

Soccer and the City

The Unwieldy National in Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*

In an interview shortly after the publication of her third novel, *What We All Long For* (2005), Dionne Brand explained her love for Toronto, the city in which the novel is set, by way of an anecdote about a boxing match. The match took place “at a Latvian-Canadian hall” before an audience of “old Latvian-Canadian men . . . Hispanic-Canadians, African-Canadians . . . Anglo-Canadians, [and] even a Russian-Canadian promoter” as a “fundraiser for kids in Latin America” (Bök). Brand reflects on attending this event with her “own small posse of African-Canadian and Portuguese-Canadian women”: “We all sat there looking at the fights, urging on our favourites, and there was a moment when I found myself laughing, thinking, ‘What the hell is being shared here!’ It was fantastic, wild” (Bök). If the appeal of the city is that it “widens your sense of the world” (Bök), Brand’s experience of the boxing match suggests sport as one area through which this “widening” occurs. Indeed, sport is an important aspect of culture, a major site through which meanings and identities are produced, transmitted, and expressed. This paper will discuss Brand’s representation of another sport, soccer, in *What We All Long For*. Although soccer appears only briefly in *What We All Long For*, it offers significant insight into the tension between global and national categories that has in many ways structured the novel’s reception.

Beyond illustrating sport’s capacity for cross-cultural sharing and the expression of identity, Brand’s anecdote about the boxing match suggests the extent to which, in the words of Donna Bailey Nurse, “being Canadian means having a hyphenated status.” When *What We All Long For* was

first published, it was widely hailed in the popular press as a comment on “hyphenated-Canadianness,” an expression of the urban, multicultural, and cosmopolitan “new” realities of Canadian society and space. A *Canadian Press* review, for instance, proclaimed the novel as “herald[ing] the arrival of truly 21st-century CanLit, with a blend of races and cultures that reflects the urban realities of Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and other cities across the country.” Nurse’s *Ottawa Citizen* review billed *What We All Long For* as a “watershed novel: From now on, Canadian writers will be pressed to portray contemporary Toronto in all its multiracial colour and polyphonic sound.” Writing in the *Guelph Daily Mercury*, Anne-Marie Tobin punningly proclaimed *What We All Long For* to be “CanLit’s New Brand.” Another way of putting all this, perhaps, is that the urban and multicultural ethos of *What We All Long For*—“CanLit’s New Brand”—represents a turn from the discursive and critical traditions that have situated Canadian identity in nature, survival, and the myth of the wilderness. As one *Toronto Star* review put it, “Canadian literature owes [Brand] a debt of gratitude” for “locat[ing] these places of grace in funky Toronto bars rather than some lake in northern Ontario or windswept prairie in Saskatchewan.” “I did not want to write poems / about stacking cords of wood, as if the world / is that simple,” Brand asserts in *Land To Light On* (iv), and the reviewers I have cited see *What We All Long For* as the novelistic outgrowing of this mentality.

The problem with reading *What We All Long For* as simply another salvo in Canada’s ongoing identity war is that Brand appears less interested in reorienting “Canadianness” than in rendering it obsolete. Rather than reshaping or restructuring “the crumbling ideas of nation and state” (Bök), *What We All Long For* appears to foreclose entirely on the possibility of any homogenous national identity. Brand’s protagonists, Tuyen, Carla, Oku, and Jackie, all fall between the cracks of their parents’ diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and the official versions of Canadianness they are subjected to in school, where each of these characters realizes at a young age that “nothing there was about them” and you have to wear “a blonde wig . . . [to] fit in” (19). Citizenship and belonging give way to becoming in *What We All Long For*, and Brand’s protagonists—like the city in which they live—are constantly being reinvented “under the constant construction of this and that” (183), the mutable flow of emotions, interests, allegiances, traditions, and geographies that they regularly traverse. The city functions as a “crossroads” (3) in *What We All Long For*, a place where “people turn into

other people" (5) and where "you can stand on a simple corner and get taken away in all directions" (154). The city is a place where "lives . . . are doubled, tripled, conjugated—women and men all trying to handle their own chain of events, trying to keep the story straight in their own heads" but in which "the lines of causality [are juggled], and before you know it, it's impossible to tell one thread from another" (5).

