant between his own language and what he calls the “common view”: “The relationship of the author to a language conceived as the common view is not static—it is always found in a state of movement and oscillation that is more or less alive” (“Discourse” 302). This living movement between a discourse (perhaps even the discourse on authority) and the person writing it *delimits* writing intertextually. It is this movement which allows one to write in the voice of another. “Thus we have in this case ‘nondirect speaking’—not *in* language but *through* language, through

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proper is the corpus of texts the reader may legitimately connect with the one before his eyes, that is, the texts brought to mind by what he is reading. This corpus has loose and flexible limits” (626). I must also note here that Mary Orr’s reading of Riffaterre is egregiously misleading. She avoids any mention of Derrida’s work within “Syllepsis”, which is Riffaterre’s primary focus.

<sup>7</sup> When the Vichy government in France abolished the “Crémieux decree” of 1870, which guaranteed Algerian Jews French citizenship, Derrida was, in fact, without nationality.

the linguistic medium of another—and consequently through a refraction of authorial intentions” (“Discourse” 313). Citation, allegory, analogy, and allusion are all vehicles for this movement between languages and authors. While these intertextual references between Bakhtin, Kristeva, and Derrida are seemingly unintentional, the very fact of their words having to pass through the “alien territory” of my writing “echoes” their intentions, or what they meant to mean, in this state of finding a new context or home from which to speak again.

Consequently, an intertextual reading is not readily bound by genre, epoch, or discourse. Traces of the author remain only in the movement, both intentional and unintentional, between texts. Thus, the figure of the rogue (and the fool) is central in Bakhtin’s theory of linguistic migration, since the rogue assumes a role of “not grasping the conventions of society [...], not understanding lofty pathos-charged labels, things and events” (“Discourse” 402). In fact, the “mask of a rogue” allows one to not know and still to create knowledge. This uncertain knowing can, by virtue of working within the plural relationships (all the mergers, recoils and intersections) of language, occur without the author’s knowledge. The author, as a personification of authority, becomes the unknowing fool, the rogue, who willfully does not grasp the effect of his decisions. In Bakhtin’s terms, “[t]his prosaic ‘estrangement’ of the discourse of conventional pathos by means of an uncomprehending stupidity (simplicity, naiveté) had an enormous significance for the entire subsequent history of the novel” (402). The grasping, understanding, and forming of canonical knowledge and libraries are themselves analogous to the formation of communities and nations. Yet, an intertextual reading accepts unannounced or uninvited texts within itself, which it can never completely gather. Much like Derrida’s migrant

figure of the “*arrivant*” who is always unannounced and unknown until the moment he/she arrives, a text receives the words of another intertextually:

The new *arrivant*, this word can, indeed, mean the neutrality of *that which* arrives, but also the singularity of *who* arrives, he or she who comes, coming to be where s/he was not expected, where one is awaiting him or her without waiting for him or her, without expecting *it* [*s'y attendre*], without knowing what or whom to expect, what or whom I am waiting for—and such is hospitality itself, hospitality toward the event. (*Aporias* 33)

The arrival of unexpected intertextual references into a text demands a similar form of hospitality, or acceptance, towards the stranger. The text welcomes, unconditionally, those references that are not *familiar*. Far from a competition of “one-upsmanship” to find references, an intertextual reading accepts the inevitable passage of references, allusions, and allegories that might go unnoticed or uninvited.

Annick Hillger’s keen reading of *The English Patient* offers many examples of intertextual connections in Ondaatje’s novel to Homer’s *The Odyssey*. She identifies a philosophy of “nomadic” thought, derived from Theodor Adorno and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, as organizing the intertextuality within *The English Patient*. Indeed, while she adeptly unravels many of the references to *The Odyssey*, her theory of “nomadism” leaves out the play of textuality. For example, Hillger demonstrates the roguishness of intertextual relations through, ironically, an accomplished reading:

The reference to the boat travelling the ‘Sand Sea’ [*English Patient* 5] immediately calls to mind Homer’s epithet of the ‘unharvested sea’. In describing the desert Ondaatje not only takes up the image but reverses the comparison of the sea to an uncultivated land, very much like Fernand Braudel for whom the desert, ‘the devouring landscape, is like the “unharvested sea” of Homer’. (29)

While Hillger welcomes intertextual meaning from Braudel into *The English Patient*, Ondaatje need not have been aware of the depth to which such echoes between texts may have reached. The unrestricted hospitality of a text, such as in Hillger’s reading, may

acknowledge the movement of a rogue text, but risks re-inscribing a hierarchical binary which privileges the “free,” unrepressed nomad over the political centre of power. While such a simple inversion is an oversimplification of her nomad theory, it seems that nomadology leaves out the fact that nomads have family relations and biological parents.

While my intention is not to overshadow Hillger’s work on intertextuality in Ondaatje’s writing, I do hope to welcome her work within my own. Indeed, the tradition of locating the position of the author has, in the words of Derrida from *Archive Fever*, been fraught with “metainterpretative outbidding” (100 n.25). Thinkers within the discourse on authority attempt to find a more primordial, more originary, or more archaic commencement of the author’s will. And yet the question of “who is speaking,” or who owns words, is without answer. In *The English Patient*, Ondaatje phrases the question, in the mouth of Caravaggio, as, “Who is he [the patient] speaking as now?” (*English* 245). Barthes likewise asks, albeit in translation, “Who is speaking thus?” (“Death” 142). Also in translation, Bakhtin asks, “*who* precisely is speaking, and under *what* concrete circumstances?” (“Discourse” 340). Finally, Michel Foucault asks, while citing Beckett in translation, “‘What does it matter who is speaking,’ someone said, ‘what does it matter who is speaking?’” (“What is an Author?” 101). While it is possible to draw a genealogy of writers commenting on the question of authority (though in this case with a bias towards writing in French), the artificial links between each writer necessarily lays bare the fiction of any literary family or system of literary inheritance from father to son.

Yet, it seems that Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” has really “influenced” Foucault’s response in “What is an Author?”. If Foucault and Barthes had carried on a conversation on the subject of authority, a reader of their existing essays would still be



without access to such a hypothetical encounter. For any reader of this tradition, the only relationship available is a textual one. Attempting to avoid intertextual relations altogether by substituting a model of *intersubjectivity through textuality*, Harold Bloom assumes that the author is somehow still present within the text and still speaking the truth of an author's intentions. In *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), *A Map of Misreading* (1975), and *Kabbalah and Criticism* (1975), Bloom defines his notion of influence, which assumes a direct relationship between authors through their texts. In other words, despite theories of textuality, influence remains intersubjective because authors are linked through their texts. In Bloom's words, "Texts don't have meanings, except in their relations to other texts, so that there *is* something uneasily dialectical about literary meaning" (*Kabbalah* 106). Bloom thus returns dialectics to textual theory, inasmuch as any interpretation is a "misprision," not because of the polysemy of the text itself, but rather because any poet must misread his predecessors to make room within the literary tradition for his own poetry.<sup>8</sup> Rather than a roguish "not grasping," misprision suggests a lack of rigour in an intentional misreading, which in turn makes the critic the author. It is the dialectic of reader/writer and interpretation/text which produces, for Bloom, an inevitable misprision of canonical texts and allows for a revivification of canonical works. The canon is thus maintained and defended by an ideology of revisionism, which never questions the social and cultural manifestations of power within the literary discourse.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, he

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<sup>8</sup> In a strange rhetorical move, Mary Orr reintroduces the motif of familial violence and hierarchical struggle when she claims Bloom, the "champion of misreading," is Derrida's "sibling rival" (63): "To borrow Bloom's terminology, both are strong misreaders, vying to be the strongest of all" (64). Despite these grand conclusions, Orr never cites Derrida's work directly.

<sup>9</sup> In her essay "A Map for Rereading: Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts", Annette Kolodny demonstrates how "Bloom effectively masks the fact of an *other* tradition entirely—that in which women taught one another how to read and write about and out of their own unique (and sometimes isolated) contexts" (60). While Kolodny's critique is well founded, she uses Bloom's

overtly aligns canonization and literary nationalism, which, by extension requires a national/literary defense: "Reading is defensive warfare, however generously or joyously we read, and with whatever degree of love, for in such love or such pleasure there is more-than-usual acute ambivalence" (104). In short, Bloom's theory of influence is dialectical and necessitates that one text or author wrestles against the other. Strong poets and strong "misreaders" become model defenders of powerful canons and nations. Bakhtin's theory, by contrast, is dialogical or polyvalent, inasmuch as it can merge, recoil, or intersect within the existing languages of society, culture, and nations. If texts and their author-critics are at war for Bloom, texts are simply in conversation for Bakhtin.

Bloom nonetheless defends his rejection of the term "tradition" in *Kabbalah and Criticism*, which he sees as too daimonic and multifaceted to render a suitable ground for determining a literary heritage. There remains "something uncanny (*unheimlich*) about tradition" (*Kabbalah* 97) for Bloom. The *unheimlich* (uncanny or unhomely) "unhomes" the author from the text and breaks down the singularity of the author's position, which his concept of influence enshrines: "'Influence' is the great *I am* of literary discourse [...]'influence,' unlike 'tradition,' is not a daemonic or a numinous term" (100-2). Conversely, the home or hearth remains the sovereign centre of the father's power for Bloom. Admittedly influenced by Freud, Bloom accepts the notion of an Oedipal anxiety of influence between literary forefathers and heirs, who "wrestle" with "poetic strength" for access to greater originality over literary origins (*Anxiety* 10). The critic, like the poem, makes himself both new and original out of the old. The critic thus returns anew like

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sexist vision of tradition as an opportunity to canonize (white) women writers, while not addressing his underlying logic. Put simply, any canonization gathers a group of texts, thereby creating an opposition to "lesser" texts outside the canon.

“children of the dawn” (*Kabbalah* 126). In “his” desire for the original, the critic-poet seeks to be a child who vanquishes the strong father.

Ondaatje, by contrast, offers a vision of intertextual influence that creates a “place where the weak can enter the strong” (*English* 82). Like its etymology, “influence” implies, contrary to Bloom, something akin to a merging or blending of rivers. Influence in *The English Patient* appears as a trope of flow and fluidity, rather than as a monument to a monological strength of a sovereign “Will-to-Power over texts” (*Kabbalah* 100). In the end, the sovereign forefather (or author of poetic strength) does not have any inherent persuasiveness, but rather confers authority in an autotelic fashion. Bakhtin explains that the “authoritative discourse” simply “demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it” (342).

The shift from an author’s work to “textuality” opens the interpretation of literature. The authoritative discourse’s “semantic structure is static and dead, for it is fully complete, it has but a single meaning, the letter is fully sufficient to the sense and calcifies it” (343). If the monological author arrives on the scene already dead, the death of the (literary fore)father is not a literal murder or violence, but a roguish robbing of the power and position of fatherhood. To kill the literary forefather, which Bloom suggests is the vocation of any poet, would only enshrine through violence the memory of the progenitor.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> I would like to invoke Derrida’s early essay “Plato’s Pharmacy” here as a primal scene of the creation of meaning. In the Western philosophical system, a violence done upon the father (the presence of speech) by the son (the absence of writing), such as the trial scene of writing in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, inaugurates the creation of meaning as binary. Put simply, by privileging the presence of speech over the absent authority of writing, Plato ushered into Western Metaphysics an assertion that meaning is found in the memory of the speaker’s Self. To accept meaning from

Rather than inflicting violence, literary inheritors must only mourn fathers who have “passed on.” To inter a text is to intertextually bury and mourn, within the ground of a new context, the literary tradition. Interring the tradition within a body of writing does not require a building of monuments, but rather a simple citation or call to the past. While considering the appropriate mode of mourning the death of literary forefathers, one must accept, or simply acknowledge, limits to rereading. Edward Said is profoundly concerned with extending the meaning of a text beyond the historical context and intention of the author. In a particularly salient example, Said explains that, “if one reads [Rudyard] Kipling not simply as an ‘imperialist minstrel’ (which he was not) but as someone who read Frantz Fanon, met Gandhi, absorbed their lessons, and remained stubbornly unconvinced by them, one seriously distorts his context, which he refines, elaborates, and illuminates” (*Culture* 146). Said demands, in other words, that readers acknowledge the author’s place in history or risk doing damage to the text. Said is certainly correct to maintain that historical context, while fraught with problems of accuracy and authority, must be balanced by a rigorous reading of a text. Indeed, texts offer themselves to necessary re-readings through the polysemy of language. So, while Said’s essay, “The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions” (1978), offers an early and sober reading of Derrida and Foucault’s writing on authority and textuality, his “contrapuntal reading” in *Culture and Imperialism* is meant to “emphasize and highlight the disjunctions [between authorial intentions and the polysemy of the text], not to overlook or play them

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texts is to accept the death and stasis of the father’s speech: “the father’s death opens the reign of violence. In choosing violence [...] or patricidal writing—[the son] cannot fail to expose himself, too. All this is done in order to ensure that the dead father, first victim and ultimate resource, not be there. Being-there is always a property of paternal speech. And the site of the fatherland” (“Plato’s” 146). Within this patricidal metaphor, the father must die to secure the privilege of presence/speech and become the “resource” and base structure of the community.

down” (146). The movement between the political/historical (the practical and political “real”) and the purely textual (any cultural product which can be read as text) is thus figured as an intertextual relationship. Said urges readers to move between the author and the text, contrapuntally.

As such, we must always remember that the familiar relationship between authors and authority also poses a great *risk*. Like the defusing of bombs in *The English Patient*, which assumes the risk that the bomb might achieve its intended purpose, deconstruction also risks “falling back within what is being deconstructed” (*Of Grammatology* 14). Falling back, in this sense, would trigger the violence of the old systems, if they are not decoded and defused. Only through such risks does Ondaatje’s Kip become aware that “the problem was now simply the problem,” and “[t]he problem would not be solved by embracing it” (*English* 193, 199). Kip solves the problem of the bomb with the problem, its fuse, intact. The deconstruction of the bomb does not require a complete dismantling of potentially violent systems. Similarly, the philosophical deconstruction of modernity,<sup>11</sup> seeks to disarm the tradition of dangerous and potentially violent systems, while not discarding our heritage. As inheritors of a tradition that has always accepted the sovereignty of authors, readers must try to understand this other context in which texts were produced. In other words, readers must contrapuntally consider, in Riffaterre’s words, both the *contextual meaning* and the *intertextual meaning*. Despite an inherent risk of simply re-inscribing the tradition, discarding or distorting it would constitute a greater violence upon the past and the work of any reading to come. Both the promise of the future and the injunction to remember are inter-related: “the one is founded on the other”

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<sup>11</sup> For my purposes here, modernity may be defined as the primacy of the Self in the context of one Truth, together with the desire for originality and for hierarchical systems of dialectical opposition.

(*Archive Fever* 76). While this movement between past and present is interlinked, an intertextual reading, in which texts stand outside time, follows a nonlinear structure. Through the movement of this non-genealogical passage through the tradition, intertextuality becomes a means to the beyond, to a new system of relations, which is always to come.

Three “canonical” novels are made to stand outside of time in *The English Patient*—Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901), Stendhal’s *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839), and James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826)—where they are all re-cited and revised in Ondaatje’s text. Each canonical novel is a product of a period of historical migrations across empires, ending in the First World War of 1914-1918, the largest clash of the opposition of “us” against “them” in history. A detailed reading of how and why these texts find a home within *The English Patient* will guide my second chapter on mourning the death of forefathers. For each of these three novels haunts the characters’ lives and is more than a simple instance of the acknowledgement of literary influence. Each novel literally presents the lives of its characters as strangers who have come to live outside of their native context. Their own uncanny movement between cultures and nations is paralleled in the movement of literary texts. Colonial texts in *The English Patient* appear out of context, as it were, without leave of the author.

A predominant situation in each work concerns a man fighting for the very empire or nation which has colonized him. Magua fights the Huron, the nation to which he was born, on behalf of the Mohawks and ultimately the French colonial military in Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*. At the same time, Chingachgook, a Delaware Indian, fights the French on behalf of the British North Americans, epitomized in the character of Natty

Bumppo. The Italian Fabrizio, of Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma*, fights as a French soldier at the battle of Waterloo. Equally indoctrinated by the ideology of war and masculine valour, Kimball O'Hara works, in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, as an international spy for the British Empire, despite his being of Irish descent. Within this colonial discourse, cross-cultural bridging is always seen as resourceful adaptation, when it is undertaken by a colonizer. For example, Hawkeye, like Chingachgook, is a cultural adept able to function anywhere in North America. For Cooper, this cultural adeptness underwrites the logic of the colonizer's right to rule. In contrast, Ondaatje's Kip seeks to become like the white colonizer. Beyond mimicry, cross-cultural bridging necessitates a cultural relating or retelling. In a sense, Kip re-cites the British Empire back to the Empire. British culture finds a new context and therefore a new interpretation. In other words, this "cultural quotation" opens a whole new field of interpretation, due to the new context in which the cultural narrative finds itself. New contexts allow old symbols, like Ondaatje's British military Sapper, to signify anew. Through citations and the iterability of both texts and cultures, as with re-citing the words of Derrida towards his own work, one's responsibility to a cultural inheritance is really to be "unfaithful through fidelity" (*Paper Machine* 140). The citation or iteration of one culture within the context of another culture creates, through the simple gesture of entering a new political context, a cultural critique.

This critique is the hidden political statement inherent in any citation. This cultural critique does not, however, enter into the intrinsic xenophobia found in the nationalist dialectic of "us" and "them." If intertextuality were to follow the paradigm of Barthes, where texts blend and clash, a narrative of peace/war or friend/enemy would be the

inevitable result. Returning then to our first example, *In the Skin of a Lion* begins with two citations that share an affinity with each other. Aside from the Berger citation already mentioned, the second citation is from the epic *Gilgamesh*: “The joyful will stoop with sorrow, and when / you have gone to the earth I will let my hair / grow long for your sake, I will wander through / the wilderness in the skin of a lion.” In this oldest of written stories, the very “origin” of writing, one finds a story of a great friendship and a great act of mourning. Gilgamesh leaves his home of Uruk to mourn the death of his friend Enkidu. Gilgamesh undertakes a quest to find the secret of immortality for his lost friend. In the end, Gilgamesh fails to give life back to Enkidu, but the story of this quest becomes the immortal testament to his friend. Thus, what Derrida calls “the work of mourning” is the work of reading and writing stories. For Gilgamesh, mourning Enkidu is also a celebration of the lost friend who mellowed his temper and turned the great king away from warring tyranny.

Derrida, while not referring to Gilgamesh directly, enters into this tradition of the interlinked discourses of friendship, mourning, and war. A “real war” is not possible, says Derrida, without a theory of the enemy and the enemy is made possible by its antithesis, friendship. Consider here, then, the double bind that the enemy is “a combating collectivity” (*Politics of Friendship* 86). The enemy is the collectivity that combats collectivity or the gathering principle of nationhood. Thus, for the sake of peace, Derrida repeats a long tradition of citations and recitations, from Aristotle to Montaigne: “O my friends, there is no friend.” The double movement of Aristotle’s phrase implies a lack of friendship, while speaking to friends, for the sake of friendship. In other words, without friendship there is no enemy and no combating of collectivity and war. Without this



binary of friend/enemy, the politics of friendship becomes more fluid, allowing for a constant interchange of friends, collectivities, canons, and distinct borders. Consequently, reading (or mourning) as a friend necessitates reading intertextually. Where “gathering” is defined as movement, there is no fixed connection or permanent space to be *of connection*, not even in the intertextual text where citations are gathered. Thus, a violent gathering into a singular whole is impossible when defined as movement. At stake within this model of intertextuality as movement, and of internationality as intertextuality where one is able to read the other, is a notion of texts which are never at war with each other. In a very literal way, a text does not bear arms against another text.

For this reason, I have to ask, why does Mary Orr insist upon describing the terms “intertextuality” and “influence” as “arch-enemies” (15)? Seemingly *influenced* by Bloom, Orr dismisses “voguish and modish” writers who “end up doing very much what their elders do with ‘influence’ and its partners like ‘context’, ‘allusion’ and tradition” (58). In effect, Orr makes a pre-emptive strike against any writer determined to question and revise her work. Indeed, sprinkled throughout Orr’s book are war metaphors and depictions of violence directed at the “cultural agenda” of postmodernism.<sup>12</sup> The irony of Orr’s argument against intertextuality is that her own (rogue) text exposes the failures of her argument and the violence it implies. Despite entitling her book *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (2004), Orr’s second chapter on “Influence” exposes her defense of Kristeva’s intertextuality against Barthes’ “plagiarism” as a basis for Bloom’s notion of

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<sup>12</sup> The language of war and conflict is endemic within Orr’s text. She claims, in the war of theory, “Interdisciplinarity promises and delivers more, but is disarmed because it provides ammunition to the very enemies it would seek to overcome” (48); her short discussion on the revolution of hypertextual media claims, “no revolution, however virtual, is bloodless” (51). In short, Orr sees “philosophical problems or adversaries” throughout theoretical philosophy (164).

influence:<sup>13</sup> “Indeed, influence studies reveal intertextuality’s terrible potential sameness and how it did the banishing [of intersubjectivity]” (92). She attempts to remove any support for Barthes’ work on textuality, while inserting Bloom’s notion of intersubjective influence *through texts*.

