



Whatever Singularity in de Bernières' *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores Louis de Bernières' novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* from the perspective of Giorgio Agamben's concept of "whatever singularity", the main theme of his *The Coming Community*. Agamben's work provides a clear distinction from homogenized communities and nations to argue for the possibility of how groups and peoples living together without reducing their distinct individual and cultural identities to sameness. Besides, whatever singularities border 'in-between' spaces and thresholds and that is the space where friendship emerges from. In this context, the article aims to apply Agamben's essay 'The Friend' to explore the concept of friendship. The novel is set mainly during the Italian and Nazi occupations of the Greek island of Cephalonia in World War II. Although occupying forces aim to constitute a fixed society, intercommunal friendship emerges between different nations. In this regard, the love between the Italian soldier Captain Corelli and the local girl Pelagia, as well as the friendship among Dr. Iannis, Captain Corelli, and Carlo Piero Guercio will be examined in terms of friendship and 'whatever singularity'. Moreover, the friendship between 'The Good Nazi' Günter Weber, who is forced to shoot his Italian friends, and Captain Corelli will be investigated through the concept of friendship. In the narrative, the Communist Greek resistance group ELAS, a destructive occupying force, tries to form a fixed homogenous ideological group on the island bearing similarities with fascist and Nazi groups. Therefore, this will also be discussed in the context of the tension between heterogeneous and homogenous communities.

Keywords: Agamben, whatever singularity, threshold, bordering, friendship



Introduction

British author Louis de Bernières' novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (1994) depicts the occupation of the Greek island of Cephalonia first by the Italians, then the Nazis, and eventually, following the departure of the Nazis, by ELAS, the Greek Communist resistance during the Second World War. Moreover, the love story between a mandolin-playing Italian soldier, Captain Antonio Corelli, and a local girl, Pelagia, is presented as a main theme in the novel. As Sheppard argues, the novel is "normally and exclusively read as a love story" (2002, p. 51). In the novel, however, war is an important theme that is related to borders between different nations. Although the themes of love and war overlap in the novel, it reveals a friendship that occurs even across the borders of political enmity (MacMillan, 2020, p. 10).

During the occupation, Captain Corelli is staying at Dr. Iannis's home and is ostracised by the locals, and the doctor's daughter Pelagia; however, Captain Corelli and his troops earn the islanders' trust over time. First, Pelagia attempted to treat him "as badly as she could", however, Corelli's behavior towards her and the villagers was "polite and submissive" (p. 246). Despite their different nationalities, the Italian soldiers and the Greeks share a way of life that reveals a sense of friendliness, while sitting outside in the yard listening to the captain's mandolin and teasing each other (p. 225-252). In this sense, their togetherness without the common contributes to the sense of these characters as whatever beings as it emerges in the in-between spaces and the thresholds.

The island is occupied many times by different groups; first by the Italians, then the Nazis, and eventually, after the departure of the Nazis, by ELAS, the Greek Communist resistance. The Communist Greek People's Liberation Army, ELAS, is supposed to protect the inhabitants of the island against the fascist occupying forces; however, it terrorizes the people on the island and sparks the civil war which can be seen as a threat to the Greek community. Therefore, it is ELAS itself that resembles its enemies by posing the greatest threat to the inhabitants of the island, with a connection to the Greek Communist organization whose members belonged to the military wing of the EAM (p. 229). Thus, all members of the party were easily duped into believing that they were part of the national liberation struggle (p. 229). Hence, the anti-Nazi Greek resistance group ELAS will be examined as the most destructive force against the Greek community.

In this regard, the events are told from the perspectives of different characters, including Pelagia and her father, Dr. Iannis, Mandras (Pelagia's fiancé), and Carlo Guercio, a homosexual Italian soldier who sacrifices his own life to save Captain Corelli. Moreover, the dictators', Mussolini and Metaxas, points of view are narrated, and their aims are presented in the novel as a tragic break in the history of Cephalonia.

Besides, Dr. Iannis' *A Personal History of Cephalonia* portrays the past invasions and occupations of the island by several imperial forces, including the Romans, the Venetians, the Ottomans, and the British. The island's history of invasions plays an important part in shaping the culture of Cephalonia. Particularly, the Venetian occupation has a great effect on the island by leaving it with an Italian flavor, especially in its architecture and language. The influence of "Italian words and manners of speech" on the islanders' language is such that many, including Doctor Iannis and Pelagia, speak Italian as a second language (p. 146). Thus, language can be seen as a shared apparatus that establishes the dynamics of togetherness. As Captain Corelli said to Dr. Iannis at their first encounter:

"You speak Italian very well, you are the first one I have come across...It seems that no one here speaks Italian".

"You are very kind," said Dr. Iannis, "but I think you will find that those of us who do speak Italian will suddenly lose our memory when required to do so." (p. 199)

In this sense, the island is an arguably hybrid place. Golban argues that Dr. Iannis can be analyzed in terms of hybridity because he "represents a clear case of 'dislocation' of the self, his position in relation to the notion of 'the Greek' or 'the Italian' describing a situation of inexorable ambiguity" (2014, p. 347). In addition, MacMillan describes the last two invasions, like the previous ones, as important factors that shaped the island's culture for better or worse; "the wartime invasions of the island by the Italians and then the Nazis are just the latest in the island's long history of domination by outsiders, conquests which, for better or worse, have shaped the island's culture" (p. 24). Thus, concerning alterity, the novel explores the theme of in-betweenness, national boundaries, and friendship; this article will refer to Agamben's writing on community and friendship in the frame of existence with an other.