Importantly and expressly, the "crossroads" of the city is a multicultural and highly globalized space, a "polyphonic murmuring" (149) in which "there are Italian neighbourhoods and Vietnamese neighbourhoods . . . Chinese ones and Ukrainian ones and Pakistani ones and Korean ones and African ones. Name a region on the planet and there's someone from there, here" (4). The city and its inhabitants, then, are depicted as "borderless" (213) and reflect Brand's sense that "there aren't 'them' and 'us' anymore . . . it's a city of everyone" (qtd. in Walker). Rather than occupying a markedly "Canadian" field, Brand's protagonists appear to exist within a "global city" (Sassen), an urban space whose significance derives not from any particular national distinction but from "its position within the grid of world-class postcard cities" (Davey 266). How, then, are we to understand the readings, which see *What We All Long For* as a meditation on hyphenated-Canadian-ness or political intervention in the ongoing debate about national identity? If *What We All Long For* offers "an alternative to the boundaries of home and the nation-state" (Marlene Goldman, qtd. in Dobson 89), why has it so often been received in terms of national significance?

One possible answer to this question lies in the seemingly unlikely realm of soccer. Soccer is often hailed as "the global game," a label that, as Philip Moore suggests, "possesses the ring of a clever marketing slogan" but contains a good deal of "truth" in that "no other game is played by as many people, and no other sport has the numbers of spectators that [soccer] attracts" (117). Indeed, soccer has become a global game to the point that Richard Giulianotti has coined the term "soccerscape" to "refer to the geo-cultural circulation of [soccer's] constituent parts: players and coaches, fans and officials, goods and services, or information and artefacts" (24). But while "old boundaries between the local, the regional, the national, and the global are routinely penetrated or collapsed," soccer on the international level remains in many ways an "embod[iment] of the modern nation, often literally wrapping itself in the national flag, and beginning matches with a communal singing of the 'national anthem'" (Giulianotti 24; 23). Soccer, then, has been "one of the most significant loci of nationalization and

globalization concurrently” (Hedetoft 77-8), and, as such, provides a suitable “way of thinking about how people . . . identify themselves in this new [globalized] era” (Foer 5).

Soccer appears in *What We All Long For* by way of the 2002 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup Round of 16 match between Italy and Korea, which brought about both celebration and mourning in multiracial Toronto when Ahn Jung-Hwan scored in extra time to win the game for Korea. In Brand’s fictional retelling of this event, Tuyen circulates among the Korea Town celebrations taking pictures and revelling in the pleasure of “being in the middle of whirling people, people spinning on emotion” (204). The daughter of Vietnamese immigrants, Tuyen’s allegiance is with Korea: “She wasn’t Korean, of course, but the World Cup made her feel that way. No Vietnamese team had made it, so today she was Korean” (204). Despite cheering for one team over the other, however, Tuyen is more interested in the celebration than the soccer. She is described by the narrator as “[feeling] elated, infected by the mood on the street,” and the experience is said to “[remind] her of a year ago, when she and Oku went to Quebec to demonstrate against globalization” (204), a detail that refers to another real-life event, the 2001 Summit of the Americas meeting in Quebec City which proposed to extend free trade throughout the entire Western Hemisphere. For both Tuyen and Oku, the World Cup celebrations and the Quebec City protest are opportunities to “find something tingling on the skin, something where their blood rushed to their heads and they felt alive” (204-5). During the World Cup celebrations at least, the same becomes true for the “usually subdued Carla,” who surprises Tuyen and Oku by “waving a Korean flag and singing, ‘*Oh, Pil-seung Korea*’” (“Victory to Korea”)(209).