Intertextuality, as I have tried to demonstrate throughout this introduction, is more synonymous with textuality and the removal of the author. “Postmodernism,” explains Orr, “especially by its use of the word ‘text’, can find no other for omni-definitional ‘authority’” (150). Yet, Orr profoundly misreads text theory in her simple unwillingness to relinquish the sovereignty of authorship. As a result, she falls back directly upon an all too familiar hierarchical structure of the family: “While there is some correlation between the unfolding of the narrative of intertextuality in this book as the reading of a family tree from bottom to top – sibling rivals (intertextuality), parental rivals (influence), family rivals (imitation), founding rivals (quotation) [...] the over-riding lessons of the third chapter make quite clear that analogy can only go so far” (169). Despite this rhetorical retraction, Orr allows the familial structure of kinship to structure her book and her thought on the relationship between texts. This pervasive structure of the family, if only a mere analogy, defines myths of nationalism which are built upon founding fathers and *patriotic* love of a fatherland.

Many writers have attempted to define the source and best method of appraising nationalism and its familial myths. Nationalism seems to be a term defined as both too narrow and too obtuse to encompass the manifold identities held within it. Any nation,

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<sup>13</sup> Orr claims that “Barthes is then everywhere a graffiti artist scribbling over the flaunted texts of others” (36). Orr cites Barthes’ entry into the *Encyclopédie universalis* (1973) as containing echoes of Kristeva’s *Semiotiké* (1969). See pages 32-6 of Orr’s *Intertextuality* for her argument against Barthes. I will suggest that it seems fitting for a certain echo, or call, to Kristeva’s work to appear in Barthes’ definition.

especially in view of democratic nationalisms, contains a torsional relationship between individual and collective forces. Benedict Anderson describes nationalism in his *Imagined Communities* as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). For Anderson, print capitalism, made possible by the invention of the printing press, produced the conditions by which a collective belonging and ideology of shared values could occur across vast distances. As a result, Anderson emphasizes common language and literacy as the necessary conditions for nationalism. In contrast, Eric J. Hobsbawm claims that a nation “cannot be established simply by consulting writers or political spokesmen of organizations claiming the status of ‘nation’ for it” (9). For Hobsbawm, an individual’s personal identity is too complex and changeable to be homogenized into a single national identity represented in literature. Following Ernst Gellner’s liberal theory of nationalism, Hobsbawm explains from a Marxist point of view that the “collective sovereignty” of nationalisms is a product of the state, the governing body, not the cultural productions found therein (19). Following Anderson, I maintain that nationalism is a cultural product; and, texts (of which literature is only part) are invariably inter-related with the formation of nations. In the words of Said, “[t]he modern history of literary study has been bound up with the development of cultural nationalism, whose aim was first to distinguish the national canon, then to maintain its eminence, authority, and aesthetic autonomy” (316). With the rise of empires and nations, any literary discourse is also inter-related to the political, in one movement.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Said’s impetus for writing *Orientalism* came from the simple observation of the correlation between the increase of colonial writing and the percentage of landmass of the globe: “The simple fact is that between 1815, when European powers were in occupation of approximately 35 percent of the earth’s surface, and 1918, when that occupation had extended to 85 percent, discursive power increased accordingly” (“The Problem of Textuality” 711). Certainly, the discursive power of words does relate to political power.

For Anderson, the history of the founding of nations and nationalisms is always a “family history” (201). He observes that the construction of national genealogies arises from “reassuringly fratricidal wars” (200). Whether the example is the founding of Canada on the Plains of Abraham, the American Civil War, the Peloponnesian Wars, or the Norman Conquest, the question is always, how could a war between “brothers” found nations? Indeed, the French and the English or the North and the South of the fledgling United States were not brothers in any conventional sense, but rather sovereign governments. Derrida identifies this long fratricidal mythology in *Politics of Friendship* as being constructed on the logic of dialogue. The *question* of “the deadliest tragedy of fratricide” is so egregious that it is without plausible *answer* (*Politics* 151). The dialogue of question and answer, and absolute war and absolute politics, collapses the dialectical politics of friend/enemy into “monstrous truths” (152). The monstrous fratricidal war (the question/absence of a binary dialogue) of the nation results in a singular truth and the presence of a sovereign body politic. The monstrous absence or lack left by fratricide is thereby filled with an equally unwieldy definition of the nation. However, at play within this family dynamic of brothers is also the relationship between fathers and sons. Brothers easily become fathers and inheritors. A fratricidal war for an inheritance, whether literary or national, stems from a desire to gather into one family or lineage. A father’s sovereign will and authority is always gathered and enacted within one nation or family.

To accept, however, that a founding civil war is fought between strangers, at the intersection of differing cultural contexts, is also to accept heterogeneity and polyvalent meanings within the nation and family. While never mentioning mothers or sisters within the political (that eternal irony of the community), this language of fathers and sons is

merely symbolic or rhetorical. Literally speaking, nations have no fathers, and biological brothers rarely, if ever, fight civil wars. In short, patricide and fratricide are nothing more than metaphors for a hierarchical dialectic structure. The great mythical thrust of patriotic forefathers and fratricides are meant to stem the inherent lack of a purely singular and sovereign national identity with which to match the desire of an uncontaminated familial bloodline. In the end, the book, authority, nationalism, and forefathers are all structured by a xenophobic fear of the other. This unknowable other, outside of any origin, precedes any text, political paradigm, or family line, all of which are constructed of mothers, fathers, and friends from abroad. The unknowability of our origins, whether literary, political, or familial, is the *aporia* we must accept.

As I have already suggested, the relations between a literary inheritance and the mourning of a dead father are interlinked. Caught in the contradictions of the Second World War, the English patient has learned in the desert to “Erase the family name! Erase, nations!” (139). In the desert, the unbounded place of traces and influence in the endless sands, he creates within his intertextual copy of Herodotus’ *The Histories* a new relationship for texts outside the familial relations of nations. Mourning the erasure of origins becomes a means of carrying a tradition into the future, which is always to come, in both *The English Patient* and *In the Skin of a Lion*. By way of merging life and death, writing and reading, and *eros* and *thanatos*, mourning the text’s loss of authority also allows for the interment of the text, beyond any Bloomian intertextual misprision, within the body of one’s own writing.

Following the traces of inter-relationships is nonetheless the critical movement of reading and receiving a tradition intertextually. Thus, Hana mourns the words of Cato

(Hana's biological father) who haunts the periphery of *In the Skin of a Lion*; Hana has then to mourn her *other father*, Patrick, in *The English Patient*. It is Hana who ultimately demonstrates the uncertain lineage of these shifting intertextual relations. What Kristeva identifies as the totalizing "ideology of the novel" becomes a perpetual mourning of the text due to its loss of a living and present authority. The whole process of rereading is caught between beginning and ending, life and death, as texts read and reread each other. And so, guiding this *movement between* texts is a certain affection, care, or love for the other. Love stories do not follow the grand plot of an authorial will, but rather describe the promise to remember a relationship with another. This promise is why the English patient begins his story all over again by saying, "I promised to tell you how one falls in love" (229). When the words of another are on one's lips, a story of relations is told, a relationship which is always intertextual.

“Otherwise They Were Just Men From Nowhere”:  
Beginnings, Family Ties, and Saving Traditions in *In the Skin of a Lion*

From the very outset of *In the Skin of a Lion*, beginnings and origins are uncertain. Indeed, with all that has been written, how does one speak of beginnings? For Ondaatje, Patrick and his father appear as if simply to awake from sleep when they witness the passage of the migrant workers, “this collection of strangers” (7).<sup>15</sup> In Canada, it seems that beginning always assumes a more aboriginal precedent, which forever defers the moment of initiation as a reading of the past. Again, with all that has been written, how does one speak of beginnings? The boy and his father, who are initially unnamed and unfixed for the reader, appear as strangers even to this “strange community” (7). They are forced to “sleep in the shacks behind the Bellrock Hotel and have little connection with the town” (8). Implied, however, is a life lived by these characters outside of the text, before this abrupt beginning. Patrick and his father appear out of the darkness to join with a community of readers, as if illuminated by their relationship with the other men. Indeed, “[t]he only connection the loggers have with the town is when they emerge to skate along the line of river, on homemade skates, the blades made of old knives” (8). These “strangers of another language” (22), to whom Patrick and his father are also strangers, are only manifest in the community of Bellrock as movement. These skating men glide “past boundaries, speed! romance! one man waltzing with his fire....” (22). The act of being borne along on a knife’s edge emphasizes the tenuousness of movement; neither here nor there, living on the “line of river” enacts the unhomed movement of

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<sup>15</sup> In *Imagined Communities*, his historical study of nationalism, Benedict Anderson describes this trope of “awakening from sleep” as being common to European nationalisms (195). But, Ondaatje’s image of a household awakening gestures towards an unknown and always more originary pre-history. This conflation of the family and the nation, a collectivity that simply awakens, points to the fictional conceit of beginning without acknowledging a preceding history.

estrangement. These men do not live in any place, neither outside the town nor on the margins. They live on the line between, which is illuminated by their own torches. If beginnings emerge as if out of prehistoric darkness, there exists nonetheless another story even when it is unseen.

Far from privileging a photo-centric knowledge based on the eye, Ondaatje gestures towards origins that remain unseen. Upsetting the stability of an identity founded upon place, Patrick's birthplace is unknown to him. Much like the darkness of the library where Patrick replaces the world atlas, the nondescript and formless objects in the library gesture to a world of books and a world of places that are unseen, yet named: "Caspian. Nepal. Durango" (9). In the dark, there is no guarantee of their existence. These places and the books on the shelves are merely potentialities not yet actualized. For Patrick, the uncertainty of texts and maps to determine familial origins emerges from being "born into a region which did not appear on a map until 1910, though his family had worked there for twenty years and the land had been homesteaded since 1816" (10). Again, it seems that any Canadian story of origin always assumes a more aboriginal precedent, which forever defers the moment of initiation as a reading of the past. On the map, which is a text that defines the territory of the nation, Bellrock is merely "pale green and nameless" (11). Even the nearest name on the map is lost in an uncertain play of language. Depot Creek is a misnomer for "Deep Eau," which recalls the multilingual beginnings of Canada (11). So, somewhere in the movement between mistranslations and the blending of languages, the real name and exact location of Patrick's home is lost. Always, it seems, there is a deferral when looking for Patrick's home.



Many of the arresting scenes of this most seminal beginning in “Little Seeds” are manifested as analogues for accepting an inheritance.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the rest of the novel, as well, there is a relationship between representations of the family and of inheriting literary traditions. After all, the family has never had a purely biological function. The scene of the father and son saving “the neighbouring farmer’s holstein” from the ice demonstrates not only the caring relationship between father and son, but also a metaphor for saving a tradition, in general. Fundamentally, the value of saving is manifested in the act of pulling the Holstein from the water. The act of saving the animal and the neighbour’s livelihood is extended, furthermore, by an image of the knot. Indeed, any complex intersection of discourse results in knots; or, in other words, problems where the line of understanding is not clear: “More than anything Patrick is surprised at his father who is obsessed with not wasting things. He has lectured the boy several times on saving rope. Always unknot. Never cut” (14). Ondaatje seems to suggest, by analogy, that logical or discursive knots are never cut or destroyed.<sup>17</sup> The work of readers or inheritors is to follow, untie, or at least form an understanding of this discursive complexity. To waste the knotted rope one has received, from hand to hand, is a “luxurious act” (14). To cut loose an inheritance is done only when necessary, such as in the case of the nearly frozen Patrick and Hazen.

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<sup>16</sup> I am moved towards this discussion on tradition and inheritance by Michael Naas’ reading of Jacques Derrida in *Taking on the Tradition*. Naas’ explanation of tradition necessitates an intertextual reading of Derrida. In a sense, inheriting our mode of inheritance and our tradition is guided by our reading of others reading. In the words of Naas, “It is always the other who signs last, who has the last word, who signs off or does not, and so has in effect the first word, concerning history, tradition, and the very possibility of receiving or taking these on” (xvii).

<sup>17</sup> Michael Greenstein first identifies Hazen’s belief in saving rope as an analogy for reading: “Hazen’s philosophy instructs the reader in strategies of reading—join with the writer wherever possible, but severing instead of bridging may be necessary” (124). Greenstein, however, focuses on the trope of cutting and explosives as a function of metamorphosis and change within the novel.

Saving and beginning, however, are terms that must still be untangled. The Greek word *arkhe* [the beginning] forms the root of the word archive. The double bind of beginning and saving suggests that beginning occurs with saving. Thus, any beginning is already a tradition, which is archived.<sup>18</sup> Not surprisingly then, Jacques Derrida and Ondaatje share a similarly duplicitous metaphor of saving. Much like Patrick pulling the Holstein from the pond, Derrida suggests that deconstruction must simultaneously *ground* and *run aground* the tradition. While Derrida both undoes and restores the Western tradition of philosophy, his work may also influence our reception of a literary tradition (120-3).<sup>19</sup> For being grounded in a tradition necessitates the often accidental running aground of that same tradition. Michael Naas' phrase "taking on the tradition" summarizes the double movement of inheritance as both a carrying and a struggling. In short, a firm grounding within the tradition must run violent hierarchies aground. This double and

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<sup>18</sup> Derrida's *Archive Fever* works on this logical bind of archiving, origins, and beginnings. The very structure of Derrida's work begins again and again. He moves from "Exergue", to "Preamble", to "Foreword" and finally to short (and always multiple) "Theses", which is followed immediately by a "Postscript". Indeed, Derrida never really begins *Archive Fever*. Following from my introduction, citations, references, and allusions acknowledge the fiction of origins and beginnings. The epigraph of *In the Skin of a Lion*, which begins the novel, shows how an author can never really begin because he or she must enter into a language and discourse that always precedes them. I repeat John Berger's words once again, "Never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one."

<sup>19</sup> Of interest here is Derrida's *Rogues* where the illogical double movement of deconstructing the hierarchy of the *logos* ends in *saving the honour of reason*. The indefinableness of a concept such as "honour," says Derrida, saves any regression of reason into *logos* and the violent hierarchies held therein. Reason's honour must be saved because the illogical must still be described logically. Saving the honour of reason necessitates, echoing Martin Heidegger's pun on *grund* [ground] and *abgrund* [abyss]. In regard to the ontological structure of interpretation, Heidegger explains that, "if we see this circle as a vicious one and look out for ways of avoiding it, even if we just 'sense' it as an inevitable imperfection, then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up" (*Being* 194). The ground of being and understanding becomes for Heidegger also an abyss: "for a 'ground' [grund] becomes accessible only as meaning, even if it is the abyss of meaninglessness [abgrund]" (*Being* 194). Derrida adds, to this tradition on the difficulty of interpretation, an intentional "grounding" [*échouage*] and an accidental "running aground" [*échouement*] which is the necessary movement of reading (*Rogues* 121-2).

ambivalent movement deconstructs hierarchy while not setting upon the tradition antagonistically. Family ties, like the knots within the discourse of the family, cannot simply be cut. To murder the forefather would only solidify his position as an ultimate resource and origin. Saving the honour of the “father,” while not privileging him unduly, necessitates an acceptance of the other, who always precedes any beginning.

Thus, there is a risk in taking on the family structure. A tradition requires very little innovation or radical change to be useful from one generation to the next. The transmission of inherited knowledge within *In the Skin of a Lion* is as risky as working with explosives. Knowledge of explosives, in fact, is the inheritance followed throughout the novel. His “initiation” to the use of explosives occurred “when Patrick was fifteen, his father made the one leap of his life” (15). This logical leap, from the sound of an axe knocking snow from tree branches, allows Hazen to learn the blast radius of explosives. By extension, following this logical leap gives Hazen a position within the logging industry by enabling him to break logjams with explosives. The inheritance of this knowledge, gained from a singular logical leap, led Patrick to work in mining the waterworks’ intake tunnel under Lake Ontario: “He carries out the old skill he learned from his father – although then it had been in sunlight, in rivers, logs tumbling over themselves slowly in the air” (107). As is the case with all traditions, a singular logic finds use, again and again, in new contexts.

The original understanding of the use of explosives in forestry is easily translated to mining, and even to terrorism. Explosions, as a fundamental function of clearing or opening space, can be made a tool for a revolutionary clearing away of structures. Yet, by choosing not to destroy the waterworks, Patrick does not clear away the literal power

structure, but only its discursive structure, which allowed a government to kill so many workers and starve the rest with inadequate salaries. In the end, this knowledge of clearing away, opening, and destruction, is misused when it is manifested as violence.<sup>20</sup> As I will demonstrate throughout the rest of this chapter, breaking free of the structures of the family, like a logjam, guide both literary and political inheritance within *In the Skin of a Lion*.

The hierarchical structures of the family are so pervasive that they are taught both formally and carried within “everyday language,” often without criticism. For Patrick’s strange upbringing, Ondaatje is careful to demonstrate how “Hazen Lewis did not teach his son anything, no legend, no base of theory” (18). “There were,” however, “abrupt lessons” (19). “Little seeds,” for example, while referring to origins and beginnings, are also “little seeds of explosive”: “His father took off his shirt one evening and threw it onto the campfire. The shirt fizzed and sprayed sparks over the knees of the loggers” (19). These abrupt lessons taught by Hazen to his son gesture towards the danger of unseen seeds (or *preceding* logics) and the explosiveness of origins in general. Inherited

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<sup>20</sup> It may be said that Heidegger weighs most heavily on Derrida’s own writing and his inheritance of the tradition of philosophy. Derrida’s catch phrase “deconstruction,” which is so often used to summarize a methodological rubric (that he never describes), is a mutation of Heidegger’s destruction [*destruktion*]. In the opening pages of *Being and Time*, Heidegger works very hard to place his writings outside or beyond Hegelian Platonism, which has dominated all philosophical thought on the ontology of being. Thus, Heidegger tells his reader, “we are to *destroy* the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being” (Heidegger §22). In a long note at the end of *Rogues*, Derrida describes his taking on of Heideggerian destruction as a means of reading the tradition and *logos* (*Rogues* 173 n. 14). Derrida explains that destruction never really opposed *logocentrism* because Heidegger was only seeking a more originary or primordial state of being as *da-sein*. Derrida goes on to explain, in this note, that he never subscribed to notions of the “end of the book” or “death of philosophy” as a closure of the tradition. Indeed, taking on the tradition is marking your connections to it by moving through “its heterogeneous space following a grid of complex and noncircular limits” and not destroying or clearing away the past (174 n. 14). Patrick may then be seen as following Derrida’s gesture by not destroying the waterworks.

knowledge rarely has a sole originator from which the tradition stems.<sup>21</sup> Who could ever claim to know the origin of any inheritance, the beginning of any discourse, or foresee the origin of an event?

For example, “The bridge. Christened ‘Prince Edward.’ The Bloor Street Viaduct,” is not even crossed originally by those assumed to be the first crossers (27). The first crosser, “alone and illegal,” is not the cyclist, as the records show. The cyclist is preceded by the workers who “moved with their own flickering lights – their candles for the bridge dead – like a wave of civilization, a net of summer insects over the valley” (27). This wave of civilization is the steady and anonymous carrying of the tradition by each generation of workers or readers.<sup>22</sup> This work is always a work of mourning another who is no longer with us. The initial crossing of the bridge is completed as a remembering of the past. In other words, the workers carrying candles for their lost comrades gesture towards a work of mourning an inheritance in any initiative act. As a bridge between works, intertextuality in *In the Skin of a Lion* likewise works at mourning the past.

All work on a literary inheritance, says Derrida in his essay “By Force of Mourning”, “in general works *at mourning*” (142). Throughout this “abyssal thought of inheritance” there appears a re-imagining of family structures (163). For Derrida, all

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<sup>21</sup> Carol L. Beran suggests that the endowment of the craft of explosives gives Patrick his name, “Pa / trick” (74). While there are always possibilities of meaning within the play of language, the singularity of this ironic naming suggests that Ondaatje is not constructing a system which gives undue importance to proper names.

<sup>22</sup> Crossing the bridge *bridges*, metaphorically, the workers and the work of mourning inherent in working on literary texts of authors that are absent or no longer with us. As with any tradition, there is never a parthenogenesis, or creation *ex nihilo*, of a new discourse. Despite Michel Foucault’s assertion of the originality of the “initiators of discursivity” (“What is an Author?” 116), such as Freud commonly known as the father of psychoanalysis, all discourses intersect, recoil, and merge with other discourses, regardless of contexts. While defining his “Author Function” as an empty site constructed by the users of a discourse, he contradicts his own argument by maintaining some privilege for fathers of discourse.

writing allows an author to declare, "I am here," while simultaneously and impossibly (in the future anterior) admitting "I died" (157-8). Writing claims a presence while forever reminding the reader of the writer's absence. Literally the phrase "I died" is of interest to Derrida because it is impossible to say without accepting the possibility of being nothing or being read in the mouth of another. In other words, "this being-in-us reveals a truth *to and at death*, at the moment of death, and even before death, by everything in us that prepares itself for and awaits death, that is, in the undeniable anticipation of mourning that constitutes friendship" (159). The other who writes is thus relocated within the reader. As in the model Bakhtin develops in "Discourse in the Novel," the dialogic imagination admits the words of another within the polyphonic text much in the way that they come to reside within the reader. Derrida thus gestures towards an important rereading of inheritance by allowing the other to become interred in the self. Derrida explains to the friends and family of Louis Marin that, "we can get over our mourning *of him* only by getting *over our* mourning, by getting over, by ourselves, the mourning of ourselves, I mean the mourning of our autonomy, of everything that would make us the measure of ourselves" (161). To relinquish the *autos*, the sovereignty of the self, by welcoming the other within us necessitates a realization, of which Bakhtin is clearly aware, that many voices haunt our expressions.