Brand’s depiction of the Korea Town celebration is certainly based in reality. After Korea’s win over Italy, “thousands of ecstatic fans pounded on traditional Korean drums, chanted the country’s name, and sang the national anthem as they danced and waved flags” on Toronto’s “Bloor St. between Christie and Bathurst Sts” (Taylor). Although the majority of the celebrants were Korean immigrants or of Korean descent, people of other ethnic and national backgrounds notably took part: according to journalist John Allemang, “the applause doubled for non-Korean flag-wavers who had infiltrated the instant party, an unforced multicultural gesture of both welcome and thanks” (19 June 2002). One particularly noteworthy aspect of Brand’s realism is that the Korea Town episode in *What We All Long For* seems to address purposefully

several themes that attended this event in the Toronto newspapers. For instance, one Korean fan, Simon Hong, was quoted in *The Globe and Mail* describing the win as “a good chance to show the people of Toronto that we exist,” while another, Chris Choi, suggested that the victory would help overcome the stereotype that [Koreans in Toronto] “own convenience stores” (Smith). Brand’s narrative seems to acknowledge these sentiments when Tuyen hears a television announcer exclaim that “I didn’t know we had a Korea Town in the city” and thinks to herself—identifying with the Korean community despite her Vietnamese ancestry—“Asshole . . . you wouldn’t. You fuckers live as if we don’t live here” (204). A similar moment occurs when *What We All Long For* appears to allude to a quotation from Jong Sik Lee, a Korea Town shop owner who told *Toronto Star* journalist Bill Taylor that Korea’s win made him “so very happy. This is the first time I’ve been so happy here [in Toronto].” A version of Lee’s comment appears in the novel when Oku mentions hearing “one Korean guy say . . . this was the happiest day he’d ever had in this city” (210). Oku interprets this comment as “visionary,” the evidence of “some world shit coming down” without which “this city would burn us all” (210, 211). As with Tuyen’s angry response to the television commentator, then, Oku sees the Korean victory not only as a triumph or “coming out” for the Korean community but as a cross-cultural moment that empowers anyone who identifies with its minority ethos.

Several academic articles have specifically commented on the soccer episode in *What We All Long For*. Kit Dobson, for instance, reads the comparison Tuyen draws between the Korea Town celebrations and the Quebec City protests as highlighting the extent to which the characters of *What We All Long For* “live lives that do not adhere to national or racial categories” (100). For Tuyen, Oku, and Carla, Dobson suggests, “the exclusions of the city and global capitalism are not to be reversed through the formation of oppositional counter-movements or a reliance upon nationalist communities” but through “the opportunities that they create to construct urban spaces for themselves” (100). Similarly, Diana Brydon has suggested that “Brand’s characters have left behind the colonial desire for a place on the map of the world” and that “they seek . . . a different kind of identification, more a claiming of the moment and the streets than a desire for external recognition” (98-9). For Brydon, the Korea Town celebrations work to “fuse, however briefly, transnational modes of connection in the local now” and illustrate the extent to which “[Brand’s] characters no longer find their identities in national belonging” but seek instead the thrill of the moment

and the energy of the crowd (99). Brydon identifies this “rush of collective belonging, across traditional class, racial, and national lines” as an example of “what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have called ‘the multitude’” (99), a collection of “singularities that act in common” as opposed to “the undifferentiated unity of the people” on which national belonging is predicated (qtd. in Brydon 99). Both Dobson and Brydon, then, see Brand’s representation of the World Cup as moving beyond traditional national categories, a post-national moment of local community and connection inspired by the provisional alignment of people’s energies and interests rather than any particular allegiance to nation, origin, or ethnicity.¹ Another way of saying this, perhaps, is that, contra the more popular and journalistic interpretations cited, academic critics have tended to see *What We All Long For* as “anti-national” (Dobson 88) and “transnational” (Brydon 99).