This welcoming of the other inside the self upsets the logic of inheritance and the relationship between fathers and sons. Traditionally, inheritance and genealogy are governed by the logic, says Derrida, of "the son in the bosom of the father, the son as the sight of the image of the father" ("Mourning" 163). However, Derrida works backwards by suggesting that it is the son who makes the father: "the father *in view* of the son, of the

father looked upon, judged, made possible by the son. An abyssal thought of inheritance” (163). Like intertextual relations, which upset the chronological priority of historical order, a literary forefather becomes the source only when viewed, read, or judged by the inheritor. In other words, the birth of the son sanctions the naming of the father as a father. Ondaatje seems intentionally to upset this privilege of the literary forefather by inserting the story of Al Purdy as a child. Glen Lowry describes how Caravaggio escapes to Trenton, Ontario where he enlists the help of Alfred [Wellington Purdy] to wash off the blue paint (Lowry 68). Yet, Lowry dismisses this instance as mere literary homage to a great Canadian writer. Ondaatje is, in fact, honouring his forefathers, while acknowledging that seniority does not prescribe superiority. This scene, where the child listens to an escaped convict discussing the oddity of doors being outdoors and outboard motors suspended not in water, but in the sky, is entirely imagined. Yet, the young Al Purdy leaves readers with only one request: “The kid grinned, very happy. ‘I know,’ he said. ‘Remember my name’” (*Skin* 182). In the midst of so many paradoxical misplacements, Ondaatje imagines that a prisoner outside of prison would please the young Alfred. This intertextual relationship, which the literary “son” provides to the father by receiving an inheritance, by receiving the other into the self, is what makes the position of the forefather possible.

Ondaatje further blends his roguish theft of traditional writers and their writing, from Gilgamesh to Al Purdy, through the artist-like thief, in the “Caravaggio” section. Boundaries are broken and entered by the rogue-as-artist. While painting the roof of the penitentiary, both Caravaggio and Patrick become “uncertain of clear boundaries” (179). By painting himself aqua marine, which is comically more noticeable, Caravaggio escapes

detection. He can pass outside the bounds of the prison undetected and make a mockery of any authority. Similarly, Ondaatje is a kind of thief or trespasser who blends his voice with his characters. He is capable of escaping the prison of authority, even if that authority is his own. While “postmodern” readers are keenly aware of meta-fictional representations of authority, Ondaatje’s position of authority merely disappears under such scrutiny.

Dressed as the sky, Caravaggio escapes from the Kingston Penitentiary. Dressed as David Caravaggio, with the mask of the rogue, Ondaatje can break into the unknown lives of authors. Mocking the authority of the critic, Ondaatje escapes a reader’s desire to “imprison” (or perhaps “misprison”) the meaning of the text. As a result, on behalf of Ondaatje and the reader, Caravaggio is able to meet Al Purdy as a child or Anne Wilkinson on a private paddle about the lake she loves.

Katherine Acheson first identifies the “thematic and metaphoric alliances between Ondaatje’s work and Wilkinson’s poetry” (114).<sup>23</sup> Foremost among them are Wilkinson’s use of natural metaphors such as insects, water, and the play of light, which is echoed throughout *In the Skin of a Lion*. Acheson also acknowledges that “Wilkinson’s sense of history is deeply indebted to the continuity of her family and their places” (111). The lake and cottage where Wilkinson spent her time was, in fact, a family property. While Acheson aligns Wilkinson’s family wealth to the discourse of the working class in *In the Skin of a Lion*, it seems that Ondaatje’s reference to Wilkinson is also linked to their shared work on the discourse of the family. In short, Wilkinson works and lives on a

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<sup>23</sup> Acheson “confirmed by personal correspondence with Ondaatje” that this Anne is, indeed, intended to be Wilkinson (119). Perhaps this was a misstep by Ondaatje to affix such certainty to this character. The haunting nature of a tradition, it seems to me, is much better represented if the identities of some characters are unknown. Ondaatje seems to be holding his cards closer to his chest now. When I attended his book launch (on 05/09/2007 in Winnipeg) for his novel *Divisadero* (2007), he was asked if the character Rafael is Caravaggio’s son. He replied with a shrug, saying only, “I don’t know.”



family inheritance; and, by virtue of their shared themes and metaphors, Ondaatje also works and lives on an inheritance—a general inheritance of literary works, which he must steal unnoticed.

Intertextual references that go unnoticed frustrate many of the critics working on *In the Skin of a Lion* (Acheson, Lowry, Barber, Spearey). Acheson worries that “the Wilkinson intertexts are so deeply buried as to be available to only a few readers,” which would exclude all but certain “classes of readers” (117). Indeed, even these “upper class” readers described by Acheson could not find all the intertexts of the novel because much of the material to which Ondaatje refers was, “at the time of the publication of the novel, unpublished and therefore unavailable to the ordinary reader” (117). Consequently, these roguish intertexts may remain forever buried. To mark all his references, however, would fix Ondaatje’s place too narrowly within a strict literary lineage. Instead, the relations and boundaries between *In the Skin of a Lion* and the literary tradition remain fluid and often uncertain. When reading *In the Skin of a Lion*, Ondaatje’s readers are given both intentional and unintentional intertextual references. However, the reader is given a choice to follow any of these pathways through the interlinked tradition. Thus, by covering his tracks, Ondaatje removes the authority of more informed “upper class” readers. The work of reading intertextual references backwards through the tradition is left open for all readers.

Indeed, working backwards is the necessary direction of reading intertextually. One simply recognizes and acknowledges a citation, allusion, or reference to previous works. The most overarching and most primordial intertextual reference in the novel concerns the epic of *Gilgamesh*. Of all the critical work done on *In the Skin of a Lion*,

Carol L. Beran most completely describes the intertextual connections between the two works. Following Michael Greenstein's early essay on the novel, Beran claims that references to *Gilgamesh*, "a Babylonian text less generally known to educated readers than Homer's epics" (Beran 75), echoes the gesture to save local historical figures like Ambrose Small, Nicholas Temecloff, and Rowland Harris from "archival oblivion" (Beran 77, Greenstein 122). This is the work of mourning; the work of realizing the self is spectral, or ghostly, but also multifaceted. Also, Beran identifies swimming through the intake tunnel as analogous to Gilgamesh running through the tunnel of the sun; the ramparts of Gilgamesh's city Uruk are analogous to the Harris' water filtration plant; and, finally, Patrick's hiatus at the bourgeois island party is analogous to Gilgamesh's visit to Siduri's garden in the underworld (Beran 75). Of particular interest to her is the relationship in *In the Skin of a Lion* between intertextuality and mourning as it is figured in *Gilgamesh*: "Ondaatje's novel begins with an epigraph from the ancient work that identifies the intertext and specifies grief for a dead friend [Alice Gull] as a key similarity" (Beran 75). Haunting the entirety of *In the Skin of a Lion*, as it is told in a mosaic of narratives, is Patrick's mourning of Alice Gull and Hazen Lewis. By following the spectral tradition, Patrick is able to mourn the loss of two loved ones.

The most important analogue between these works, however, is more than a simple similarity between their plots. Patrick, like Gilgamesh, must also learn the necessary relinquishing of strength, and come to see the moral ambiguity endemic to the epic. Central to the "quest" of Gilgamesh is the secret of immortality that he wishes to use to revive his friend. The epic roguishly falls outside its own genre by not satisfactorily attaining Gilgamesh's goal. In the end, the gods force Gilgamesh to accept that death will

inevitably overcome his sovereign authority and supreme will. Telling a story, which becomes the epic itself, is the only means for *Gilgamesh* to mourn his friend and give him immortality. The politics of friendship are thus added to *In the Skin of a Lion* by this link to the epic of *Gilgamesh*. The description of the ramparts of Uruk, which bookend the epic and initially represent the grand power of the king, become a symbol of all the people living within them. Similarly, Harris' aqueduct and filtration plant, which were constructed as monuments or offspring of his will, are transformed into a marker for the once forgotten people who died building them.

The many deaths that occurred building the bridge recalls another intertext, which Susan Spearey first discovered, an allusion to Rudyard Kipling's story "The Bridge Builders" (in his 1914 collection of short works called *A Day's Work*).<sup>24</sup> Spearey claims such a reference, while aligned with Ondaatje's sympathies to lower class workers, "commemorates and extols the enactment of heroic deeds" (46). Indeed, there is certainly an analogue between Peroo, the Indian worker of unusual abilities, and Nicholas Temelcoff, the Balkan immigrant daredevil.<sup>25</sup> Yet, more significantly, Peroo and Temelcoff both act as intermediaries between different social and cultural groups. Peroo is the linguistic adept in both English and the mixed "*lingua-franca* [of] half Portuguese and

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<sup>24</sup> Spearey also claims that Ondaatje refers to Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel *The Jungle*. While there is certainly a similarity between Ondaatje and Sinclair's regard for the working class, a full study of Ondaatje and Sinclair's treatment of animals would reveal their differences. Metaphors of working class men as animals and Temelcoff's desperation in coming to America in "an old boat that carried animals" definitely speaks to Sinclair's uncomfortable mixing of man and animal, and their shared inhumane treatment (*Skin* 45).

<sup>25</sup> Through rigorous research, particular details of Ondaatje's references can be uncovered. Winfried Siemerling reveals that the "character of Nicholas Temelcoff is based on the Macedonian immigrant by the same name (who died on Sept. 12, 1988 in Toronto), and in particular on the research and the interviews with Temelcoff by the historian Lillian Petroff" (94). I fail to see how knowing the historical details of Ondaatje's subject matter aids in understanding the fictional character in the novel. On the one hand, there is a futility in attempting to "know the truth" behind the myth. Yet, on the other hand, the tradition is constructed and begins by remembering the past.

half Malay" (*Bridge* 35). As a result, "Peroo was worth almost any price he might have chosen to put upon his services" (34). The highly paid Temelcoff, while less useful for his linguistic prowess, "links everyone" (*Skin* 34) by fearlessly ferrying tools and supplies to other men working on the bridge. Temelcoff feels that, "[i]f he did not learn the language he would be lost" (46). He nonetheless believes that "North America is still without language, gestures and work and bloodlines are the only currency" (43). Rather than following Spearey's complaint that Ondaatje privileges the "enactment of heroic deeds," one could better say that *In the Skin of a Lion* "commemorates and extols" internationals who labour to connect and bridge cultures.

Between language and gesture, family and social class, Peroo and Nicholas are thus able to link, quite appropriately, the bridge builders. Connection and linking are never withheld due to linguistic or vocational differences. Spearey nonetheless complains that, "[f]or the first time [within Ondaatje's body of work], the majority of the primary documents upon which he draws are not presented directly to the reader" (46). Indeed, the linking intertexts are roguishly left in the dark. Many intertexts are not referred to directly by name and may simply be materials that are not widely published, such as archival documentation. Like Temelcoff's diving into the abyssal night with the knowledge that he is connected to and connecting the other men on the bridge, intertextual connections may be lost to plain sight, even as they remain in full view: "Six in the morning and he's already lost to that community of men on the bridge who are also part of the fairy tale" (*Skin* 39). The ambivalent structure, between linking a community and being lost to it, is represented by Nicholas' risky night dives. In a sense, Nicholas cannot belong to a community which he links because he belongs to the movement of linking workers. One

cannot, however, belong to this movement. Within the chapter "The Bridge," Temelcoff opens the structure of relations, which Ondaatje carries throughout the novel.

The communities of workers, whether they are building a bridge over the Don Valley or the Ganges, are linked internationally through these texts. As gesture, Temelcoff's movement through the dark, as he escapes the war in his native Macedonia, emulates or echoes his life as an immigrant. Falling through the night, "[Nicholas] knows his position in the air as if he is mercury slipping across a map" (35). The metaphor of a liquid that leaves little trace as it moves across a paper map speaks to the intertextual linkages which conceal the movement between original and intertextual contexts. If no visible trace is left, what relations or relationships, in the dark of the Macedonian bar can occur between a construction worker and a nun? Alice and Nicholas' relationship, as brief as it is, forms an entirely new concept of relations and societal relationships outside the closed *autos* of the family. As an international, Nicholas' opening of possible relationships, beyond the norms of cultural and geographic territories, is the primary thrust of his work as a "linker."

Though it is preceded by the relationship between Alice and Nicholas, the opening of relations is more clearly manifested by the love between Alice, Clara, and Patrick (in "The Searcher" section). The relationships held within a nation hinge upon the private and public expressions of community. While Ondaatje's public representation of internationality and linking is manifested through intertextuality, a more *intimate* type of *relations* defines the nonhierarchical model of private relationships. An open sexuality is, however, far from original within the discourse of the novel. Within the tradition of the novel, Bakhtin describes a long lineage of sexual opening and bodily materialism. In

short, *In the Skin of a Lion* opens sexual relations into something like a Bakhtinian carnival. Yet, Ondaatje does not merely invert the Enlightenment hierarchy of mind and body, which Bakhtin describes in the work of Rabelais, but rather meshes intertextual relations with the politics of physical relations. A construction worker's relationship with a nun embodies the carnivalesque upsetting of norms in which a king slaves and a slave is crowned king. Indeed, as representative of the highest social classes, Ambrose Small is absent and unseen, though thoroughly imagined within the Canadian press.<sup>26</sup> However, Small remains a dead end in the plot. While linked to the class struggle at the heart of building the bridge and embroidered by an intertextual link to Martha Ostenso's novel *Wild Geese*, he remains little more than an imagined object or goal for Patrick as a "Searcher." Ondaatje carnivalizes the newspaper language of power by writing on the less significant members of society and relegating figures of authority to the sidelines. Instead of finding Small, Patrick finds Clara Dickens, a woman of strength who brings him to the farmhouse and to Alice.

The body, in keeping with the Bakhtinian carnivalization of hierarchy, becomes a figure for social upheaval. Thus, the new social paradigm of nonhierarchical relations and relationships is figured as sex between Patrick and Clara. Sexual relations become a key trope defining the intertextual relations of people, texts, and communities within *In the Skin of a Lion*. The very passage of sperm between their mouths emulates Bakhtin's "birth of the word" through raising the "lower stratum" of genital fluids into the mouth and head, which is the centre of enlightened thought (*Rabelais* 309). Most clearly within the work of

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<sup>26</sup> Ambrose Small acts as a central point of imagining a commonality for the country, as seen in numerous citations from newspapers (*Skin* 56). Benedict Anderson's model of imagined community is thus mocked indirectly in Ondaatje's book in contrast to a local bodily relationship and international textual relationship. I will return to this discussion on newspapers and nationalism later in this chapter.

Rabelais, but also within the discourse of the carnival in general, Bakhtin identifies a movement from the lower regions of the body to the upper body or mind as common to the novel. Even more significantly to Ondaatje's novel, the body is made to redefine relations in general:

I'm going to come. Come in my mouth. Moving forward, his fingers pulling back her hair like torn silk, he ejaculated, disappearing into her. She crooked her finger, motioning, and he bent down and put his mouth on hers. He took it, the white character, and they passed it back and forth between them till it no longer existed, till they didn't know who had him like a lost planet somewhere in the body. (68-9)

In this passage, voices, sexual fluids, and authority enact a model of reception, or polyphonic "oral" communication. This metaphor may be extended to the reception of a tradition and intertextual relations. The description of Patrick and Clara's relations, in fact, becomes a figure depicting the relationships between texts and communities. An intertextual reference is passed between original and intertextual contexts until meaning exists between both texts. Rather than explosive little seeds, which are dangerous, the "seed" of semen is disseminated openly. Ondaatje thus enters into a long history of carnivalesque writing, which upsets the incorporeal Enlightenment philosophy of mind over bodily knowledge.

This sexual dissemination of meaning necessitates an opening of logical connections, which complements the opening of intertextual relations outside of genre, media, or discourse. Ondaatje demonstrates the seemingly irrational nature of interconnections and the passage of logical thought that often goes unseen. This other logic of relations is, after all, still understood logically. Early in the novel, for example, Ondaatje includes a link to the future relationship between Clara and Patrick. Upsetting all semblance of historicity and chronology of narrative, Ondaatje links Patrick's childhood

fascination with insects and the Finnish skaters to a later memory of Clara. Attempting to describe the look of the Finn's cattail firelight in the distance, the narrator explains,

Already he knew it could not be lightning bugs. The last of the summer's fireflies had died somewhere in the folds of one of his handkerchiefs. (Years later Clara making love to him in a car, catching his semen in a handkerchief and flinging it out onto bushes on the side of the road. *Hey, lightning bug!* he had said, laughing, offering no explanation.) (20)

While this moment is, in fact, an example of *intratextuality*, Ondaatje seems to be demonstrating the intimacy of relations in general. With the kindness of a lover, Clara accepts Patrick's seemingly irrational term of affection, "Hey, lightning bug!" His foolish phrase becomes a "link" or point of intersection which binds "[s]omething joyous" in Patrick's memory, "[a] gift" (21).

In the days following Clara and Patrick's mutual seduction, he learns more detail about her childhood, finding that he "loved the eroticism of her history" (69). Within the erotics of "history," as well as bodily relations, Patrick establishes a relationship with Clara outside of nations and the political: "All these gestures removed place, country, everything. He felt he had to come back to the world" (70). The private life of Clara and Patrick obfuscates the public political life of the country. There is no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation. Yet, Clara is still married to Ambrose; she is defined by a name which forbids Patrick to make her his wife, or to have a family with her. Thus, between the conventional private laws of the family and public laws written by the state, there is another form of relations that is open, bodily, erotic, and nonhierarchical.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> It must be noted that Clara, as she leaves the farmhouse to return home, encounters a "young George Grant with his brother Russell" (100). George Grant, the conservative political philosopher who authored the canonical work of Canadian political theory entitled *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*, described in 1965 the early dissolution of Canadian nationalism. For Grant, holding to a sense of collectivism with the British Empire and a strong sense of the sovereignty of Canada as an independent nation, relations with the United States



The discourse on love is a tradition which allows a place for a multitude of hierarchies to be manifested privately. Ondaatje dramatizes something beyond this simple dialectic of submission between public and private. Ondaatje suggests that the love between Clara and Patrick, while not participating in the state, can relate to what is possible within a nation. Thus, there must be a middle ground to express love both publicly and privately, and for the individual as well as the community. It is necessary to relate Ondaatje's work outside the novel to an unlikely writer on love, Derrida. By moving outside the novel and outside monological discourse, a gesture of how to relate collectively can be observed. Texts read other texts, intertextually, which is itself a loving dialogic.

Between notions of lover and beloved, following from the Greek political erotics of the *erastes* and *eromenos*, there is a power relationship between the active and the passive which Derrida unsettles. In Derrida's words, "[b]eyond all ulterior frontiers between love and friendship, but also between the passive and active voices, between the loving and the being-loved, what is at stake is 'loveness' [*aimance*]" (*The Politics of Friendship* 7).<sup>28</sup> For Derrida, what is of interest is the strange link between this *aimance*

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signaled the absorption of the country by the larger and stronger neighbour to the south. As a classical philosopher railing against the unrelenting progress of modernity, Grant envisioned a loss of a Canadian sovereign nationalism and lamented the passing epoch of a simpler political environment: "The new methods the social sciences use to dissolve the opposition in friendly or enemy societies are welcomed by the government of the United States" (*Lament* 63). For Grant, the loss of sovereignty is the warning siren of an impending invasion. Set in comical opposition, the opening of relations represented by Ondaatje is a joyous and erotic opening of Grant's sovereign political thought. Rather than a lament, Clara "felt somehow deliriously happy" (*Skin* 100).

<sup>28</sup> I will cite here Derrida's own footnote on his inheritance of the word *aimance*: "A fortunate coincidence: in the seminar that I am following here, I believe the word *aimance* indispensable for the naming of a third or first voice, the so-called middle voice, on the near or far side of loving (friendship or love), of activity or passivity, decision or passion. Now, luckily, I come across this word, invented by a friend, a poet-thinker I admire: Abdelkebir Khatibi who sings this new word in *Dédicace à l'année qui vient*" (25 n. 5).

and mourning. Following Aristotle's claim that it is better to love than be loved, from the *Eudemian Ethics*, Derrida suggests that the underlying logic is based on a certain knowing and unknowing. One can be loved without knowing it, but one can only love by knowing it. The lover carries the other within themselves, whereas the loved is narcissistic, or in Derrida's words *ipseic*, and can turn only towards themselves in a dead and static autotelic return. In other words, "I could not love friendship without engaging myself, *without feeling myself in advance* engaged to love the other beyond death. Therefore, beyond life. I feel myself – and in advance, before any contract – *borne* to love the dead other. I feel myself thus (borne to) love; it is thus that I *feel myself* (loving)" (*Politics* 14). To love the other includes a promise to mourn him or her at the limit of death. There is, between *aimance* and mourning (*eros* and *thanatos*), a movement between two orders of relationships, which govern relations to the other whether present or absent. Buried within the uncertainty of any thought on love is the blossoming of all relations.