Inasmuch as they derive from Tuyen, Oku, and Carla’s particular attitudes toward the World Cup celebrations, Dobson’s and Brydon’s readings are certainly valid and align with the general thematic of Brand’s novel. But soccer also suggests a moment of slippage in *What We All Long For* that betrays the difficulty of moving beyond national categories and the continued efficacy of these categories in an ostensibly post-national world. Brand’s narrator specifies that during the World Cup “resurgent identities are lifted and dashed” and “small neighbourhoods that seemed at least slightly reconciled break into sovereign bodies” (203).² When soccer enters the narrative, then, the city ceases to be a “crossroads.” In fact, the possibility that the city ever was a “crossroads” is called into question by the characterization of Toronto’s ethnic neighbourhoods as only “slightly reconciled” in the first place. Either way, soccer breaks the tentative truce, dividing the city back into national and ethnic components. Soccer reimposes borders on the city’s “borderless” space, exposing the idea of borderlessness as a fictional construct and suggesting the extent to which old nationalisms remain in effect despite the post-national outlook of Brand’s characters. Indeed, the soccer episode is the only moment in *What We All Long For* where traditional national identifications—Korean, Italian—appear effectively intact.

One way to get at the significance of the soccer episode in *What We All Long For* is to consider why Brand chose to depict the FIFA World Cup rather than the other major sporting event that brought Torontonians to the streets in 2002, Canada’s men’s hockey gold-medal win over the United States at the Salt Lake City Olympics.³ When Team Canada brought home Olympic gold in men’s hockey for the first time in fifty years, “tens of thousands

of delirious hockey fans turned Yonge St. into the world's longest party" (Van Rijn and Teotonio). These "jubilant fans clad in Canadian hockey colours, maple leaves painted on their faces, fervently waved the flag and burst into impassioned renditions of 'O Canada'" (Van Rijn and Teotonio). The Olympic gold-medal victory was described in media outlets across the country as vindicating "our game" (Brunt), expressing "a shared dream and a common purpose" among Canadians ("Editorial"), and as "the win that defines a nation" (Al-Atraqchi). In one particularly noteworthy reaction to Team Canada's gold-medal win, Rick Salutin characterized the victory not simply as a nationalist moment but as a triumph of nationalism over globalization. For Salutin, the victorious Canadian hockey players "out[shone] the vapid heroes of globalization, like the dot-coms and Enrons, who never produced anything real or usable, and then vaporized." For Salutin, apparently, nationalism is tangible, usable, and, therefore valuable, while globalization is insubstantial, not grounded in reality, liable to evaporate or implode at any given moment. Nationalism, Salutin implies, gives us firm ground to stand on (or, in the case of hockey nationalism, ice to skate on), while globalization recedes before us, a momentary sleight of hand that provides nothing lasting or worthwhile.

If the men's hockey gold-medal win represented, at least to some, a triumph of Canadian nationalism over the forces of globalization, it is not difficult to see why Brand chose to depict the Korea Town World Cup celebrations instead. The apparently unifying, homogenizing sense of Canadianness occasioned by the Olympic hockey victory doesn't seem to exist in *What We All Long For*, or, if it does, expresses itself in the intolerant school system that demands conformity and in the racist police who hassle Oku and imprison Carla's brother Jamal. Surely the celebration occasioned by the Olympic hockey victory could have given Brand's characters the "tingling on the skin" they crave, the moment where "blood rushed to their heads and they felt alive." But the putatively definitive Canadianness of these celebrations—"the win that defines a nation"—represents much of what Brand's narrative sets out to render obsolete. Indeed, hockey has often been seen as "Canada's game," an expression of distinctive Canadian identity and unified national consciousness (see Beardsley, Gzowski, Richards, and Kidd and Macfarlane for a few examples of this characterization). Soccer, on the other hand, seems at least in some respects a more fitting choice for the post-national thematic of *What We All Long For*. Beyond being "the global game" and a game in which "national borders and national identities [have

seemingly] been swept into the dustbin . . . of history” (Foer 3), soccer has seldom been seen as an expressly “Canadian” game.

Although soccer doesn’t carry the markedly nationalistic overtones of hockey, the game has recently become a battleground in the ongoing culture war over Canadian identity. Simply put, the dilemma is this: should Canada have a unified and homogenous national identity, or is Canadian-ness best expressed through diversity, tolerance, pluralism, and multiculturalism? In soccer, this debate has centred in recent years on the role of the game in Canadian society and on its status at the national and international levels. Although soccer was widely played in Canada as early as the mid-nineteenth century, “local climate and cultural pressures to invent a national sports tradition ensured ice hockey and US sports became much more established” (Giulianotti 7; Jose and Rannie). As sport moved from the vernacular to the modern in Canada, soccer never acquired the nationalistic overtones of hockey or lacrosse (Morrow, “Lacrosse as the National Game”; Robidoux) and lacked the “stabilizing influence” of American involvement that helped popularize baseball (Morrow, “Baseball”). While Canadian soccer has thrived at the grassroots level during the last fifty or so years, the game has yet to truly catch on at the national level and remains in many ways perceived as “an alien intruder on Canadian soil” (Alan Metcalfe, qtd. in Leung).⁴

Buoyed by the brief success of the now defunct North American Soccer League (NASL), youth soccer exploded in Canada and the United States throughout the 1970s and 80s, mostly among “white, middle-class suburban children” (Giulianotti 36). The parents of these young soccer players were predominantly educated professionals, many of whom saw the game as “a cultural enclave from violent playing ethics or Afro-American domination” (Giulianotti 36). Aside from supplying shorthand for a newly ascendant demographic category, the soccer mom, the turn toward soccer by the suburban middle class seemed to many an abandonment of the national sporting traditions represented by hockey in Canada and baseball, basketball, and football in the United States (Waldstein and Wagg; Markovits and Hellerman). Indeed, soccer’s failure to gain significant support at the national level in Canada has frequently been attributed to hockey’s hegemony as “Canada’s game” (Leung), a point nicely illustrated by the fact that Canadian minor soccer has often been promoted as “a summer training program for . . . ice [hockey] enthusiasts” (Jose and Rannie 137). Furthermore, it was the “nation-building question”—the fact that American and Canadian

audiences wouldn't tolerate reliance on foreign players—that, in conjunction with a policy of overly aggressive expansion, ultimately brought about the end of the NASL in the early 1980s (Giulianotti 36; Waldstein and Wagg). By contrast, the current men's professional premier league in Canada and the United States, Major League Soccer (MLS), was created shortly after America hosted the World Cup in 1994 with a vision of measured expansion and the goal of appealing to ethnic groups with “an established [soccer] interest” (Giulianotti 37). Rather than predicated itself as “a modern mechanism for uniting the nation through sport,” then, the MLS “depends upon exploiting post-modern class and ethnic divisions” (Giulianotti 37).

Franklin Foer's insight that the American “anti-soccer lobby really articulates . . . a phobia of globalization” (243-4) can be equally applied to Canada. The perception of soccer as “an alien intruder on Canadian soil” doesn't imply an objection to soccer, per se, but to the blurring of national distinctions that the game appears to represent. As such, a certain segment of Canadian soccer fans have worked in recent years to “patriate” the game, to recast soccer as a marker of unified Canadian nationalism rather than the ethnic niche sport it has often been perceived to be. The drive to “Canadianize” soccer has been nowhere more evident than in the activities of the Voyageurs Canadian soccer fan club. Founded in 1996, the Voyageurs “have been a visible presence at Canadian national team games both in Canada and abroad, at all age levels, for both the men's and women's teams” (The Voyageurs). The stated goal of the Voyageurs is to build support for Canadian soccer at the national level, and to this end the club has been active in attending and distributing tickets to national team games, lobbying (and sometimes protesting) the Canadian Soccer Association, and working in various ways to raise the profile of Canadian soccer among fans and in the media. For instance, the Voyageurs Cup—a trophy funded entirely by member donations—is awarded annually to the winner of the Canadian Championship, a home and away series between the three Canadian MLS and United Soccer Leagues First Division (USL-1) teams (Toronto FC, Montreal Impact, and Vancouver Whitecaps).⁵