The private physical relations of two lovers (which are present to each other) are related to the public love of anonymous fellow nationals (who are yet unknown or absent) by the dialogical movement between these two positions. This movement or negotiation between the singular and collective is constantly at work within any concept of national identity. If translated further, textual relations can manifest both the private and public acts of belonging to a community of movement. Thus, in terms of reading texts, a reader can love a text, without the author knowing it. If a text informs, illuminates, or speaks to another text, a relationship that is nonhierarchical, and both private and public, can be made manifest. Thus, the novel continues to inform and inspire the structures of our gathering together, even if the community is constantly in movement.

After Clara returns to Ambrose, Alice and Patrick find a brief romance that also follows this line between mourning and *lovence*. Patrick mourns the loss of Clara while finding new love with Alice. As one lover leaves, another comes in, but all are related intimately. "Relax," Alice says, "and he wanted to collapse against her, be carried by her into foreign countries, into the ocean, into bed, anywhere. He had been alone too long" (*Skin* 88). The indefinable and uncertain relationships that occur in the farmhouse do not conform to the norms of the state, constantly desiring to be foreign and unhomed. This shifting and moving love falls outside any nation constructed on a private/public schema. On the one hand, the national imagination is constructed, following Benedict Anderson, on the private, monological reader and writer imagining others within his community. Anderson explains that "[t]he casual progression of this house from the 'interior' time of the novel to the 'exterior' time of the [Manila] reader's everyday life gives a hypnotic confirmation of the solidity of a single community" (27). The private reader, who can imagine the simultaneous, anonymous action of his fellow patriots without ever having met them, echoes the political logic based on the monologic authority of the sovereign state. With little logical work, the locality of the household, the familial centre of power, is translated to the entirety of the nation. Thus, the imagined "steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" of the nation is in fact imagined out of the private space offered by reading (26). Embedded within this private ideology is a love of the nation. This love of one's own community, of one's own house (self love), is, indeed, strong enough for citizens to choose to fight and die. This auto-affecting love for one's nation requires enemies and a fear of the other. Patrick and Alice can, in private, love beyond mere politics.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Derrida, like Anderson, places great importance on the public sphere of the political. In fact,

As I have tried to demonstrate thus far, there is a space between texts which is political in its very openness to other texts. There is a relationship between the risky (yet sometimes necessary) decisions of the author and the transcendental instance when an author is lost in an endless series of intertextual references. Within this gap defined by Kristeva there is an animating tension between the individual and the community of texts. Politically, the role of any government is to negotiate this gap between the individual will and the will of the community. This is also the central tension at play within nationalism or any community, much as it is at play for an author taking on the tradition. The role of the author, like that of a government to its people, is to negotiate the intersections of texts.

By extension, communities that are polyphonically imagined welcome the other within them. Derrida's *aimance* describes the open movement between the so-called "middle voice," between imagined and politically real situations. One can love by mourning the absence of a community member (who may be yet to come). One can love those within the political "real," with whom one shares a physical relation. The popular catch phrase, "think globally, act locally" would not be out of place when thinking of the double movement between an anonymous public and a private love. Intertextuality becomes a program for a hospitable relation to the other within the self. When Patrick thinks of his life with Clara, Alice, and Ambrose (even after being set on fire), he imagines a tension between himself, as a single person, and the community of which he is a part: "Something hollow, so when alone, when not aligned with another –whether it was

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the political only exists within the public sphere. For Derrida, any thought of the enemy is founded solely within the public expression of the political: "The disappearance of the enemy would be the death knell of the political as such" (*Politics* 84). Therefore, the only political decision is to decide who is the enemy since "a *private* enemy would be meaningless" (85). Thus, "I can, in privacy, love my enemy" (88). In contrast to Anderson's evidence of a monological sovereignty, Derrida re-imagines the private sphere of the political as a space where the politics of friend and enemy ("us" and "them") can be unbound.

Ambrose or Clara or Alice – he could hear the rattle within that suggested a space between him and community. A gap of love” (*Skin* 157). Patrick’s “gap of love” moves between a kind of monological authority (“him”) and the polyphonic inter-relations of texts (“community”). Patrick is “hollow” without another. In a sense, he is a personified archive, who is nothing without that which he receives from another.

Returning to the farmhouse, the site of this strange community, Patrick “feels more community remembering this [place] than anything in his life” (79). The imagined status of the nation described by Anderson is replaced for Patrick by a more immediate physical relationship. Despite the openness of relations on the farm, when Alice arrives, the three lovers do not toast themselves and their mutual excitement, but rather remember and mourn their dead fathers: “Here’s to holy fathers, Alice says, holding up her glass” (74). Alice’s ironic remark mocks the *patriotic*. Yet, when Patrick sets this new community within the tradition of visual art, he contextualizes his community outside of all family relations: “Patrick and the two women. A study for the New World. Judith and Holofernes. St. Jerome and the Lion” (79). To understand this love Patrick feels a need to contextualize, to bridge this “gap of love” and understand it through other examples. Patrick selects the popular subject of Renaissance painting, perhaps to add “New World” subject matter.<sup>30</sup> If Michelangelo has represented the Old Testament “Book of Judith” in

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<sup>30</sup> For Anderson, the struggle between the old and new worlds serves as the basis for familial relations between nations: “the aim was not to have New London succeed, overthrow, or destroy Old London, but rather to safeguard their continuing parallelism” (191). However, Anderson’s “family link” between nations allows, following the pattern of fratricidal wars (as I discussed in the introduction), “after a certain period of acrimony had passed, close cultural, and sometimes political and economic, ties which could be re-knit between the former metropolises and the new nations” (192). The complexity of family ties and the knots of discourse are applied to the formation of nations following a war. The chronological structure of the family is used to mask the monstrous logic of making an aggressive ruler a member of a national lineage. Intertextual relationships between nations do not acknowledge this priority of old or new because

the Sistine Chapel, Caravaggio has also treated the subject matter. Most famously of all, perhaps, Artemisia Gentileschi [1593-1653] depicts two young women (Judith and her maid) beheading the invading general Holofernes. Rather than accepting the Old World paradigm of killing an invading other, even if used as an example of feminine strength in defense of the nation, Ondaatje's women accept Patrick into this New World community. Additionally, Patrick selects a painting by Niccolò Antonio Colantonio [1420-?] entitled "St. Jerome," which depicts the translator of the Bible from Greek into Latin, in the act of pulling a thorn from a lion's paw. A connection between Colantonio's style and play between light and dark profoundly influenced Flemish painting and the Baroque style of Caravaggio. Colantonio's painting also signals the point when St. Jerome, holding the new and old in each hand, translated the Bible from ancient Greek to Latin, the international language of his day.

Yet, as the popular saying goes, something always gets lost in the translation. The interpretation of these intertexts, between painting and writing, passes through an uncertain movement that is similar to a translation. Between these differing media and the shifting movement of meaning that occurs with any interpretation, the meaning of this intertext will always be uncertain. Fotios Sarris demonstrates how "the influence of painting is perhaps nowhere more profound than in Ondaatje's use of light and darkness in the visual modeling" (184) of *In the Skin of a Lion*. Linked to the presence of Caravaggio in the novel, as the thief and "the painter" (*Skin* 182), is Ondaatje's writing style, which Sarris calls a "baroque realism" (184). According to Sarris, "[t]he novel's strange half-

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chronological priority is removed between texts. Barthes, as I noted earlier, is amazed by the possibility of Proust appearing to influence Stendhal, if the texts are read out of historical order (*Pleasure* 36). For Ondaatje, Alice, Clara, and Patrick's new familial relationship is unrelated though irrevocably linked to the old familial traditions.

light evinces both presence and absence" (188). In a letter to Clara asking her to leave Small, Patrick wonders at "these strange half-lit lives" around him (*Skin* 84).<sup>31</sup> Thus, in Ondaatje's treatment of "half-lit lives," we find a type of translation from one medium, or artistic language, to another. Through a type of translation between artistic languages, painting can influence writing and even a method of writing history.<sup>32</sup>

The translation of painting and writing, or any inter-relation of discourse, is analogous to the hybridization that occurs in Bakhtin's dialogic novel. Bakhtin describes the relationship between language systems, novels, and voices as a movement of "interillumination" ("Discourse" 362), a trope that is also common to *In the Skin of a Lion*. In the movement of interillumination, Bakhtin says, "there is no direct mixing of two languages within the boundaries of a single utterance—rather, only one language is actually present in the utterance, but it is rendered *in the light of another language*. This

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<sup>31</sup> Linking Small and Caravaggio is their shared affinity for visual art. Small is known for building "the Grand in London, Ontario – the largest theatre in North America, save for Shea's Hippodrome" (*Skin* 57). The painters of the Grand's interior were anonymous for 100 years until, after much research, the artists were identified. A Canadian named F.S. Chaneller, with the anonymous assistance of his good friend C.W. Jeffreys, completed the lavish interior. After the completion of the paintings, neither of the friends would take credit for the work they shared (Corbet). Caravaggio is intertextually linked to Small by an affinity for Jeffreys' art, which Caravaggio steals. By contrast, the uncertainty of authority is appealing to Caravaggio: "He looked at his stolen [Jeffreys] drawing in the sunlight, the clean lines, the shaky signature" (*Skin* 190).

<sup>32</sup> Much is written on Ondaatje's reference to the John Berger essay "The Moment of Cubism" (*Skin* 34). Rochelle Simmons explains, with no reference to Douglas Barber (186), "Ondaatje could be said to use a literary technique analogous to the collage method of synthetic Cubist painting, in which a pictorial image is constructed out of heterogeneous materials that previously had not been combined" (Simmons 708). While cubist collage is, indeed, a good metaphor for Ondaatje's brand of imagism, Simmons fails to acknowledge that Ondaatje is writing about an essay on Cubism. He makes no direct reference to Cubist works. Indeed, the translation between writing and visual arts is seamless for Simmons. Can intertextuality incorporate other texts which are not written texts? Indeed, references to visual art can always be made, but a direct citation is only capable through mechanical reproduction. Any reference will only trigger an image in our mind's eye that is a rough approximation. By welcoming other artistic languages or media into the text, Ondaatje allows for a polyphony of voices, genres, and media that opens literature to all art, not simply written materials. Ultimately, the reader is given the agency to follow intertextual references and illuminate more of the mosaic.

second language is not, however, actualized and remains outside the utterance” (362). Like intertextuality, the writing of one author is translated, often carrying completely new meanings, into a new context. But within theory, the text of one is not decipherable from the text of another. While interillumination allows texts to be read within the context of another or “in the light of another language,” this type of hybridization does not allow the merging, recoil, and intersection of an intertextual relation. An intertextual relation does not simply allow one text to be read *from* a new point of view, but rather *within* a new context. One text is at home within the other text. Intertextual relations allow one to gather another’s text within one’s own text, without a violent rupture.

According to Derrida, any trope of gathering always violently gathers into one, which immediately inscribes the other as other and therefore as the enemy. As I have already discussed, the decision to gather into a community, at the expense of leaving others outside as enemies, is the only political decision ever made. If the roguish play of textual relations, which both exceed the author’s intentions and often pass unnoticed by the reader, is used to govern a political gathering of a community, intertextuality could become a guide for an open and international nation. Ondaatje seems to be working with this alternate form of gathering.<sup>33</sup> From the outset of *In the Skin of a Lion*, we are told, “[t]his is a story a young girl gathers in a car during the early hours of the morning” (1). Despite Hana’s third-person narration, the relationship of the story to the reader is dramatized as a dialogue: “She listens and asks questions as the vehicle travels through

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<sup>33</sup> Sarris suggests that “[t]he emphasis on reading, or ‘gathering,’ is significant because *In the Skin of a Lion* is the type of work that [Linda] Hutcheon calls ‘historiographic metafiction,’ a form in which the narrator is essentially a reader whose primary text is history, a text that is itself fragmented and chaotic, and that only coalesces in a particular reader’s mind, in individual interpretations” (190). I would add that the text Ondaatje reads is more than just history. He is incorporating all genres, intertextually, in the broadest sense.



the darkness” (1). Thus, Patrick’s story is not merely illuminated by Hana’s relation of it, but is merged by her retelling of it. The narrative, as a result, is impossible to differentiate between Patrick’s telling of it or Hana’s gathering of it.<sup>34</sup> Both the gatherer and the teller are given a shared authority in the telling of the story.

The structure of *In the Skin of a Lion* thus defines an intimacy between reading and writing, telling and listening, and orality and textuality (recalling Clara and Patrick’s “oral” relations), which underpins all relations in the novel. The whole of Ondaatje’s narrative mode is gathered in this trope of linking or of relationships. Indeed, Patrick explains the entirety of the plot and characters as a kind of Kristevan mosaic:

His own life was no longer a single story but part of a mural, which was a falling together of accomplices. Patrick saw a wondrous night web – all of these fragments of a human order, something ungoverned by the family he was born into or the headlines of the day. A nun on a bridge, a daredevil who was unable to sleep without drink, a boy watching a fire from his bed at night, an actress who ran away with a millionaire – the detritus and chaos of the age was realigned. (145)

Patrick sees this mosaic of lives, or communal histories, as “part of a mural.” Following the epigraph by John Berger, which reminds the reader that “never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one,” one sees how the lives of the characters are placed side by side in a mosaic. These relationships are, for Patrick, “something ungoverned by the family he was born into,” which signals the clearest expression of Ondaatje’s reworking of relations outside of the hierarchies of the family. They are “accomplices”, rogues, or perhaps vigilantes complicit in this shared narrative outside any

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<sup>34</sup> Greenstein first describes how Hana begins as a passenger, listening to Patrick’s story, but becomes the driver by the end of the novel: “Reader, writer, and rider together gather Ondaatje’s story, participating in a dialogic process” (118). Recalling Kristeva’s “ideology of the novel,” the collapsing of beginning and end disrupts the binary structure of the novel and calls for a re-reading. Re-reading is, after all, the very process of reading intertextually that upsets any binary ideology.

guiding structure of the family. This “wondrous night web” forms a constellation of interlinked relations far beyond any genealogical family tree.

Yet, “the headlines of day” refer to newspapers and print capitalism, which function to centralize and gather nations into an imaginary sense of wholeness. The centres of power and common ideology of the nation-as-family find a foothold within the homogenizing influence of newspapers. By contrast, intertextuality offers a trope of gathering, but not a gathering into a totalizing whole of the political headline. In the tunnel, for example, Patrick is surrounded by men who speak many different languages; they resort, in each other’s lamplight, to a common expression of their labour. The hole left in their shirts from being hung on a steel peg, a material “text” which identifies tunnellers to each other, is “a code among them” (112). Initially, Patrick feels “deliriously anonymous” within this multilinguistic community of labourers (112). But once Patrick learns the Macedonian word for iguana, *gooshter*, he is able to “leap over the code of languages between them” (113). With his friends outside the grocery, the movement of translation creates a further opening between linguistic, cultural and communal territory. Though Patrick (as an English speaker) is more properly Canadian, he is made strange or uncanny in his own home; he is unhomed both linguistically and culturally. When he arrives in a Finnish suit, thus introducing still more cultural codes, he is complimented and greeted with friendship: “*Po modata eleganten!* which meant stylish! stylish! He was handed a Macedonian cake. And suddenly Patrick, surrounded by friendship, concern, was smiling, feeling the tears on his face falling towards his stern Macedonian-style moustache” (123). Through adopting and sharing many cultures, Patrick is welcomed, like a friend, into a mosaic of which he is only part.

Though he is an English-speaking Canadian, there is something illegal or roguish about his becoming a stranger at home. Patrick begins the novel, with his father, as a stranger to Bellrock. Patrick honours his father by again becoming a stranger, rather than identifying with the political centre of the state, which has authorized the violence of classism. The state's identity is at stake if native or natural-born Canadians are made, somehow, less Canadian. The "illegal gathering of various nationalities" at the waterworks becomes for Patrick the expression of a carnivalesque trespassing of the imagined community condoned by the state and the media (115).<sup>35</sup> Since the meeting "was a party and a political meeting" (115), the gestures of the puppets and the costumes—themselves a "blend of several nations"—express everything equally for all who are gathered. The scene acts as an analogue both for power and how the oppressed can become oppressors. The stage play features a large human-sized puppet that is dominated by the others with "grunts of authority" (117). The dominated human puppet fights back the oppressors only to have this excessive violence checked by the audience clapping in unison. Patrick breaks, once again, the power of the audience by saving the terrified puppet. Foreshadowing his decision not to destroy the waterworks, Patrick decides to save the oppressed puppet that has become an oppressor. The cycle of the

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<sup>35</sup> Anderson's discussion of print capitalism's role in the formation of nations features national newspapers, along with a national literature, as critical infrastructure for the formation of any common ideology. In Anderson's words, "Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways" (36). In addition, the newspaper allows a community to measure collectively the passage of time, which Anderson assumes to be experienced uniformly, and to imagine them as part of a national plot through history (33). Ondaatje's immigrant gatherings and the passage of communal information through theatre signal his contrary awareness that not all citizens of a nation are imagining the same community. Other imaginings of the community exist in a mosaic of the intertextual nation. By virtue of the multiple intertextual threads that may be followed, Ondaatje's novel allows for many communities of interpretation to exist within one text.

oppressed becoming the oppressor is the very same one at the foundation of the family structure. The struggle between patriarch and progeny for the blessing of an inheritance is one that is enacted again and again within the family. Indeed, how easily sons become fathers, with all the trappings of power and authority.

After this puppet performance, Alice and Patrick have a conversation which defines this ideology of sons becoming fathers. Alice tries to convince Patrick of the “high level of justice” most immigrant “freedom-fighters” like her father aspire towards (122). Despite the use of violence, Alice feels terrorism is a justifiable response to social and economic violence. She explains that racist labour practices allow some, like Ambrose Small, to succeed, but “[t]hey do it by becoming just like the ones they want to overtake” (123). Alice ignores the argument that terrorist violence is just as excessive or roguish as state-sponsored violence. In a sense, terrorists resist by becoming just as violent as the ones they wish to repel. When Patrick claims to have a “passive sense of justice,” Alice accuses him of being easily influenced. “Like water,” Alice says, “you can be easily harnessed, Patrick. That’s dangerous” (122).<sup>36</sup> The anxiety of influence Alice feels is a result of her belief in the freedom-fighters’ just authority to use violence. This type of gathering, based on the political decision to define an enemy, invariably justifies violence against another. *In the Skin of a Lion* locates these centres of power in Rowland Harris, who embodies the state and the employers, and the marginalized terrorist group, which is

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<sup>36</sup> Derrida describes a responsible, non-violent decision as “something like a passive decision” (*Rogues* 152). Any decision signals a sovereign will’s action upon another. For Derrida, “We would thus have to rethink the philosophemes of the decision, of that foundational couple activity and passivity, as well as potentiality and actuality” (152). In regards to Patrick’s falling asleep in Harris’ office, this gesture, while certainly not a decision nor a completely passive act, signals Patrick’s revocation of the system of thought which demands a violent decision issued from a sovereign will.

dialectically opposed to the state. Both centres of authority use violence against the other to maintain their collective status of “us” against “them.”

If the desire for self-sufficiency structures the will for an autonomous community or nation, or if an autonomous community justifies violence against the enemy, that “combating collectivity,” to remain whole, Alice inherits from her freedom-fighter father a dialectical politics of the enemy. “You name the enemy and destroy their power,” Alice tells Patrick (124). Her father has recently died and she seems to be carrying on his legacy of self-sufficiency, however paradoxically. “The power of the girl’s father,” Patrick observes, “was still in her” (124). The possibility of self-sufficiency is nonetheless negated by her inheritance of tradition.

Though Alice feels an anxiety of state influence, she is paradoxically influenced by her father’s desire for justice. Recalling Harold Bloom, Alice’s father is stronger than her, which, in turn, institutes a violent tradition within the Gull family. As such, she cannot imagine a nonviolent system. Patrick, on the other hand, only understands the real suffering of the workers after getting a job at the Wickett and Craig’s tannery. He hears of men being burned alive due to the chemicals they work in: “A green man on fire” (131). Alice claims that Patrick is preparing to make war against the upper class by taking the job, “the way a dog before battling with cows rolls in the shit of the enemy” (132). Patrick imagines no such opposition. He quite mundanely needs a job. Consequently, his passage through the waterworks intake tunnel must not be read as an attack on governmental fixtures of power but rather as an act of mourning that re-imagines Alice’s desire for revolution. Alice will later accidentally destroy herself with the tools by which she seeks to destroy the other. Indeed, this is Ondaatje’s greatest addition to the politics of

friendship defined by Derrida. The wars fought for friends, for a nation, will not destroy the enemy other, but only the self.

Patrick does his best to guide Alice away from this inherited desire for violence through quoting the letters of Joseph Conrad. She tells Patrick that her favourite line is, "Let me now re-emphasize the extreme looseness of the structure of all objects" (135). Patrick asks her to "[s]ay it again" (135), in an attempt to allow her to see a different meaning in the text.<sup>37</sup> While she believes that Conrad gives license to terrorist revolution, Patrick believes in the extreme looseness of all systems, including the dialectical opposition of the terrorists and the state. Yet, Alice continues to read the Conrad passage, like Bakhtin, as a license for a carnivalesque reversal of society and even a revolution. Patrick, more pragmatically, reads Conrad's words as simply meaning that all structures are constructed and may be deconstructed.

After Alice's death, he mourns her by mediating between her memory and his own beliefs. He mourns their relationship by a gesture of polyphonic authority, their doubled voices still speaking within Patrick: "Let me now re-emphasize the extreme looseness of the structure of things. Whispered to him once" (163). If Patrick misquotes both Alice and

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<sup>37</sup> Patrick is calling for Alice to echo her citation of Conrad. Throughout *Politics of Friendship* and *Rogues*, Derrida works with Echo's linguistic and political gesture: "Echo, the possible Echo, she who speaks from, and steals, the words of the other [*celle qui prend la parole aux mots de l'autre*], she who takes the other at his or her word, her very freedom preceding the first syllables of Narcissus, his mourning and his grief" (*Politics* 24). Though she only reiterates what she hears, Echo always says what she needs to say. Through the very movement of citation or repetition, it seems that the tradition will say what is needed. We must, at great risk, choose the right things to repeat. For Derrida, Echo responds, in a responsible way, "thus disobeying a sovereign injunction and outsmarting the tyranny of a jealous goddess. Echo thus lets be heard by whoever wants to hear it, by whoever might love hearing it, something other than what she seems to be saying" (*Rogues* xxi-xxii). By repetition or citation, Echo escapes the punishment of Juno by being able to call to Narcissus. A citation or call (the French *citer*, to cite, is etymologically linked to the Latin *citare*, to call) summons the other and thus "bridges the distance" in a loving way (*Politics* 297). Patrick's request for Alice to "say it again" is evidently done with love, so that she may escape her father's violent inheritance.

Conrad, he does more justice to what he has inherited from them. In Patrick's context, the meaning and use of the words must change. Like his reapplication of explosives to tunnelling, Patrick finds a new use for his inherited knowledge. Rather than simply echoing Conrad's observation on the structure of nature, "the extreme looseness of the structure of things" allows for a radical rereading or deconstruction of the structure of power. While traditions always find new contexts, each new context requires another re-imagining.

Though Patrick is haunted by the past, he mediates his relationship with Alice through texts. By bringing Alice's citation within his own words, Patrick inters her memory, borne along by Conrad's text, within himself. The inheritance of an ideology of enemies and violence from her father is tempered by the polysemy of language, which allows Alice to say what Patrick needs to hear, even from the grave. Similarly, Hana carries a photograph of her father Cato, a letter written a month before his death, and a story of a group of amorous bulls' affection for his socks. From these rough beginnings, she can imagine her father and even love his memory. This is the gift of the text, which continues to speak long after the author's death.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Within this discussion of family relations, it may be important to discuss Ondaatje's memoir *Running in the Family*. This highly fictionalized memoir is written as a "communal act" with the help of his family (*Running* 175). The innumerable aunts, uncles, and cousins that inhabit the book add to the sense of a family as a mosaic of names and participants, without ever gesturing towards a single head of the household. Even the paternal family name is obscured by a Dutch mistranslation of his ancestor's Sri Lankan name. The name "Ondaatje" is "[a] parody of the ruling language" (54). Ondaatje's unconventional families and father figures in his novels seem to be influenced by his own enigmatic father Mervyn Ondaatje. His father's lovable and roguish disruptions of the railway are starkly tempered by his problems with alcohol. Ondaatje, on the one hand, desires to respect and honour the memory of his father, while acknowledging the mental abuse that occurred within his family. The memoir thus seems to be mourning the loss of his father first to alcohol and then to the grave. When imagining his father's personality, Ondaatje mournfully realizes, "I never knew what my father felt of these 'things.' My loss was I never spoke to him as an adult. Was he locked in the ceremony of being 'a father'? He died before I even thought of such things" (152). There is a great sadness in losing fathers, but a greater

So [Patrick] discovered Cato through the daughter. The girl had been told everything about him, told of his charm, his cruelty, his selfishness, his heroism, the way he had met and seduced Alice. 'You didn't know Cato, did you?' 'No.' 'Well he was supposed to be very passionate, very cruel.' 'Don't talk like that, Hana, you're ten years old, and he's your father.' 'Oh, I love him, even if I never met him. That's just the truth.' (139)

Hana's interpretation of fatherhood and familial relations is predicated on a willingness to re-imagine Cato's memory. Hana's relationship with her father is unlike Alice's inheritance of violent dialectics from her father. While Cato is also a revolutionary, who died at the hands of logging companies near Onion Lake, Saskatchewan,<sup>39</sup> Hana does not inherit his willingness for war. She does not even know his real name. "You must realize that Cato was not his real name," Alice explains to Patrick, "it was his war name" (140). Yet, this "self-made" (155) and self-sufficient man does not finally *influence* Hana. Instead, she embraces a foolish story about smelly socks. While honouring his memory and his passion for life, Hana embraces her father, but not as a patriarch. She can therefore move between Nicholas and Patrick, adopting new fathers as she pleases. Beyond her biological heritage, Hana's love for Nicholas, Patrick, and Alice defines their inter-relations through a shared love of each other. Hana is, in a sense, the loving "middle voice" within this strange community.

When Hana answers Clara's call from Marora, "the sled-dog capitol of Ontario" (217), Patrick is amazed to hear Hana echo Clara's strange epithet for the town. Humour links Hana and Clara the same way humour links Patrick and Hana. For Patrick, humour allows him to understand another's point of view: "He felt comfortable joking with

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sadness in not having anything to remember them by. Though I hesitate to infer too much significance in Hana's imagined relationship with her father as an analogue of Ondaatje's own mourning, Ondaatje could not, I am sure, write about Hana's father, or any father, without thinking of his own.

<sup>39</sup> Onion Lake is directly on the border of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Situating Cato's death on this border territory, forever between two places, further obscures his history and Hana's origins.



[Hana], gathering her perspective” (212). To laugh with someone is to share his or her perspective on the world. In sum, Patrick’s adoption of Hana becomes the central trope of gathering and caring for the other. Furthermore, assuming responsibility for another is much like assuming responsibility for the other’s tradition. Ondaatje can thus assume responsibility for Conrad, for Gilgamesh, and for other works that are not properly Canadian. Thus, reading and writing intertextually allows for undefined relations outside of the laws of the state or the family. A literary text can be lovingly adopted by another literary family without ever determining its place within the new context. But in adopting her tradition, literary or otherwise, Patrick does not seek permission of the state or even the permission of Hana. If he defined himself as her father, he would then assume a superior role. Patrick becomes her father only insofar as he cares for her, responsibly.

And yet, in the end, Patrick is faced with a moment of decision. With a detonator in his hands, after swimming through the intake tunnel and re-enacting Gilgamesh’s run through the tunnel of the sun, Patrick is faced with a choice. He must choose to destroy the waterworks, or not. While carrying the knowledge taught to him by his father, he must choose to seek revenge against his enemy or not. Indeed, the decision of who is the enemy is manifested as a choice to push the detonator or not. Patrick must decide if Harris is his enemy. “What you are looking for,” says Harris in the dark, “is a villain” (237). Despite Harris’s feldspar desk, which Patrick’s father could have died mining, Patrick does not carry out his revenge upon Harris. “Always unknot. Never cut” (14). Telling a story rather than enacting violence is Patrick’s political act. The relationship between writing and politics is told to Harris in a story. Patrick, standing in the dark, tells the story of Alice’s death. Yet, Patrick fails to tell the full story: “Not far away, near enough to have found her

and picked up that bag and flung it anywhere on the street....” (240). The narrative now turns inwards, towards memory: “Then nobody moved, Patrick remembered, the whole crowd locked in stillness” (240). In the darkness, the voices of friends and enemies blur, blend, and merge. Remembering Nicholas and himself holding the body of Alice, he hears a single call of his name: “Patrick...” (241). Whether Nicholas or Harris makes this call, from the past or the present, is unclear. What remains clear is that Patrick has decided not to choose an enemy. After something like a passive decision, he falls asleep, following the story of Gilgamesh and honouring the tradition. However, Patrick is honouring an epic that does not privilege strength or power, or even heroic acts of violence. Before this scene, Harris names Patrick the “lost heir” (238) because he refuses to claim the wealth capitalism tacitly promises. If he were like Alice, who inherits the desire for revolutionary violence, Patrick should destroy this patriarch. And yet, Patrick undoes this paradigm, which makes the father the ultimate origin and resource, by doing nothing. In fact, he refuses the inheritance of violence against the other and the politics of the enemy.

Within Ondaatje’s polyphonic novel, distinctions between friend and enemy are blurred; the literary tradition can be adopted by anyone. Giving the sense of beginning again, the novel ends as it began, as if awakening from sleep. Patrick awakes into a world complete with a history and tradition, but heading in a new direction, towards Marmora. The story told on that drive is the story we have just read. This story of Hana’s origins is carried or borne along by the story of another, Clara, her “mother’s best friend” (244). The difficulty of ever determining Hana’s paternity or family origin can then be carried on into Ondaatje’s next novel, *The English Patient*, as she mourns several fathers who are not her own.



“Destroy Not Thy People and Thine Inheritance”: Mourning,  
the Rogue’s Gaze, and Intertextual Bastards in *The English Patient*

*The English Patient* opens by describing the relationship between the shell-shocked nurse, Hana, and her “eternally dying man” (115), the English patient. The dreamlike narrative moves contrapuntally from Hana reading novels, such as Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*, James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, and Stendhal’s *The Charterhouse of Parma*, to dipping intermittently into the English patient’s “well of memory” (*English* 4). Indeed, *The English Patient* foregrounds the relationship between these several texts and the lives of those living in the Villa San Girolamo, where such texts have come to inhabit the lives of the residents. For Hana, “This was the time in her life that she fell upon books as the only door out of her cell. They became half her world” (7). She would, with the wine given to her by a neighbour, “sip away further into whatever book she was reading” (7). Likewise, the amnesiac English patient, burned beyond all recognition, “listens to her, swallowing her words like water” (5), as she reads to him. Fluid and open, texts *influence* the lives and relations of all the inhabitants of the villa, well beyond any conventional notion of intersubjective influence.

As Hana reads, she begins wherever she is at in the narrative, regardless of the English patient’s knowledge of the plot, so that “the books for the Englishman, as he listened intently or not, had gaps of plot like sections of a road washed out by storms, missing incidents as if locusts had consumed a section of tapestry, as if plaster loosened by the bombing had fallen away from a mural at night” (7). Thus, the open structure of intertext is described in the very structure of the villa, which in turn influences the familial and political relations of those living there. So, hand in hand, these metaphors of fluidity

and influence work within the open structure of the bombed-out villa to describe the relationship of both texts and people in postwar Italy.

Indeed, the war-torn structure of the villa is further echoed in the worn and torn copy of Herodotus' *The Histories*: "[I]n his commonplace book, his 1890 edition of Herodotus' *The Histories*, are other fragments—maps, diary entries, writings in many languages, paragraphs cut out of other books. All that is missing is his own name" (96). In fact, Almásy's copy of *The Histories* contains all the facets of intertextuality I have attempted to describe thus far.<sup>40</sup> Seemingly authorless, the patient's text of Herodotus is a mosaic of quotations, international in scope of languages and geography. This re-imagining necessarily opens its bindings to other texts. As a result, Hana learns from Almásy's rewriting of *The Histories* that a creative re-imagining of the author is necessary, which breaks the sovereignty of the self-contained book into an international, interdiscursive, and intertextual field of movement. Almásy imagines Herodotus much like the merchant medicine man, "this king of oils and perfumes and panaceas, this Baptist" (10), who healed him in the desert among the Bedouin: "I have seen editions of

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<sup>40</sup> In the words of D. Mark Simpson, "the Englishman's copy of [*The Histories*] approximates more readily a literal foliation of the very notion of intertextuality" (222). While Simpson is virtuosic in his ability to gather citations from Ondaatje's novel, he rather harshly moves from reading Ondaatje's "urgencies of architectural design" to failure of meaning, in general, within textual systems: "On this logic intertextual references offer threatening and precarious knowledge where reassurance and enrichment might ordinarily be expected, precisely in order to suggest that reading has very little to do with comforts in meaning" (219, 221). Simpson suggests that intertextuality is explosive (with meaning) and therefore dangerous, even "shrapnellike" (228). Perhaps, the risk comes not from the explosiveness of meaning, as Simpson suggests. Rather, the risk is in following the wrong wire, as the bomb-defusing metaphor goes, and having *violent texts and structures* both explode forth. Taking on the tradition is always fraught with problems of safe and proper handling. While Ondaatje does describe the dangerous nature of reading (bombs), intertextuality's explosive nature is not the problem. Instead, I suggest that any reader mishandling the materials will be cast asunder by these dangerous gifts. I follow Stephen Scobie's more even-handed reading, which highlights the roguishness of following intertexts: "[*The English Patient*] invites us to master its narrative while at the same time confounding our attempt to master it" (95).

*The Histories* with a sculpted portrait on the cover. Some statue found in a French museum. But I never imagine Herodotus this way. I see him more as one of those spare men of the desert who travel from oasis to oasis, trading legends as if it is the exchange of seeds, consuming everything without suspicion, piecing together a mirage" (118-9). Thus, the "father of history" is not at all the author of a monological history, but rather a gatherer of stories. Herodotus is imagined as a stranger by Almásy, wandering throughout the desert trading stories and collecting them together in a mosaic mirage.<sup>41</sup>

The actual Greek history opens, "Herodotus of Halicarnassus here displays his inquiry, so that human achievements may not become forgotten in time, and great and marvelous deeds – some displayed by Greeks, some by barbarians – may not be without their glory; and especially to show why the two peoples fought with each other" (Herodotus 1:3 [*English* 240]).<sup>42</sup> Despite the fluidity of memory imagined by the English patient, Herodotus aspires to memorialize the achievements of man. Of primary concern for Herodotus, rather like Almásy himself who has lost both friends and a lover to conflict, is the logic or reason for going to war. Thus, Herodotus' history moves from one

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<sup>41</sup> Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, editor of the recent collection of essays *Comparative Cultural Studies and Michael Ondaatje's Writing*, is the author of an essay addressing the historical record in *The English Patient*. Zepetnek, in a telephone conversation with Ondaatje, claims he "was unfamiliar with the questions concerning Almásy in Hungarian and German sources" (142). While Zepetnek's essay attempts to contain or explain the strange and heterogeneous relationships between the historical record and *The English Patient*, Ondaatje seems to be playing the unknowing fool by opening a complex system of relations, while not offering any direct meaning to these interdiscursive connections. However, as a performance piece, which tries to use historical facts, photographs, and citations to grasp at *The English Patient*, Zepetnek's essay demonstrates the slippery nature of Ondaatje's texts.

<sup>42</sup> Though it is too early to discuss, this passage is what appears out of Almásy's narrative on the death of Madox. Madox, Almásy's quiet friend who was enamored of the measured emotion he found in *Anna Karenina*, "heard the sermon in honour of war, pulled out his desert revolver and shot himself" (*English* 240). Aware of the warring dialectics of "us" and "them" inherent in the nation, he loses hope of ever being rid of war: "Madox was a man who died because of nations" (242). Mourning Madox requires some understanding, then, of "why the two peoples fought with each other."

place and time to another, documenting how war arises.<sup>43</sup> Within the politics structured by the dialects of friends and enemies, and fathers and sons, and leading to inevitable conflict and war, is a structure of mourning which necessitates the injunction to remember another after death.

Indeed, *The Histories* can be understood as mourning all the wars between the Greeks and the barbarians. However, by mourning their wars, *The Histories* also links these two disparate groups. Similarly, Almásy is keenly aware of how the discourse of mourning structures *The Histories*, yet still carries a hope of love between cultures: “There were traditions he had discovered in Herodotus in which old warriors celebrate their loved ones by locating and holding them in whatever world made them eternal – a colourful fluid, a song, a rock drawing” (*English* 248). Thus, the tradition of mourning the other in texts, whether these are visual, musical, or written, is opened by this father of history. History is not a monument to the past but the small gestures of lovers; the injunction to remember is not a monument to war, but rather a memorial to lost love.

As it appears in *In the Skin of a Lion*, love also guides strategies of reading and understanding language in *The English Patient*. After all, Almásy, and the novel itself, “promised to tell you how one falls in love” (229). Nowhere is this more pronounced than between Almásy and Katharine’s differing understandings of language. Katharine sees solidity in words where he sees only uncertainty: “She had always wanted words, she

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<sup>43</sup> In one particularly interesting story in *The Histories*, the logic of going to war is impossible for King Croesus to understand. He is simply told by the oracle he will destroy a mighty empire. Indeed, he could not believe that that empire would be his own. He responds to the victorious king, “No one is fool enough to choose war instead of peace – in peace sons bury fathers, but in war fathers bury sons” (1:41). Recalling *In the Skin of a Lion*, a mutual and assured destruction is the only result of Alice’s desire for violent revolution. Thus, Patrick’s decision not to destroy the waterworks breaks the historical precedent which allows sons to die rather than fathers. Similarly at play within *The Histories* is the movement between the familial politics of war and the resulting community of mourning.

loved them, grew up on them. Words gave her clarity, brought reason, shape. Whereas [Almásy] thought words bent emotions like sticks in water" (*English* 238). Katharine's classical understanding of language is set in contrast to Almásy's postmodern understanding of the regime of arbitrary signs. Yet, between these two conceptions of language, a man and woman are still able to fall in love with each other. By way of intersecting these two understandings of language, Almásy falls in love with Katharine through a story, intertextually. "This is a story," Almásy confides to Hana, "of how I fell in love with a woman, who read me a specific story from Herodotus" (233). Indeed, the stories of love are the subtexts of history, which Almásy cherishes. Quoting from *The Histories*, Almásy tells Hana, "'This history of mine [...] has from the beginning sought out the supplementary to the main argument'" (119). These supplementary "cul-de-sacs within the sweep of history [describe] how people betray each other for the sake of nations, how people fall in love" (119). Ondaatje is quite clearly working towards describing how love can guide both reading practices and political behaviours. In these terms, Katharine links her life directly to the text; and, through the text, Almásy can then love her: "He would often open Herodotus for a clue to geography. But Katharine had done that as a window to her life" (*English* 233). This is the reading lesson that Almásy learns from Katharine after her death. Texts guide our lives as much as our lives guide texts.

Politically, Almásy's affair does violate the family logic upon which the nation is based. The affair with Katharine undermines the integrity of proper family relations and, therefore, the hierarchy of man and woman. Disrupting the structures of the family with extramarital affairs disrupts the structure of the nation. As Caravaggio explains to Almásy,



“You had become the enemy not when you sided with Germany but when you began your affair with Katharine Clifton” (255). Yet, Almásy also claims ownership of her body, a bounded territory, while simultaneously upsetting the familial logic of the nation. As with Hana, whose “body had been in a war and, as in love, it had used every part of itself” (81), there is for Almásy, too, an uneasy relationship between love and domination.<sup>44</sup> Ondaatje works toward defining a concept of love (“loveness” perhaps) and relations, which, like a roguish intertextuality, is non-violent.<sup>45</sup>

As previously discussed, the English patient’s commonplace book, “splayed open, almost twice its original thickness” (94), becomes a literal manifestation of intertextuality, where texts are literally pasted within *The Histories*. For David Williams, “what we encounter in it is a version of hypertext in its non-linear pathways to related texts, and in its projection of a *third dimension behind the two-dimensional page*” (227, my emphasis). Williams explains that “[e]ven Almásy’s mental processes are instances of networked rather than of linear thinking, as his mind moves through catalogues of information, *slipping beneath the surface of embedded texts* where further texts are stored” (242, my emphasis). While constituting a metaphor for hypermedia and the multitasking windows of palimpsestic layering, the patient’s commonplace book also operates through the

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<sup>44</sup> The relationship between Katharine and Geoffrey Clifton enacts the violence of hierarchical love: “He did not trust her last endearments to him anymore. She was with him or against him” (172). Recalling the ultimatum given by George W. Bush after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, “You are either with us or against us,” the binary of friend and enemy easily upsets intimate relations. Thus, the politics of friend and enemy appear in personal relationships, but are rendered in the larger political arena. By contrast, Hana’s entry in the “book of poetry” (209), which is more or less a love letter to Kip, speaks to the similarity of dialogic participation in texts and with lovers: “[Kip] turns off her light so they are equal in darkness” (225).