One of the major frustrations expressed by the Voyageurs is that Canadian fans often cheer against their country in international matches. Supporters of Canada's national teams frequently complain that “during Canadian [soccer] matches on home soil . . . people living in Canada tend to cheer for the visiting country if they share common ethnic or cultural heritage with the visitors” (*The Kick About*). This has been true to the point that a recent

thread on the Voyageurs online discussion forum condemned the Canadian Soccer Association for booking a men's World Cup qualifying match between Canada and Jamaica at BMO Field in Toronto because of the city's large Jamaican population. Several posts even went so far as to strategize about managing Jamaican-Canadian attendance and mobilizing fans who would support the Canadian side (The Voyageurs, "Canada/Jamaica"). Similar expressions of homogenizing nationalism can be seen in the Voyageurs' attempts to keep Canadian-born players such as Owen Hargreaves and Jonathan de Guzman from joining other national teams, and hence becoming ineligible to play for Canada.⁶

These few brief examples should suffice to illustrate that what the Voyageurs want to achieve through national-level soccer is the expression of a unified and homogenous Canadian identity. This effort is a backlash not only against globalization, but against the idea of multicultural pluralism, which purports to value diversity, tolerance, and heterogeneity rather than insisting on the definitive Canadianness implied by a "national" sport.⁷ But while soccer has been mobilized in the service of homogenous nationalism by fans of teams such as the Voyageurs, it has also worked to signify Canadian multiculturalism. One example of this is the extent to which Canadian amateur, semi-professional, and professional play remains organized along old ethnic and national lines. The Canadian Soccer League (CSL), for instance, classifies its teams into two divisions, one of which is composed of teams such as Portugal FC and Toronto Croatia that are formed by members of a particular national or ethnic community. By way of contrast, Australia, another post colonial immigrant nation in which soccer has traditionally been seen as an interloper on local sporting traditions such as rugby and Australian football, attempted during the 1980s to "Aussify" [soccer] clubs by demanding that they change their ethnic names—hence, for example, Sydney Croatia became Sydney United" (Giulianotti 38). Despite the fact that Australia adopted a policy of official multiculturalism around the same time as Canada in the early 1970s, then, Australian soccer has been, at least nominally, far more homogenous.

Another way in which soccer has appeared to represent Canadian multiculturalism was in Canada's hosting of the 2007 FIFA Men's Under-20 World Cup, which, despite the fact that the Canadian team failed to score even one goal throughout the tournament, managed to set a new event attendance record. This remarkable accomplishment for a traditionally "non-soccer" nation was frequently attributed in the Canadian media to

cultural diversity, or, to put it another way, to the type of fan the Voyageurs protest, those who cheer for the team of their ethnic or national heritage rather than that of the country they currently call “home.” Because of its multicultural diversity and because it doesn’t require assimilation in the realm of soccer allegiance, Canada is, according to some, “the perfect venue for a World Cup” (Starnes). Furthermore, in conjunction with the U-20 World Cup tournament, the CBC broadcast its first-ever “Soccer Day in Canada,” the purpose of which was to “celebrate the beautiful game and provide a snapshot of the sport’s growing popularity” (“CBC”). Obviously patterned on the more established “Hockey Day in Canada,” an annual documentary-style program that works to mythologize hockey as a marker of Canadian identity, “Soccer Day in Canada” eschewed the homogenizing nationalism of its ectype in order to focus on the diverse range of Canadians who are interested in soccer.