<sup>45</sup> Patrick also struggles with masculine desire and the cultural constructions of sex as domination: “This battle for territory, Clara, ownership and want” (*Skin* 84). As discussed in the last chapter, Patrick opens himself to the fluidity and interchange of sexuality and removes any connotation of violence or domination.

roguishness of intertextuality. Kip has a similar ability to visualize the structure of wires in a bomb: “He found out he had the skill of *the three-dimensional gaze*, the rogue gaze that could look at an object or page of information and realign it, see all the false descants. [...] The rogue gaze could see *the buried line under the surface*, how a knot might weave when out of sight” (*English* 111, my emphasis). What, then, is the status of the novel, in general, within *The English Patient*? Williams argues that “[t]he book in *The English Patient* is no longer really a book – that is, a bounded entity, an authorized text, or even an autonomous voice – it has turned into a figure of hypertext” (227).<sup>46</sup> Not surprisingly, Kip “turned away from mystery books with irritation, able to pinpoint villains with too much ease” (*English* 111). The rogue is at ease in uncertainty and frustrated by clear and linear meanings. The book, however, is not wholly circumscribed by newer information technology like the Internet. Instead, the book remains an open space, which incorporates and welcomes other texts. Of concern, however, is the privileging of a new technology without acknowledging the role of the older forms of communication. At the same time, the interplay between communications technologies is the primary structure in hypertextuality and intertextuality.

At issue is not whether intertextuality or hypertextuality preceded each other, but how one is caught within the other. In some sense, a text governed by intertextuality influences the Internet; and yet, the Internet opens borders and boundaries within the novel. There is, in short, a relationship between the Internet and the text. Williams’s *Imagined Nations*, the very title acknowledging a tradition linked to Benedict Anderson’s

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<sup>46</sup> First coined by self-described “Poet, Philosopher, and Rogue” Theodor Holm Nelson in 1967-8, “hypertext” and Kristeva’s “intertextuality” were coined nearly simultaneously. Nelson’s website, which demonstrates and outlines his work on theorizing the Internet, can be found at <<http://ted.hyperland.com>>.

*Imagined Communities*, functions on the basic premise that “the nation has come under stress or attack because of some fundamental change in the mode of communication” (Williams xi).<sup>47</sup> Thus, the nation is imagined not on linguistic boundaries, but rather out of the very modes of communication which gather a community together. That strange “power to gather people into a profound sense of communion” is borne by communications technology of all kinds (xii). Indeed, for Williams the nation can be gathered, based on linguistic lines, only insofar as language is arbitrary. In his words, “If there is any connection, then, between national languages and modern nations, it is the fact that both are arbitrary, fictional, and imagined” (18). As such, this “postmodern” concept of language necessitates a structural look at the mode of communication as well as its content. Thus, between reading and writing, Williams describes an imagining of a nation through how we read, not what we write: “a national imaginary in manuscript culture derives less from the *writing* than from the *reading* of national identities” (26). In other words, we are how we read. I propose that Canada’s strange nationalism is intertextual as much as it is international. Novels, such as those written by Ondaatje, signal the intertextual nature of the literature and the people that we call Canadian.

While Williams finds great possibility in the plural, decentred, and multifaceted nature of hypermedia communications, the Internet does not guarantee a deconstruction of the sovereignty of the nation-state. The “placeless” tribes of networked communities,

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<sup>47</sup> As a student and reader of David Williams’s work, I am confronted with the problem of how to receive an inheritance and continue a tradition of reading Ondaatje’s work through and by his writing. Here, in this thesis, I will (like many students before me) honour the work that I follow. Recalling Derrida’s pun from “The Animal that Therefore I am (more to follow)”, I am [*je suis*] what I follow [*je suis*]. Through an intertextual process of merging, recoiling, and intersecting, I will attempt to honour, diverge from, and assimilate *Imagined Nations*. As an adopted son, I will allow a father, who is not my own, within the body of my text. Thus, following a literary inheritance necessitates, rather than an image of the son in the bosom of the father, welcoming Williams’s work within my own.

connected through a web of hyperlinks, does not inherently break the paradigm of “us” and “them.” A networked community merely defers the moment and justification for why a community gathers. Rather than being predicated upon territory, language, or economic parity, a community built on the liberal communications of the World Wide Web only depersonalizes interaction; this is potentially dangerous when groups are gathered by ideology alone, which is the case most particularly with international terrorism and Western capitalism. Williams concludes that the novel, with its emphasis on how to read, is still “the ideal genre to question the social epistemology of hypermedia and to slow their assault on nationally imagined communities” (71). In other words, “the novel is a diagnostic tool” (71) to assess this swiftly changing communications technology environment.<sup>48</sup> Within *The English Patient*, “The most direct attack on nationalism [...] comes in the imperative voice of Almásy, the desert explorer: ‘Erase the family name! Erase nations! I was taught such things by the desert’ (*English* 139)” (Williams 226). While following Williams, I focus more on the link between the influence of the family structure on the nation and on the texts in *The English Patient*. I also consider the

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<sup>48</sup> Linked to this question on the status of the book is a profound questioning of sovereignty and authority (both politically and textually): “‘The Death of the Author,’ first announced in 1968 by Roland Barthes, comes to seem like a given. As Jacques Derrida also argued in the same year in ‘The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing,’ the ‘cybernetic *program* tends to oust all metaphysical concepts – including the concepts of soul, of life, of value, of choice, of memory – which until recently served to separate the machine from man’ (*Of Grammatology* 9)” (Williams 224). Derrida admits, however, that the end of the book is a little drastic: “some thirty years ago where I thought I had to make a diagnosis or could make a prognosis, in *Of Grammatology*, under the heading ‘The End of the Book,’ at the risk of seeing myself accused, quite absurdly, of wishing for the death of the book and pressing for it” (“The Book to Come” 14-5). Instead, Derrida revises his argument towards the teleological total book, which Hegel and other Idealist philosophers claim as a source of absolute knowledge. Derrida, much like Williams, suggests that “[w]e cannot be sure that the unity and identity of the thing called ‘book’ is incompatible with these new tele-technologies. In fact this is what we have to debate” (5). And so, it seems that the book’s status as a diagnostic tool of new telecommunications technologies, which is espoused by Williams, seems secure for the time being. In short, by changing its role within social and cultural formations, the book is going nowhere.

possibility of a changing, mutable nation and family structure much like the mutable form of Almásy's book that he somehow carried out of the fire.

Thus acknowledging the link between the patriarchal family name and the patriotic, "Erase the family name! Erase nations!" (139), the English patient renounces genealogical inheritance of the tradition and questions the thoughtless reception of violent systems. The desert teaches, like Patrick Lewis in the Macedonian community in Toronto, how to be a stranger at home. In the desert Almásy is keenly aware, within the cave of swimmers, that "[t]hese were water people" (19). The desert breaks borders due to its resistance to mapping and naming, but the people living within it still have to learn the value of being unhomed. However, these water people living in the desert, beyond all memory of living with water, honour their long past traditions: "Even today caravans look like a river. Still, today it is water who is the stranger here. Water is the exile, carried back in cans and flasks, the ghost between your hands and your mouth" (19). Beyond a native context, the influence of water-bound traditions lives on in the desert. Thus, Ondaatje's reading lesson allows an often forbidding tradition to survive as an intertextual link if it can be acclimatized to a new context. We are, it seems, book people adrift in a hypermedia environment.

As a result, libraries become dangerous places within *The English Patient*. The library in the villa, this archive of texts, is literally explosive, due to the bombs planted by the retreating Germans. Still more subtly, the reading of texts is a process of defusing a potentially dangerous tradition. Hana thus "walked backwards," through this dangerous library, "stepping on her own footprints, for safety" (12). So, fashioning new steps from books, to allow access, is the only form of rebuilding the bombed-out villa that Hana

undertakes. As a literalized metaphor for intertextuality, “She had gone into the library, removed twenty books and nailed them to the floor and then onto each other, in this way rebuilding the two lowest steps” (13). With a roguish irreverence, texts are literally tacked together, through their own bindings and beyond their own bounds, thus opening the entire archive of texts to be read. Reading the tradition intertextually necessitates working backwards, upsetting all chronological superiority. And yet, despite the danger, Hana “entered the story knowing she would emerge from it feeling she had been immersed in the lives of others” (12). Indeed, knowing the lives of others is basic to the hospitality of reading intertextually. Just as one text admit other texts within it, Hana is able to enter the lives of others through texts.

Hana is also able to borrow, steal, and even write within a number of books in the library. Any intertextual reading of the tradition necessitates literary borrowing, stealing, incorporating influences, and intertexts.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Caravaggio appears out of the Italian countryside, having lived his life outside the bounds of Ondaatje’s narrative in either *In the Skin of a Lion* or *The English Patient*, as if to adumbrate the whole thematic of thievery. However, for Caravaggio, thievery is no mere roguish crime. As a carnivalesque upsetting of the indebtedness of literary allusion, the “theft” of words opens a dialogic

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<sup>49</sup> In her essay “Literary Borrowing...And Stealing: Plagiarism, Sources, Influences, and Intertexts” (1986), Linda Hutcheon discusses the nuanced relationship between “intertextuality and influence” as “a complementary, not oppositional one” (230-1). While citing Barthes, Derrida, Kristeva, and Riffaterre, Hutcheon suggests that the shift from a high modernist notion of tradition, like that received from T.S. Eliot, may be merely a mutation of the “postmodern” mode of deconstruction. Thus, what she describes as “the clash of critical orientations” is in fact a continuation of the work of reading and inheriting the tradition (234). Far from the blend and clash of criticism, Hutcheon allows for an intersection as well as an endless reading of the tradition, intertextually.

which is the domain of the unknowing fool or rogue.<sup>50</sup> Caravaggio actually communes with those he steals from. “His hand moves along a stone hand,” as Caravaggio attempts to retrieve the incriminating roll of film; “he understands the way the woman thinks now—off which the camera hangs with its sling” (39). In short, to steal from another, whether an author or a thief, one must imagine the other’s thoughts and actions.

Appropriating the authority of the book, Hana first opens “a dialogic form of participation” (Williams 234) when she writes a note within the pages of a novel by the American James Fenimore Cooper:

She opens *The Last of the Mohicans* to the blank page at the back and begins to write in it.

*There is a man named Caravaggio, a friend of my father's. I have always loved him. He is older than I am, about forty-five, I think. He is in a time of darkness, has no confidence. For some reason I am cared for by this friend of my father.*

She closes the book and then walks down into the library and conceals it in one of the high shelves. (61)

Hana thus inscribes anonymously her personal, private history into the larger literary tradition. Indeed, acknowledging the value of the smaller tributaries of history seems to be a lesson learned from her adopted father in *In the Skin of a Lion*. As Williams also suggests (235), she is able to claim Caravaggio, like that multi-monikered and culturally adept character Hawkeye (Natty Bumppo or Leatherstocking) from Cooper’s novel, as a

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<sup>50</sup> Williams is careful to explain in detail the problems of inheritance between Harold A. Innis and Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan popularizes the link made between the medium and the message, which Innis first developed in *The Bias of Communication* and *Empire and Communications*. Quoting from McLuhan’s *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, Williams recalls McLuhan’s admission that, “‘Harold Innis was the first person to hit upon the *process* of change as implicit in the *forms* of media technology,’ and so acknowledging ‘the present book’ to be nothing more than ‘a footnote of explanation to his work’ (*Gutenberg* 50)” (Williams 231). Within a tradition, there is a necessary overlapping, but also a need to unknot lines of discourse that describe our relations to others. Thus, caught between enacting more thieving, literary roguery, which necessarily undermines monological authority, and honouring literary forefathers, which avoids committing an undue violence upon the past, Williams examines the linkages between Innis and McLuhan.

caretaker rather than a father. Between Hana, Caravaggio, Alice, and Clara, there is an unconventional family structure, which links both of Ondaatje's texts. The relationship between *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient* is strange and unfamiliar to conventional structures of lineage.<sup>51</sup>

The mode of inheritance Hana assumes is caught between war and mourning her lost father. Shell-shocked from all the dying around her, Hana refuses to participate in the war effort and seeks refuge in the villa.<sup>52</sup> She is not escaping the war, but rather accepting the loss of life around her. The narrator recalls how, "in Santa Chiara Hospital in Pisa, Hana had been able to see a white lion" (40). This white lion becomes the physical manifestation of the news of "the death of her father" (41). "Like some gift from the past that had to be accepted" (40), the lion, like the death of the father, slowly becomes real to her. Though reported through a letter, the death is as real and simple as "[a] white lion" (41). In addition to this, she confesses to Caravaggio that the father of her own child, which she aborts due to that lack of "a member of the family" (85), has also died. These

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<sup>51</sup> As a means of understanding how Ondaatje's corpus can inter-relate, as multiple texts without a governing author, Roland Barthes' essay "From Work to Text" is instructive. Within Barthes' maneuvering from a concept of "work" to "text," the work gets "caught up in a process of filiation" ("From Work to Text" 160). "The author," explains Barthes, "is reputed the father and the owner of his work" (160). In contrast, the "[text] reads without the inscription of the Father. [...] [The text] can be read without the guarantee of its father, the restitution of the inter-text paradoxically abolishing any legacy" (161). However, this removal of the sovereign author from the text does not preclude that author from adding to or revising his own work: "It is not that the Author may not 'come back' in the text, in his text, but he then does so as a 'guest'" (161). Thus, Ondaatje is both a guest (*une hôte*) and a host (*un hôte*). As a result, the intertextual relations between *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient* signal an opening to international hospitality.

<sup>52</sup> In this passage, a *strange intertext* occurs between *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient*. Just as Hana renounces war and any participation in violence, she ceremoniously cuts off her hair: "She would have nothing to link her, to lock her, to death" (*English* 50). By contrast, Alice, Hana's mother, dies due to her inability to renounce violence. As a means of honouring her mother before her life as a terrorist, Hana echoes Alice's appearance as a nun with short hair, which Nicholas loved (*Skin* 38). Years later in an abandoned nunnery, in a strangely impossible way, Ondaatje suggests a tradition between mother and daughter of non-violence through the gesture of wearing shorn hair. In this way, Hana honours what she can of her mother's memory.



events are what spur Hana to remain at the villa: "The war is not ended everywhere, she was told. The war is over. This war is over. The war here" (41). When assessing the tradition as a whole, the warlike structure of dialectics is likewise not over in all texts. However, here, in *The English Patient*, the war is over for Ondaatje and his readers. Indeed, "It is a strange time, the end of a war" (54). The interim period between peace and war is not just the setting for the novel, but also an analogue for the movement between "modernity" and "postmodernity," which is an ongoing and endless process like mourning an "eternally dying" father.

So, it is no accident that, while mourning the death of her adopted father (and her aborted child's father), Hana moves to reading literary forefathers. In some sense, Ondaatje seems to be gesturing towards how literary traditions necessarily involve a process of taking on an adopted tradition. Hana's mourning of an adopted father is analogous to this strange mourning which all readers of any tradition must undertake. All readers must adopt a forefather if only to mourn their loss. Thus, working on the tradition constitutes a double movement of receiving and releasing, or love and loss. Caravaggio is amazed, upon arriving at the villa, to find, "[a] twenty-year old who throws herself out of the world to love a ghost" (45). Indeed, she sleeps in a dead man's hammock and walks in a dead man's shoes (41). Yet, Hana is not fixated on death. She wants "nothing to link her, to lock her, to death" (50). Far from what she jokingly calls "[m]y father complex" (84), Hana is attempting to care for and honour fathers, even as they die around her.<sup>53</sup> Through reading texts, perhaps, Hana can learn to "talk of or even acknowledge the death of

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<sup>53</sup> As a strange echo between fathers and novels, the English patient is not Hana's first burned adopted father. The jealous Ambrose Small sets Patrick on fire. Patrick, however, cuts the buttons off his jacket, whereas Almásy's buttons become part of his skin (*Skin* 94). Patrick escapes the flames, which would render him anonymous, whereas Almásy wears his anonymous skin like clothing.

Patrick" (92). From this perspective, between peace and war, and by nursing the English patient between life and death, Hana finds her means back to life through mourning adopted fathers.

Thus, balanced between life and death, the act of reading in *The English Patient* is dialogic on several substantive levels. Hana and Almásy write within their respective texts, opening a dialogue directly. However, texts are also read collectively. Reading becomes the site of gathering a community where texts become an interstitial tissue, defining the relations between those living in the villa. A structure of relations is thus defined dialogically without the monological authority of the father of a literary work. The loss of origins and the endless movement between texts, which defines intertextuality, guides the relationship between those gathered around a text. As a result, "The tales Hana had read to the English patient, travelling with the old wanderer in *Kim* or with Fabrizio in *The Charterhouse of Parma*, had intoxicated them in a swirl of armies and horses and wagons—those running away from or running towards a war" (93), all gesturing towards the double movement of love and loss inherent in adopting a literary tradition.<sup>54</sup> Just as texts find new meanings by intertextually finding new contexts (one recalls here Riffaterre's *contextual meaning* and *intertextual meaning*), texts are given new meanings through the person reading them. Dialogically, between reader and text, reading and

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<sup>54</sup> In no way, however, are the three texts, which are described as being read, a totality of the tradition. Contrary to Simpson, we have not unpacked Ondaatje's library. "Stacked in one corner of his bedroom," Ondaatje is careful to mention, "were other books she had read to him whose landscapes they have already walked through" (*English* 93). At the risk of the "sins of omission," Ondaatje is forced to limit his discussion to a small number of texts, while not limiting the larger gesture at work in rereading. In turn, I have limited my discussion of intertextual references to merely three of the many texts mentioned directly and indirectly. As such, there are blanks in knowing, like sections of a road washed out by storms," which Ondaatje insists on leaving open.

writing, beginning and end, and adoption and loss of a tradition, the “ideology of the novel,” which is so critical to Julia Kristeva’s intertextual novel, is undermined.<sup>55</sup>

Further, intertextual analogies identify dizzyingly complex relations between circumstances and characters, effecting a kind of “Stendhal Syndrome” for the reader of *The English Patient*. Stendhal’s *The Charterhouse of Parma* seems to be re-enacted in the Villa San Girolamo as each person bears signs of mergers, recoils, and intersections with characters within the novel. Hana finds herself, as if in the Palazzo Sanseverina, “surrounded by foreign men. Not one pure Italian. A villa romance” (64). Surrounded by the Canadian-Italian Caravaggio, the Sikh Kip, and the omni(non)national English patient, Hana’s observation leaves her life, in relation to the novel, strangely analogous. Indeed, each of the characters of *The English Patient* taking refuge in the villa can be interpreted as analogous to the young Fabrizio del Dongo. Fabrizio, like Almásy, retires to a villa, which gives the novel its name, after his adventures in love and war “those months before he died” (*English* 4). As a reader, however, Hana’s willingness to adopt and lose fathers, whether they are literary or real, stems from her adoption and loss of her own father, Patrick. The adoption and loss of Patrick, between *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient*, marks the movement between novels and literary forefathers.

Within the foreword of *The Charterhouse of Parma*, Stendhal explains the seed of the novel. Passing by the house of a canon and long dead friend in Padua, he is welcomed

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<sup>55</sup> Like *In the Skin of a Lion*, Scobie identifies an echo between beginning and end of *The English Patient*. Just as *In the Skin of a Lion* begins as it ends, in the headlights of Patrick and Hana’s car, which they drive to Clara, *The English Patient* begins with “a buckle of noise in the air” (*English* 3). Scobie identifies this “buckle of noise” as echoing the nuclear explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Scobie 96). Structurally, however, this demonstrates that Ondaatje, in both novels, works towards dismantling what Kristeva calls the “ideology of the novel,” which fixes the chronological superiority inherent in beginning and ending that spreads hierarchical structures throughout the novelistic discourse.

“as an old friend” by their family, despite being strangers to him (Stendhal 5). As a visiting friend from abroad, Stendhal is regaled by “the story of the Duchess Sanseverina” (5). Offering to turn the “history into a novel,” Stendhal is given his dead friend’s records. Though asked “not to alter anything in her adventures,” Stendhal works through his friend’s archived records to tell the story of Gina and Fabrizio. As a kind of close echo to Fabrizio, Almásy retires to the villa to remember and recount his life. In addition, he mourns the loss of Katharine through his archival copy of *The Histories*, much like Stendhal does with his friend’s records. Thus, between Stendhal and Fabrizio, Almásy seems strangely familiar when he is read as an intertext of *The Charterhouse of Parma*.