The point of this compact survey is that soccer signifies both multiculturalism and homogenizing nationalism by various turns in Canadian society, and, as such, functions as a subset of the larger debate over national identity I have outlined. Simply by its presence in *What We All Long For*, soccer reveals that national identity remains a going concern in Canadian society and suggests the extent to which this debate continues to be carried out as a back-and-forth between pluralism and diversity on the one hand and unity and assimilation on the other. Hence a focus on soccer helps explain the novel’s reception in traditionally national terms: while Brand may be interested in moving beyond the framing category of nation, soccer reveals the extent to which many Canadians on both sides of the identity debate simply are not. In the framework of soccer’s complex and often contradictory meanings in Canadian society, of course, Brand’s depiction of the game evokes multiculturalism rather than the insular nationalism of the Voyageurs. Given that there are few other countries in which an event such as the Korea Town celebration could achieve critical mass and unfold without, to borrow a phrase from Foer, “unleashing hooligan hell” (248), it certainly isn’t unreasonable to read the soccer episode in *What We All Long For* as describing a uniquely “Canadian” multicultural moment.⁸ Seen in this light, soccer also helps explain why many readers have interpreted *What We All Long For* as an argument for Canadian multiculturalism rather than the cosmopolitan, urban, post-national, and highly globalized move beyond the “crumbling ideas of nation and state” that Brand seems to have intended.

In fairness to Brand it should be noted that *What We All Long For* “provides a shocking climax near its end that turns the reader back to the rest of the text with a new perspective on its meaning” (Brydon 104). The re-reading provoked by the novel’s ending suggests that Brand isn’t unequivocal in her valorization of the urban, post-national community she presents. Interestingly for the purposes of this paper, it is perhaps possible to see soccer as symbolically participating in Brand’s closing equivocation. Well after the Korea Town episode in *What We All Long For*, Tuyen’s long-lost brother Quy comments that “Korea beat Italy. You never know, they could beat Germany next. But I doubt it. That Teutonic bunch have no creativity, but they have order” (283). Indeed, Korea’s success in the 2002 World Cup was attributed by some to growing cultural individualism and increased allowance for player creativity, represented tangibly by new hairstyles and the supervision of a Dutch coach (see Allemang, 20 June 2002). Quy’s prediction, however, ultimately does come true, as Germany went on to defeat Korea in their semifinal match during the actual 2002 World Cup. If order trumps creativity, then, perhaps the old national categories, the forces that seek to incorporate Tuyen and her friends into the structures and strictures of a homogenous Canadian identity, ultimately win out? At the end of the story Quy is beaten, possibly to death, which seems to call into question the prospect of the urban, post-national community that much of the novel appears to endorse, a resolution which Brand herself has described as ambivalent, “neither optimistic or pessimistic” (Bök).

If *What We All Long For* remains to some extent an attempt to “[imagine] possible collective futures not constrained by exclusionary teleological narratives or the ossified social relations such narratives engender,” Brand’s treatment of soccer testifies that “the ‘well worn’ paths of these narratives are not easy to abandon” (as Maia Joseph has argued of Brand’s memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return*, 76). Beyond proposing what Brydon calls a “trans-national” moment that simultaneously betrays the extent to which national categories are still in effect, Brand’s inclusion of soccer tacitly testifies to the ongoing-ness of the debate over Canadian identity that *What We All Long For* seeks to move beyond. Both in the novel and in Canadian society in general, soccer suggests the unwieldy persistence of national categories and testifies to the framing power these categories still possess. Although soccer is not “the last acceptable form of nationalism” in Canadian society (as Anne Applebaum has argued of the game’s role in Europe), it illustrates that—even in the current historical moment of alleged globalization and

post-nationalism—much continues to be at stake in the cultural consumption and construction of Canadianness.