Of significance to such an intertextual reading is not merely the identification of which characters in *The English Patient* are analogous to the characters in other novels. Just as Katharine uses the Gyges and Candaules story as a means of interpreting her own life, an intertextual reading must continue to embroider the lives of all the characters. Almásy admits later, in the villa, “I would often open Herodotus for a clue to geography. But Katharine had done that as a window to her life” (233). As stated earlier, a community based on the movement of intertextuality may only be gathered in terms of how they read or move through a text. Thus, between the public novel and the private life of the reader, Ondaatje allows a position from which a reader of *The English Patient* may imagine Hana or Almásy’s own reflection on the novel and the significance of any analogy. So, while Gina and Fabrizio’s near incestuous affections for each other continue to echo in Caravaggio and Hana’s strangely sexual and familial relationship, there is no guarantee of such a meaning. We may be able to assume that Hana is able to rebuff Caravaggio’s affections, perhaps with something of Gina’s tact (44). Sitting half-naked in the dark

kitchen, weeping under the burden of horrors she witnessed during the war, Hana could well misinterpret Caravaggio's desire to care for her. Yet, echoes and glancing references do appear in unexpected places in Ondaatje's novel. The unexpected *arrival* of an intertextual reference enacts the unconditional acceptance of texts within each other.

Indeed, Ondaatje allows an intertextual relation to illuminate the lives of his characters as they, like him, engage with the literary tradition. Still, in the relationship between people's lives and the texts they read older texts can also offer particularly pertinent criticisms. Reading *The Charterhouse of Parma* in relation to Kip must leave some readers wondering, "What would Kip, an Indian fighting for the British, have thought about, Fabrizio, an Italian fighting for the French at Waterloo?" The strangest paradox that colonialism has produced is this logic which allows a colonized person to risk his life for the very empire that rules over him. Fabrizio is inexplicably enamored with the French Empire and the sovereign General Napoleon Bonaparte. As the highly ironic narrator explains, "Our hero thought all Frenchmen were as profoundly moved as himself by the extreme danger the fatherland was in" (Stendhal 34). Yet, the fatherland for Fabrizio is France, a foreign nation which he adopts as his own. Fabrizio is unconcerned about his place of birth circumscribing his national and familial allegiances. Strangely, Fabrizio is an Italian who adopts French fathers. While he remains a "stranger speaking bad French," Fabrizio is able to fight at one of the most important battles of French history. Like Kip's own desire to be accepted as an equal to the English ("Wery dry. *Very dry*" (187)), he is able to fight in the last of the Great Wars. Though Fabrizio is a poor soldier and spends much of the conflict wondering if he is in the real battle, Stendhal is clearly critical of the war. Indeed, Stendhal comically implies that Fabrizio is part of the

reason Napoleon lost at Waterloo. Adopting “international” fathers, it seems, tends to break the sovereign authority of nations and empires at war. So, Fabrizio’s strange adoption of a fatherland might well have appeared to Kip, or even Hana, as strangely familiar.

Whether Ondaatje intended such intertextual references is of little importance. The uncertain echoes between the novels, while different for each reader, allows *The English Patient* to acknowledge the tradition of writing (of which it is a part), but also to open itself to receive new meanings. Indeed, *The Charterhouse of Parma* is fundamentally a story about receiving an inheritance and inverting the hierarchy of any patrilineal tradition. Fabrizio is the second son of Marchese del Dongo. The del Dongo inheritance is, “naturally,” given to the eldest son, Ascanio, “the fitting portrait of his father” (Stendhal 15). Found within the genealogical structure of the family is “the son in the bosom of the father, the son as the sight of the image of the father” (“Mourning” 163). By the end of the novel, Fabrizio receives the inheritance and redistributes his wealth to his aunt, his mother and a sister “who had made a bad marriage” (Stendhal 508). Another “second son,” Ondaatje’s Kip also finds himself breaking the hierarchy of familial inheritance: “The oldest son [of the Singh family] would go into the army, the next brother would be a doctor, a brother after that would become a businessman” (*English* 182). Though I will discuss this further in relation to Kipling’s *Kim*, Kip’s work in the military allows for an interconnection between cultures which he will finally reject. Rejection of patrilineal structures and hierarchies does not, however, necessitate a rejection of fathers, adopted or not.

Kip's affections are placed more easily with Hana. The eroticism of empire allows Hana, a citizen of the Dominion of Canada and a child of uncertain origins, to pursue relations with Kip, a Sikh sapper and second son from the Punjab. Kip and Hana's relationship also works at disrupting the means by which colonials may relate. Indeed, Kip and Hana do not need Britain to sanction their love. Thus, following the Romantic tradition and the discourse of Sentimentality, Ondaatje follows Stendhal's coupling of love and politics. For Stendhal, affections of the heart govern political decision-making: "[R]eign over my States," cries the Prince of Parma to Gina, "as you reign over my heart" (458). Thus, a strange genealogy of connections is opened within the relations of empire. Indeed, Fabrizio is haunted by the Valserra del Dongo family genealogy, which comically takes on the importance of a national bestseller. After Fabrizio takes the position of Archbishop of Parma, Count Mosca produces an Italian translation, which is printed with a lithograph of Fabrizio's portrait (Stendhal 468). The second son, acquitted of a murder (which he in fact committed), is now the face of the family. Indeed, *The Charterhouse of Parma* opens an entire series of malapropisms and misnamings. In her reading of such texts, Hana pauses to consider these misnamings in the dark of the library. She loves "these books dressed in their Italian spines," and especially, "[s]he paused again. *The Charterhouse of Parma*" (*English* 222). Then, seemingly out of the dark of the library, a citation from the novel is left hanging within the pages of *The English Patient*: "If I ever get out of my difficulties," he said to Clelia, "I shall pay a visit to the beautiful pictures at Parma, and then will you deign to remember the name: Fabrizio del Dongo" (*English* 222 [Stendhal 86]). The cause of Hana's momentary pause is not explained. Yet, on one hand, this passage does speak to Hana's own desire to escape the war. Fabrizio is,

at that moment in the narrative, on his way to Milan for safety from his escapades in France. On the other hand, Fabrizio's pride in his identity and name looks almost comical beside his need to preserve his "incognito" (86). He is without a passport, "paperless," and so is required to change identities easily. Fabrizio, like Hana, Kip, the English patient, and Caravaggio, is quite comfortable masking his identity. However, being without identity is a crime in times of war.

Being incognito and paperless is the very crime that Almásy commits. In the desert, Almásy explains, they "wished to remove the clothing of our countries" (*English* 139). When the war arrived in the desert, "it was easy for [Almásy] to slip across borders, not to belong to anyone, to any nation" (139). Caravaggio's obsession to discover the true identity of Almásy derives from the old dialectics of friends and enemies, which is the basis of any war. He is fixated on names used as spy codes and places: "Cicero. Zerzura. Delilah" (163). As if these names carry some fundamental trait, and not, like all language, are a merely arbitrary appellation, Caravaggio seeks the "true" identity of the English patient, "Count Ladislaus de Almásy" (164). Hana, having extricated herself from the war, simply tells Caravaggio, "I think we should leave him be. It doesn't matter what side he was on, does it?" (165). Without war and its paradigm of friends and enemies, "It doesn't matter who he is," because, "The war's over" for Hana (166). Thus, the renaming and ownership that Almásy perpetrates upon Katharine, echoed in Caravaggio's desire to name, carries all the violence of war, ownership, and colonization. As many critics have surmised, to definitively name the English patient as Almásy would only perpetuate the violence of limiting his identity.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Tom Penner discusses the intricacies of Ondaatje's masking a definitive author or narrative agent. Penner demonstrates the limitations of the "author function" in Michel Foucault's essay



The four people occupying the villa are imagined, by Ondaatje, as a nation of mourners. Hana is mourning her dead or dying fathers; Almásy is mourning the death of Katharine; Caravaggio is mourning the loss of his thumbs and, as a result, the loss of his profession and identity. Heavily indoctrinated within the military ethos of self-sufficiency, Kip mourns the loss of his monological, independent strength (see below). There is, however, a textual precedent which informs (and is informed by) this community of mourners. James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, a profoundly masculine novel, is concerned almost exclusively with the relations between father and son. The novel takes its name from a tragic nation of Delawares who lost an entire tribe, the Mohicans. The father and son, Chingachgook and Uncas, are the very last of their people. The father and son are literally an entire nation. Following the final confrontation between Magua, a Huron fighting for the French and the Mohawks, the Delawares sustain many deaths. They are "a nation of mourners" (394). Indeed, Cooper's narrative, while placed within a historical setting, has little to do with accurately depicting aboriginal peoples. While commonly named the "first American writer" (due to his birth in America), why is an aristocrat like Cooper interested in representing the familial and national structures of aboriginal peoples, at least as he imagines them?

Perhaps some clue to this is found in the fratricidal structures of nation-building. The second volume of the wildly popular "Leather Stocking Tales," *The Last of the Mohicans*, was written approximately sixty years after the English and French colonial

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"What is an Author?" and how Ondaatje upsets the limiting function of Foucault's theory: "In various ways, then, Ondaatje's novel offers the reader an enigma who is filing for divorce from his narrative, yet cannot leave the uneasy relationship behind" (Penner 1-2). While the metaphor seems accidental, the disruption of the family and the loss of authority seem to go hand in hand. Similar to Kristeva's "*une instance transcendante*," the loss of the author amidst the weave of intertextual references further masks Foucault's limiting author function.

wars that raged throughout the woodlands of North America and concluded on the Plains of Abraham and at the Battle of Montreal (1760). Within recent memory, a fratricidal war has transformed the American colonies and led to the formation of Canada; Cooper appears, then, to be working on themes of paternity and national struggles framed within the familial context of aboriginal tribes. Each community is centred on a hereditary ruling class and is, quite correctly, termed an independent nation. However, enmeshed within Cooper's seeming admiration of aboriginal peoples, is the discursive violence of a Western form of essentialism. For, upon "the Indians," including Uncas, Chingachgook, and Magua, is foisted a belief "in the hereditary transmission of virtues and defects of character" (Cooper 285). Thus, the nations of aboriginal peoples, like the fratricidal wars that produced the nationalisms of North America, are entirely imagined.

Magua, a transnational similar to Kip in fighting for his oppressors, is described as a traitor who "went out against his own nation" (111). In fact, Magua, who is described as having "the dignity of an Eastern prince," retraces the unabashed misnaming of Indians of India and aboriginals of North America. Transgressing his national and essential heredity is Magua's true crime. Indeed, the resoundingly evil Magua, who is willing to murder women and children (198), is the embodiment of Cooper's own fear of the perils of cultural intermixing. Yet, Cooper's absurd essentialism is mocked by the death of the pure Mohicans. As pure blood royalty, Uncas and Chingachgook cannot reproduce pure Mohicans without *Mohican women*. This absurd logic of purity is what destroys the Mohicans. The inability to accept those outside the family ultimately dooms the nation. Situated between aboriginal and colonial notions of the nation and a mourning of the past,

Cora acts as the dark intermediary between traditions, mitigating the violence inherent in colonialism through her love of Uncas, that “successful stranger” (275).

Forsaking the politics of friend and enemy, and inhabiting the middle ground, Cora evokes many connections to Hana.<sup>57</sup> Both Cora and Hana inhabit and embody that middle voice guided by love. Born of half West-Indian parentage, Cora is proclaimed to be of an “unnatural union” (178). Similarly, Hana and Kip’s relationship signals a possible loving connection of cultures after the violence of colonialism. While in battle with Magua, Cora cries, “Why die at all?” (83). While Hawkeye clings to stereotypical arguments about the honour of dying in war, Cora’s words recall Hana’s entreaties to Kip to stop risking his life as a “knight[, t]he warrior saint” (*English* 273), of an another nation. Cora, as the inter-racial and international daughter of colonialism, is given the middle voice between Magua and the Mohicans. Also, Uncas and Cora’s romantic relationship signals the bridging of cultures and intermixing inherent in colonialism (178). Uncas becomes Cooper’s mouthpiece for the ideology of a totalizing fraternity of aboriginal peoples, despite their being of completely different and distinct nations. “‘Tis a long and melancholy tradition,” explains the young Mohican, “and one I little like to think of; for it is not to be denied, that the evil has been mainly done by men with white skins. But it has ended in turning the tomahawk of brother against brother, and brought the Mingo and the Delaware to travel in the same path” (261). Uncas’ lamentations suggest an inability to break with this fratricidal tradition of “brother against brother.” When considered in the context of the fratricidal war on the Plains of Abraham, Cora’s (and by intertextual

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<sup>57</sup> Following a text or character demands in some sense becoming that text or character. Such an inter-relation is what allows Hana to become “the Mohican of Danforth Avenue” (224). She is the last of her family from that place. She is the last of her nation, even if her nation is fluid, open, and originless.

extension, Hana's) nonparticipation in the politics of friends and enemies, negates the monstrosity of imagined fratricidal wars. Romantic love and relations is, then, a possible alternative to the violence of fratricidal sibling rivalry. The ambivalent space Hana and Cora come to occupy in loving Uncas and Kip undoes the knot of colonial discursive violence based on the family.

Indeed, Cooper's narrative is, fundamentally, a story of a "father in quest of his children" (206). Munro awaits the return of his daughters to him by the devoted and trustworthy Heyward, Uncas, and Hawkeye. Thus, the politics of friendship within *The Last of the Mohicans* is founded upon a "father's sacred trust" to protect his children. The nation, in Cooper's imaginings, functions best when father and son function as one will, with the son in the bosom of the father: "Both father and son," Uncas and Chingachgook, "spoke quick and loud, now looking at the object of their mutual admiration, and now regarding each other with the most unequivocal pleasure" (213). Thus, the sovereign nation, like the book as child of an author-father, gains its true meaning, most essentially and totally, when the son returns to the father. Heyward, for example, argues with Magua about the cultural differences between aboriginal and white conceptions of mourning forefathers: "[T]he white man may, and does often, forget the burial-place of his fathers; he sometimes ceases to remember those he should love and has promised to cherish; but the affection of a parent for his child is never permitted to die" (109). And yet there is an important distinction between honouring a tradition, like Uncas who mourns all his forefathers, and a child submitting to a predecessor in the image of the father.

The politics of the book as a cultural form in *The Last of the Mohicans* distinguishes between differing notions of tradition. Much of the novel is spent tracking

Magua. I suspect Cooper raises this trope of tracking as an analogy to tracking the author through a work. As he reads the tracks of Magua, Hawkeye says to Uncas, “One moccasin is not more like another than one book is like another [...] neither book nor moccasin is the worse for having two opinions, instead of one” (211). While the metaphor is a clumsy one, Cooper’s point is clear. Hawkeye, though having “read but one” book (128), insists that each author’s trace is unique and that the text can only be attributable to him. Like tracing Ondaatje’s authority through the manifold intertextual references, determining the identity of the English patient is a futile effort when tracing their respective texts. However, reading further into the metaphor, following another’s steps does echo the structure of reading backwards through the tradition. Whose footprints are they after Hawkeye and Uncas walk over them? Like a citation, authority is shared by those taking on the tradition. Indeed, following the other is the means to intersection of opposing political forces. When one follows the other, whether in tracking footprints or in reading intertextual traces through the tradition, two people can share the same textual or political space.

While the tracking metaphor neatly summarizes intertextuality, the act of following will never capture the true intent of the author and therefore the “true” meaning of the text. Like Kip spying on Caravaggio’s walks at night, “the trailing was simply a remnant of a habit he had been taught during the war” (73). While honouring T.S. Eliot’s modernist “mythical method” of reading, merely to follow intertextual references is but a remnant of older critical methodologies. The work of following will not and cannot locate, within the uncertain movement of texts, precise meanings. Like the comfortable precision of a laser-guided bomb, the logic of war and modernist criticism both function on this

false conceit of accuracy. The young Kip, diligently trained as a soldier of the empire, wants nothing more than to “aim his rifle and fire and hit some target precisely” (73). Such a desire for precision is futile in the work of reading. Dropping “foreign” texts within the structure of intertextual relations allows for the uncertain and simultaneous movement of mergers, recoils, and intersections between “strange” texts, which obfuscates the position of the author.<sup>58</sup>

After all, both *The English Patient* and *The Last of Mohicans* represent a failed attempt at political inter-relations between peoples. While the love between Uncas and Cora dies on the knife of Magua, the tragedy of Magua and Kip alike in their fall from bridges pinpoints the failure of intercultural relations. Magua is shot by Hawkeye as he tries to leap from a precipice, and Kip falls off a bridge from his motorcycle after the nuclear bombings. Many critics of *The English Patient* complain that, while offering a temporary reprieve from national and cultural divisions, the novel fails to offer a comprehensive solution to the violently nationalistic binary of “us” and “them” (Simpson,

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<sup>58</sup> In his essay, ‘The English Patient Reposed in His Bed Like a [Fisher?] King’: Elements of Grail Romance in Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*,’ Bill Fledderus identifies the nature of Ondaatje’s intertextual novels, which share relations with other texts, regardless of literary genre, epoch, or nationality. While demonstrating the linkages to Arthurian romances, Fledderus admits, “The connection is not an obvious one, however” (21). Along with a subtle knowledge of Arthurian romances, Fledderus also demonstrates an acute understanding of Ondaatje’s intertextual program: “Ondaatje’s use of these sources as archetypes is both modern in its attempt to reveal universal psychological truths and postmodern in its blurring and recreating of identity” (49). Echoing Hutcheon’s observation of the likeness of modern and postmodern notions of tradition, Fledderus does not find conflict in the blurring of literary, theoretical, and critical epochs. Indeed, the anti-epochal nature of intertextuality, in some sense, necessitates an ability to range widely throughout the tradition, regardless of dates. I would like to suggest here, as a point of further discussion, that the late onset of postmodernity in Canada (some suggest around 1969), may have left less of a sense of sibling rivalry or conflicting succession between literary traditions. In Canada, perhaps, the literary environment supported a space for postmodern texts, which were then incorporated within the body of critical ideas in play. Like Almásy and Katharine’s romance, two opposing notions of language and identity can exist, simultaneously. Perhaps, it is within this environment that Ondaatje is able to find bridges and amity between modern and postmodern conceptions of tradition. By bridging critical discourses, Ondaatje seems to be removing conflict from the critical enterprise, while maintaining the honour of reason.

Scobie, Fledderus). Initially, however, there is the potential of a practical political and cultural bridging within the villa. Textually, moreover, *The English Patient* is a resounding success in opening the library of texts within the villa. Perhaps, then, Ondaatje's novel works as a cautionary tale on larger problems of reading. Kip's failure is more like his failure of reading Hana, the patient, and Caravaggio outside of political, national, and racial borders.

And yet, Kip does learn the beauty of bridges from the frescoed chapels of Italy. For this reason, Kip falls in love with the Queen of Sheba, "[t]his woman who would someday know the sacredness of bridges" (70). Because of the oppressive discursive violence perpetrated by the British in India, "He did not yet have a faith in books" (111). Yet, his Queen of Sheba represents a different system. Having built a bridge of the tree of good and evil, the most fundamental binary system of good/bad is literally deconstructed and made manifest as a bridge or link. This bridge over the Siloam River links east and west, as does the relationship between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the erotics of relations in *In the Skin of a Lion* is represented, rather than bridging class, as being wrought through a bridging of the colonizer/colonized and the east/west binary. Hana is Ondaatje's supreme example of one who allows texts to influence her life. She imagines that "the sapper entered their lives, as if out of this fiction. As if the pages of [Rudyard] Kipling had been rubbed in the night like a magic lamp" (*English* 94).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The unnamed Queen of Sheba is described in 1 Kings 10:1-13. King Solomon's lover in "The Song of Songs" is often interpreted as the Queen of Sheba. Appropriate to the thematic of love and politics, the King of Israel and this eastern queen romantically link nations and cultures through one of the most enduring love poems in human history.

<sup>60</sup> Well before the unexpected arrival of Kip, "[Hana] sat at the night table, hunched over, reading of the young boy in India [Kim] who learned to memorize diverse jewels and objects on a tray, tossed from teacher to teacher—those who taught him dialect those who taught him memory those who taught him to escape the hypnotic" (*English* 7). This is an early manifestation of the

Through reading *Kim*, Ondaatje offers the most detailed intertextual reading of a novel within *The English Patient*. Through *Kim*, it appears, Hana is able to read Kip's indoctrination in imperial ideology. "In recent days," Hana observes, "it seemed to her a reversal of *Kim*. The young student was now Indian, the wise old teacher was English" (111). She concludes by reading Kip through this novel that strangely echoes his name, "if Kip was anyone, he was the officer Creighton" (111). Creighton is the head of the geographical and ethnological survey of India, but also a Colonel in "The Great Game" of maintaining imperial interests throughout the Asian continent. In Hana's estimation, Kip is the very embodiment of colonial aspirations to rule through the discursive power of mapping, censuses, and ethnology. "But it was Hana," the narrator observes, "in the night who stayed with the old man, who guided him over the mountains to the sacred river" (111). Then, the narrator, focalizing through Hana, cites a large section from *Kim*:

*He squatted in a corner of the clanging waiting-room, rapt from all other thoughts; hands folded in lap, and pupils contracted to pin-points. In a minute—in another half second—he felt he would arrive at the solution of the tremendous puzzle... (Ondaatje 111 [Kipling 233])*

Kim and his lama are indeed a tremendous puzzle for Hana. While Hana makes the decision to read *Kim* as an analogue for everyone in the villa, Kim really is analogous to all the character living within the villa. Both Hana and Kim enter the war and the military to find their fathers. Kim finds his "red bull" and Hana finds a letter informing her of Patrick's death. Kim, like Caravaggio in his abilities as a thief, has his own remarkable

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relationship between Hana and the English patient through the texts they read together. In addition, the English patient remembers being kept "alive for a reason" (18). *Kim* thus opens the English patient's memory to his usefulness to the Bedouin, just as Colonel Creighton kept Kim to act as a spy in Afghanistan. As the English patient is well aware, "He was there to translate the guns" in the desert (20). This translation of the guns, in which he must match the bullets to the proper weapon, is analogous to the "Play the Play of the Jewels," or memory game, that is part of Kim's spy training (Kipling 204-6). At work within this intertextual relation, however, is the opening of the English patient's memory through the interaction of texts.



skills in language and cultural mimicry put to work for the government, which he does not respect. Kim, like the English patient and Kip are both “international bastard[s]—born in one place and choosing to live elsewhere” (*English* 176). Indeed, by this definition, they are all bastards, inter-national bastards. Though of Irish decent (his name at birth being Kimball O’Hara), Kim can live anywhere, in India, China, even Afghanistan. And like the rest of those in the villa, Kim is reminiscent of *connections*. His nickname, “Little Friend of all the World,” points towards a friendship beyond the friend/enemy binary. If Kim is, as his nickname suggests, friend of everyone, no one is left to be his enemy. This is not to say that there are not enemies in *Kim*, but at least his cross-linguistic and intercultural prowess will allow cultural connections to occur.