NOTES

- 1 The extent to which Brand wanted to underscore the global signification of the soccer episode is perhaps further suggested by a minor discrepancy between the novelistic rendering and the actual World Cup match. Brand's narrator mentions that "Korea is playing Italy in Japan" (203), which was not actually the case in the real-life World Cup competition: although Japan and South Korea co-hosted the tournament, the Korea-Italy match took place in Daejeon, South Korea. While this detail is probably a minor error rather than creative liberty, the effect of proposing Japan as the venue is to contribute to the feeling of internationalism that the soccer episode seems intended to convey.
- 2 Dobson acknowledges this passage as "demarcate[ing] the city" along "national lines," but tempers this observation with the assertion that Tuyen, Oku, and Carla's participation in the World Cup celebrations rejects "the exclusions of nationalism" (100).
- 3 Although Canada's women's hockey team won gold as well, the public celebration and much of the media spotlight was reserved for the men's team, a fact which indicates the extent to which "so-called national sports afford men—in general, and certain men in particular—an opportunity to represent the nation in a way not open to women" (Adams 74).
- 4 It is worth noting that Canada's national women's soccer team has enjoyed far more international success and, arguably, more fan support than the men's team. Canada has been relatively successful in women's soccer, a fact which some attribute to a less competitive field resulting from the prominence of the men's game in many established soccer nations (Wheeler). While some fans believe that "the future of Canadian soccer lies within the women's game" (Leung), others maintain "a strong men's national program would be far better for soccer in this nation than a strong women's program" (Wheeler).
- 5 USL-1 is the second division of men's professional soccer in Canada and the United States, one tier beneath the MLS. The Vancouver Whitecaps will be promoted to the MLS in 2011 as an expansion franchise.
- 6 FIFA rules specify that once players take part in a sanctioned international match they cannot change national team allegiances. Owen Hargreaves is an elite-level Canadian-born player whom the Voyageurs repeatedly petitioned to play internationally for Canada during the late 1990s. When Hargreaves chose to play for England instead in 2001, his decision angered many Voyageurs members to the point that Hargreaves was labelled a traitor and nicknamed "Whoregreaves" on the Voyageurs' discussion forum. More recently the Voyageurs made similar efforts to convince another Canadian-born player, Jonathan De Guzman, to play internationally for Canada, only to be disappointed when De Guzman opted for The Netherlands in February 2008.
- 7 Brand, of course, as well as others such as Eva Mackey and Himani Bannerji, has argued that institutional multiculturalism in Canada actually functions as a policy for managing—rather than encouraging—difference.
- 8 Probably the closest analogues to the place of soccer in Canadian society are Australia and the United States, both of which have been more successful than Canada in recent international competition, and, as such, more successful in building fan followings for their respective national teams. Australia qualified for the 2006 World Cup (where they

made it past pool play to the Round of 16) and was in the same year admitted to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), a move which has allowed the Australian national team to face more talented opposition and play more frequently. While Australia's modest move forward as a soccer nation has brought about increased support, the gains of American soccer at the national level have been even more dramatic. According to Richard Giulianotti, America's hosting of the 1994 World Cup "symboliz[ed] a watershed in both the game's American fortunes and in the nation's sense of identity" (36). While soccer has yet to achieve the "national" aura of baseball, football, or basketball in American culture, it is beginning to outgrow its status as a suburban and ethnic niche sport. After qualifying for the 1998 World Cup and making the quarter-finals in the 2002 World Cup, American national teams have achieved not only acceptance but a devoted following of fans. During the 2006 World Cup in Germany, a large contingent of American fans "flocked [into] the streets near the [American] team's hotels, swarmed into viewing areas to watch games on large-screen TVs, and filled sections of the stadiums in which the American team played" (Mahoney). Furthermore, "the U.S. Soccer Federation sold all its available tickets quickly and fielded requests for thousands more before and during the tournament" (Mahoney). On a purely anecdotal level, I was in Germany during the 2006 World Cup and remember being surprised at the large numbers of flag-waving Americans among the screaming crowds of nationally and ethnically diverse fans. By contrast, Canada joined FIFA in 1914 but has succeeded in qualifying for the World Cup only once, a fact which—in addition to the cultural hegemony of hockey—has also been blamed for soccer's failure to achieve recognition as a "Canadian" game.

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