Yet, how can a “mere” novel influence the lives of those living in the villa?<sup>61</sup> Indeed, *The English Patient*, working through *Kim*, rewrites conventional notions of influence. While Harold Bloom maintains a notion of influence structured round intersubjective relations, which really upholds the sovereignty of the author, Ondaatje gestures instead towards an intertextual model of influence that allows one (text) to enter another (text). By breaking the genealogical mode of inheritance in this way, those taking on the tradition in the Villa San Girolamo are bastards to their literary forefathers, intertextual bastards. The thematic of entering the other in this novel is not introduced, as I have done, through theoretical philosophy, but through reading *Kim*. The plot of the novel

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<sup>61</sup> Don Randall asks a similar question in his essay “The Kipling Given, Ondaatje’s Take”: “how do texts take place in our world” (131)? In his far from detailed reading of *The English Patient*, Randall’s interpretation is mired in psychoanalytic jargon and returns, in what amounts to imperial navel gazing, to the safety of a close reading of Kipling’s *Kim*. Unable to master Ondaatje’s textual system, Randall returns to monologically reading a single novel. Not surprisingly, he interprets Kip’s rejection of the relations in the villa and his return home as a heroic deconstruction of imperial power: “Kip ultimately ‘deconstructs’ his own role within European power-politics” (138).

follows Kim and the lama's search for the river of salvation, which frees them from the illusion of time and space.<sup>62</sup> Hana finds in the English patient a figure devoid of any identity, but "There was something about him she wanted to learn, grow into, and hide in, where she could turn away from being an adult" (52).<sup>63</sup> To hide from the dying around her, Hana desires to be influenced by the English patient and lose her identity.

However, the image of entering another, as one enters a river, is not manifested as a struggle against the current. The old lama is concerned for his reliance on Kim to take care of his physical needs. As in the Bloomian notion of tradition, where one author consumes and supersedes another, the lama learns of the violence inherent in using the other in such a way: "I have lived upon [Kim's] strength – eating him. [...] I did the boy wrong. He lent thee his strength? It is true that the old eat the young daily. Stands [sic] now we must restore him" (322). It is only after having found his river of salvation that the lama is content. And indeed, the lama's salvation is the very knowledge of caring for the other. In one of the very finest endings to any novel, *Kim* concludes, as "[the lama] crossed his hands on his lap and smiled, as a man may who has won salvation for himself and his beloved" (338). Indeed, it is the influence of the one within the other which

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<sup>62</sup> Williams's theorization of hypertextual flows breaks space and time, much like the lama's vision of salvation. As if seeing an image from Google Maps, the enlightened lama "saw all Hind [India], from Ceylon in the sea to the Hills, and my own Painted Rocks at Such-zen" (Kipling 337). Similarly, intertextuality offers a reader and author freedom from chronological priority of texts and allows texts to share and overlap territory, which also breaks the illusion of space and time.

<sup>63</sup> Williams explains that, "[i]n the end, Almásy martyrs himself to a postmodern idea of a plural self, and to a postnational idea of collective identity, that bears all the marks of a hypermedia environment" (243). I would suggest that Almásy does not enter into the paradigm of martyrdom. He instead gives himself, without expectation of debt or righteousness. He looks at Kip and welcomes his criticism of any epistemological violence he may have committed to his friend. Kip "thus denies difference as much as any imperialist, only to re-inscribe, in reverse order, the old binary oppositions" (Williams 244).

constitutes the lama's salvation and the very structure of the trope of the river throughout *Kim* and *The English Patient*.

Through this influence of love described by Kipling, Hana and the English patient share the knowledge of losing oneself in the other. In what could be considered the emotional climax of the novel, after having told the story of Katharine's death, Almásy explains the influence of the other:

We die containing a richness of lovers and tribes, tastes we have swallowed, bodies we have plunged into and swum up as if rivers of wisdom, characters we have climbed into as if trees, fears we have hidden in as if caves. I wish for all this to be marked on my body when I am dead. I believe in such cartography—to be marked by nature, not just to label ourselves on a map like the names of rich men and women on buildings. We are communal histories, communal books. (261)

This often cited passage of *The English Patient* is rarely rewritten in its totality. Certainly, “communal histories” and “communal books” refer to the international nature of the novel and the international character of the English patient with his intertextual “commonplace book.” By extension, the relationship within communities is structured upon this intimate form of relations. The influence of bodily fluids becomes, as Mikhail Bakhtin also suggests, a model for the dialogic structure of the novel; or, as Julia Kristeva sees the intertextual novel, much “as any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (“Word”/“Le Mot” 66/146). Where one enters the other, where one has “swum up as if rivers of wisdom,” Ondaatje characterizes the influence between people in a most intimate model for the intertextual relations of books.

However, Hana and Kip share a different view of rivers. Hana, like the lama and Kim, has found “[a] place where the weak can enter the strong” with the English patient (82). What remains ambivalent, however, is which of the two is the weaker. Thus, they enter each other, mutually. Having already learned this lesson from *Kim* and the English

patient, “Most of all [Hana] wished for a river they could swim in” (129). She desires to re-enact the loving salvation between the lama and Kim and find a river of peace. Indeed, Hana seems to have inherited her desire of influence from her father, who was told by Alice before she died, “Like water, you can be easily harnessed, Patrick. That’s dangerous” (*Skin* 122). While the self-sufficient logic of Alice cannot accept influence, Patrick and his daughter Hana willfully accept strength in fluidity. “But [Kip] had a different sense of rivers,” due to his work in the war: “Every river they came to was bridgeless, as if its name had been erased, as if the sky were starless, homes doorless” (*English* 129).<sup>64</sup> To the sapper, a river is not a place of influence, but a border where people die and it must be either defended or crossed. Cartographic lines are often the front lines of war.

This is the destructively influential nature of colonialism, which can change something, like a river, from a metaphor for love and peace into an area of conflict. Indeed, the discursive power of colonialism allows for an invading redefinition of words. Without overwriting Kipling’s writing, Hana adds in *Kim*’s last pages a comment on how the tools of families were transformed into weapons. She has learned from the English patient that the “Zam-Zammah cannon,” which begins Kipling’s novel and stands outside the Lahore museum, is “made up of metal cups and bowls taken from every Hindu household in the city” (118). Not only did the taxation of cookware disrupt traditional families under the British Empire, but the dishes were also turned into a weapon against

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<sup>64</sup> In the chapter “Mode of Communication” in *Imagined Nations*, Williams describes Harold Innis’s discovery of the linkage of power to communications technology through the influence of rivers in the ancient world: “rivers, one of the earliest systems of communication, helped to shape centralized civilizations” (52). Quite appropriately, when McLuhan demonstrates his greatest influence from Innis, he is re-iterating Innis’ work in the chapter called “Roads and Paper Routes” in *Understanding Media* (Williams 230).

Sikhs<sup>65</sup>. Thus, the tools of family, which are meant to care for one another, are transformed into a weapon against those outside the construct of an imperial or national “family.” In defiance of municipal order, Hana dialogically writes within the bounds of *Kim*, intertextually adding supplemental information, which she learned from an anonymous man. In effect, the act of writing back to the empire is ambivalent, without origin, and done dialogically in a way that necessitates inter-relations with another.

For Kip, however, the self-sufficiency he has been taught by the military demands, like the empire itself, absolute sovereignty: “the sapper’s body allows nothing to enter him that comes from another world” (126). While empire is structured upon an absolute sovereignty, it also demands all within it to relinquish prior identities. Influence of the one in the other is not an abdication of identity or a total anonymity. Working in the “Heroic Age of bomb disposal” (184), Kip’s sacrifice would be completely forgotten for “reasons of security” (184). Though not truly English, the Irish-international, Kim, similarly serves as a spy for the Empire, accepting that “he has no name” among the spies, “but only a number and a letter” (Kipling 208). It is very different from not having a proper name, or having many names, to being rendered a mere serial number. Likewise, the distinction between Hana’s willful anonymity and the suppression of cultural identity differentiates

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<sup>65</sup> The irony here, of course, is that Sikhism is an entirely open religion. As Fledderus explains, “Sikhism, founded in the late 1600s, is historically a bridge religion (the bridge-building of engineer Kip is entirely appropriate) between Islam and Hinduism, rejecting the caste system” (35). As Ondaatje explains, “at Amritsar’s temple all faiths and classes were welcome and ate together” (*English* 272). Kip does not speak about the potential for the inclusion of Hana into his culture. Like the *arrivant*, Hana is welcome, but must not be forced to enter Kip’s culture. And so, while “[t]he colour of [Kip’s] turban echoes that of the lace collar at the neck of Mary” (280), cultures may well echo or call to each other, but understanding the echo must be mutual. Ondaatje seems to be subtly suggesting that, while there is a potential for immigrants to enter Eastern culture, Westerners must also enter Eastern cultures.

between the roguishness of any state of authority and the roguishness of an anonymous authority.

Thus, the site of bomb disposal becomes a grotesque carnival of trickery and upending assumptions. Reading and bomb disposal, as many critics have mentioned, are analogous within *The English Patient*, most obviously where “he has found something, unraveling that knot of wires and fuzes someone has left him like a terrible letter” (*English* 76). The irony of the scene in which Kip defuses the concrete bomb is that very little is known (or is concrete within the popular usage of the word). When nothing is known concretely, the “joke” within the bomb expands into an aporia of ironic reversals or “an impasse” (*English* 101). Ultimately, wire colour is an arbitrary designation for positive or negative charges. When language is understood as merely a binary system, assurances of meaning are lost. Still, trained as a good soldier, Kip follows the closed and hierarchical “ideology of the novel” in which “[t]he successful defusing of a bomb ended novels” (105). A resolution and closure of meaning guides the ideology of the genre, which demands that a novel, or a bomb in this case, must have a definable meaning. However, the concrete bomb proposed a problem that could not be answered within the binary structure. Kip is caught with the positive and the negative held in each hand and “needed a third hand to negate one of them” (101). He uses his rogue’s gaze to defuse the bomb, which allows an inexplicable insight into its structure. Unconcerned by such problems, Hana simply chooses to die in the arms of a man and in the grass of a villa she loved. After this, Kip learns that, “[h]e would be pregnant with her” (114). Some problems require welcoming the other within. Breaking the sovereignty of his will, to allow Hana a “pregnant” space within him, is the ultimate movement of intertextuality,

which demands that texts allow others within themselves. Rather than a Bloomian “map of misreading,” Kip discovers “suddenly a map of responsibility” (195). Recalling Hana’s great-grandfather’s lesson of saving from *In the Skin of a Lion*, now saving the other or even a tradition comes with great responsibility. So, Hazen Lewis’s imperative seems strangely appropriate, “Always unknot. Never cut.”

In the end, Kip chooses to cut loose the relationships with the patient, Hana, and Caravaggio. Early in the war, however, Kip accepts the knot of intercultural relations, despite the racism inherent in the colonial system: “The English! They expect you to fight for them but won’t talk to you” (188). Yet, when befriended by Lord Suffolk, Kip “stepped into a family, after a year abroad, as if he were the prodigal returned, offered a chair at the table, embraced with conversations” (189). Kip admits similarly that he loved his nanny more than his biological mother and that, “[a]ll through his life, he would realize later, he was drawn outside the family to find such love” (226). Thus, the adoption of a foreign family is not entirely foreign to Kip.<sup>66</sup> Of more importance to him is honouring the work that will save lives, “[a]lthough he is a man from Asia who has in these last years of war assumed English fathers, following their codes like a dutiful son” (217). Amazed at how technical drawings could be “drawn by desire,” Kip is able to love Englishmen like Suffolk who accept conversation, a dialogic expression between people (190). When Kip takes it upon himself to honour his adopted father and defuse the new bomb design, the narrator, focalized through Kip, explains, “When two men worked

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<sup>66</sup> Scobie eloquently explains the complex dynamics of Kip’s adopted fathers: “For Kip, the patient represents Lord Suffolk, his patron in the bomb-disposal squad, who also died in a moment of fire. And, at a wider level of political allegory, the English patient and Lord Suffolk (who eats Kipling biscuits) both stand for the paternal relation of England to India, the imperialist power celebrated in Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* and rejected here by Kip” (98). As I hope to demonstrate, Kip does not merely reject *Kim*, but works in a sense of complex mergers, recoils, and intersections of personal relationships to texts and the flow of discourse.

together there had to be a base of logic. You had to share and compromise decision” (191). Recalling my introduction, whenever a decision is the mode of exercising the sovereign will, only compromised decisions will allow for *a base dialogic*. Like the new bomb design, which necessitates defusing a bomb with its own fuse, Kip’s initial reception of colonialism is to solve the problem with the problem intact.

With the detonation of two nuclear bombs, “[t]his tremor of Western wisdom” (284), Kip thereafter rejects his adopted fathers, as well as the structures of the dialogic and intercultural (intertextual) relations.<sup>67</sup> Kip rejects Western traditions, which he has learned across cultures and intertextually: “I believed I could fill myself up with what older people taught me. I believed I could carry that knowledge, slowly altering it, but in any case passing it beyond me to another” (283). This is the nature of tradition and inherited knowledge, which is altered slowly over time. But Kip cuts the tradition loose with this nuclear onslaught of unimaginable violence. These bombs, which he cannot defuse, cause Kip to lash out at those in the villa, re-inscribing a racist hierarchy: “I grew up with traditions from my country, but later, more often, from *your* country” (283, Ondaatje’s emphasis). However, Kip’s failure of international relations marks his own failure of reading. Unable to read and defuse the bomb, the ultimate form of violence, Kip forsakes that which he does not understand. Kip cannot tolerate unknowing.

For such reasons, Kip believes he has discovered a “new revealed enemy,” when the English patient simply wants to discuss what has happened: “Kip, talk to me” (284).

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<sup>67</sup> However, such unthinking, contradictory behaviour can result in unintentionally violent decisions: “When the war came [Kip’s] brother sided with whoever was against the English” (291). While fundamentally, Kip’s brother “refused to agree to any situation where the English had power” (200), he risks making a poor decision that, inadvertently, would result in siding with the Nazis. Similarly, Hana’s mother Alice hastily chose violent revolution as a freedom fighter for the immigrant working class.



One must recall Caravaggio's advice to Hana, even though she refuses to hear it: "Fathers die. You keep on loving them in any way you can. You can't hide him away in your heart" (266). "In my country," Kip says, further delimiting the difference between himself and the others in the villa, "when a father breaks justice in two, you kill the father" (285).<sup>68</sup> Thus, forsaking his previous understanding of honouring his adopted father, Suffolk, Kip threatens to murder the English patient, which unintentionally re-inscribes the cycle of violence of sons against fathers. It must be noted that Kip does not murder the English patient. But when a weapon is pointed at someone, they are the enemy at the "other" end of the rifle. Inadvertently, Kip embraces the very structure which he believes he is rejecting. Thus, Kip gives up the position of an "international bastard" and re-enters the hierarchical structures of the family. This is the danger of misreading.

Reclaiming his name, and his cultural difference, Kip becomes distanced by the third person-narration: "His name is Kirpal Singh and he does not know what he is doing here" (287). Imagining himself as a member of a unified race of non-whites, he concludes, "They would never have dropped such a bomb on a white nation" (286). Moving

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<sup>68</sup> Kip's divisive statement "[i]n my country" echoes a particularly interesting episode in *Kim*. The play of the text betrays Kipling's imperialist writing by opening Kim's identity as an international, not a good citizen of the British Empire. In an argument with a hillman on the Grand Trunk Road, Kim exclaims, "In *my* country we call that the beginning of love-talk" (114). In the notes to this edition of *Kim*, Edward Said explains, "Kim thought of himself as a Punjabi, when he forgot that he was British. He was in any case in his own mind of more importance than any hillman, even one of Rajput breeding" (349). Thus, Kipling's text speaks doubly by acknowledging Kim's feeling of superiority, but also by betraying his international status. While forgetting his own adoption of English fathers, Kip's words both betray his claim to Indian nationality, and forget the Sikh's own efforts for a Sikh state within the Punjab. In this instance, Kip makes himself an unknowing fool by claiming to know his own country. Indeed, the roguery of language and texts to manifest many meanings exposes the foolishness of any belief in a single authoritative meaning. After all, Kip is a piece in the mosaic of many countries. Kip's failure of international relations may be summarized by how he responds to a monumental act of violence with a monological rejection of Western culture, which he misinterprets as wholly responsible for the monstrous actions of a single government. Kip, in a sense, throws the baby of international relations out with the bathwater of the Second World War.

contrapuntally, as at the beginning of the novel, between both perspectives after Kirpal and Hana separate, Ondaatje contrasts the rejection of fathers with the adoption of other relations. While Kirpal is rejecting the English patient, who he sees as another father figure, Hana is adopting Clara, who has no genetic familial connection to her, which opens the meaning of relations beyond the structured roles of the family. The whole movement between *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient* may be interpreted as a means of allowing a reader a glimpse of such the unorthodox and profoundly loving relationship between Hana and Clara. With a paraphrase from Anne Wilkinson's personal journals that harkens back to *In the Skin of a Lion*, "Love is so small it can tear itself through the eye of a needle" (288), Hana adopts Clara as a mother, sister, friend and relative so that she may acknowledge her father's death.<sup>69</sup> She tells the necessary fiction of Patrick's death to Clara in a letter. Intermixing the English patient's story with what she knows about Patrick's death, she then assures Clara that he "died in a comforting place" (293). Even if this last gift is not possible, Hana at least hopes and imagines Patrick in the way Clara would need to do. The fictionalization of history, the modification of facts, and the mutations of critical traditions, are all necessary for those who have yet to learn of it. It is ultimately necessary, then, to offer a version of the truth that allows a future. Any thought on critical traditions is structured, fundamentally, by our relation to another. So, it

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<sup>69</sup> In the introduction of *Heresies: The Complete Poems of Anne Wilkinson 1924-1961*, Dean Irvine outlines Ondaatje's consistent references to both Wilkinson and her writing. In regards to this paraphrase, Irvine adds, "The impoverished love of which Wilkinson writes is roughly analogous to the disconsolate state of Ondaatje's lovers, for the war has left them emotionally bereft and racially alienated from one another" (24). Irvine cites Wilkinson's journal, published under the title *Tightrope Walker*, entry from October 28, 1951 as follows: "We should never lose sight of the glorious, untouchable sun that is love.... Never let me write a word about love that is not in praise of love. It is only its perversions that sting in my poetry and on my skinny skin. The hare that circles, a vulture beaked and taloned about the dove, poor thing—but beautiful because it is, in the New Testament sense, always poor and therefore able to pass through the eye of a needle" (*Heresies* 24).

would seem that Hana needs another person, like Clara, to mourn her father. It may be that all works of mourning need another person or text from which to speak in relation.

By contrast, lashing out at the English patient who “sang Isaiah into his ear” (294), Kirpal insists that “we have a Holy Book too” (294). Kip sees the Book of Isaiah as allowing the ideology of the novel to continue to its necessary end. The Bible, The Book of Books, ends in the fire and destruction of Revelation, which The Book of Isaiah foreshadows. “Bury everything except the book,” Kip yells to the English patient (286). Thus, fulfilling the sovereignty of the nation of the book, which necessitates a totalizing beginning and end, Kip interprets Western power as hell-bent on self-destruction. Like an autoimmune disorder, the nation finds, as Harold Innis remarks in a passage cited by Williams, that “each civilization has its own methods of suicide” (Williams 240). Perhaps, the Western nation will destroy itself due to the ideology of the book. The structure of nations imagined as movement, both internationally and intertextually re-imagined, still offers to help defuse the dialectics of war and the ideology of beginning and ending. This is the hope Ondaatje offers through intertextuality and the mode of reading we must accept. To give David Williams the last word in my text, “Our global future depends upon it” (Williams 244 [“Politics” 53]).

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