In Agamben's *The Coming Community*, he suggests the concept of "whatever being" which offers a perspective of a community that has no requirements for belonging and thus avoids alienating others on the basis of alterity. Therefore, through Agamben's approach, "whatever beings" can be considered as existing in their distinctness without being defined by their distinctness. As Agamben puts forward, "These pure singularities communicate only in the empty space of the example, without being tied by any common property, by any identity. They are expropriated of all identity, so as to appropriate belonging itself, the sign. Tricksters or fakes, assistants or 'toons, they are the exemplars of the coming community" (1993, p. 11). In this context, the characters, who are distinct from each other in their alterity but without being defined by it, can be explored in de Bernières' novel from the basis of Agamben's approach.

Furthermore, the whatever being exists in in-between spaces, between the particular and universal, and is defined as if walking a tightrope between the common and the proper by Agamben (1993, p. 21). Additionally, Agamben integrates the concept of the threshold into his discussion by emphasizing the idea of bordering. He sees the threshold as the place where one encounters with an other, and so enabling friendship to occur. In this sense, the characters, who appear as whatever beings in the novel, border the conventional categories by shifting their national identities or living together regardless of their alterity; thus, they can be linked to Agamben's concept of friendship which focuses on living and being together without being identified by a common property. Besides, the story of friendship between Captain Corelli and Günter Weber, the 'Good Nazi', who is forced to shoot his Italian 'friends', will be analyzed from Agamben's perspective on the essence of the concept of *philia* (friendship) and co-existence with the *Philos* (friend). In this context, Agamben, both in *The Coming Community* and his essay "The Friend", discusses living together without belonging to a particular class except belonging to oneself and sensing one's existence. (2009, p. 33). By examining *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* through the concepts discussed by Agamben, this paper will focus on the ethical aspects of being together with the other in both a philosophical and a political framework.

Being Together with the Other- *Philia*

Agamben revisits the Aristotelian definition of friendship in which friendship means being together in a *polis*, community. For Aristotle friendship is extremely necessary for living and it is the duty and basis of politics. In his *Politics*, one of Aristotle's main

concepts is *zoon politikon* which means “man is a political animal” (Bennington, 2009, p. 22). He says, “It is evident from these considerations, then, that a city-state is among the things that exist by nature, that a human being is by nature a political animal” (trans. Reeve, p. 4). As may be understood, this idea leads us to conceive the nature of human beings who share communal life with others in the *polis*. Therefore, it can be said that political beings, who live together, are sure to know each other, thus revealing friendship. In the context of the *polis*, Aristotle focuses on the relationships in which human beings exist, otherwise, they will not be a part of the state; as he says, “But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state” (trans. Jowett, pp. 4-5). Thus, existence implies a shared way of life, which is also obvious in Agamben’s approach to friendship.

In ‘The Friend’, Agamben focuses on the *Nicomachean Ethics* books 8 and 9 in which Aristotle describes friendship and the friend. Agamben concentrates on the Aristotelian theory of friendship from an ontological perspective, so that it can be considered as the ‘con-sentiment’ of the existence of a friend with the concept of sentiment. He emphasizes the ancient Greek word *synaisthanomai*, in which, ‘syn’ means ‘with’ and ‘aisthanomai’ means ‘to perceive’ in English. The word *synaisthanomai* (con-sent) refers to the idea of living together (*syzen*) which alludes to the existence of a friend as desirable. Thus, Agamben emphasises the ‘con-sentiment’ which refers to the *aisthesis* (sensation) of the pure being or existing. Aristotle points out, “Existence is desirable because one senses that it is a good thing, and this sensation [*aisthesis*] is in itself sweet. One must therefore also “con-sent” that his friend exists, and this happens by living together and by sharing acts and thoughts in common [*koinonein*]. In this sense, we say that humans live together [*syzen*], unlike cattle that share the pasture together. . .” (2009, p. 33).

In this context, Agamben highlights the phrase “unlike cattle that share the pasture together” by indicating the difference between an animal community and a human community. Although “the Aristotelian expression could simply stand for ‘partaking in the same’”, Agamben underlines that human community, through living together, is not defined by “the participation in a common substance”, but rather by a sharing life itself and the experience of friendship. In the light of these explanations, existence can be identified as the only common thing that is shared by the characters in *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin*. As has been mentioned, the war is seen as a destructive force for Cephalonia, however, the friendship between the islanders and their political enemies

occurs under the Italian and the Nazi occupation. Their harmonious living together, even for a short time, is clearly illustrated in many of the scenes.

At first, the distinction between separate identities is clearly presented, particularly in Dr. Iannis' relationship with Captain Corelli. Pelagia and Dr. Iannis were trying to treat him as badly as they could do to show their resistance to the Italian occupation of the island. The tension was felt while Dr. Iannis was offering Corelli dinner by saying "This is Cephalonian meat pie [...] except that thanks to your people, it doesn't have any meat in it" (1994, p. 236-7). However, Captain Corelli's sense of humor and friendly manner helped him to avoid conflict with them. In time, he was not just an Italian anymore in Pelagia's eyes; she began to see him as a respectful and attractive man; "The trouble was that he was no longer just an Italian, he was Captain Antonio Corelli, who played the mandolin and was very charming and respectful. In any case, she could have shot him with the derringer by now, she could have cracked his pate with a frying pan, and the temptation had not arisen" (p. 247). Moreover, he became a part of the household, and she noticed that she had lost her anger, which puzzled and upset her. She was quite used to seeing him and in fact, he became "as much a fixture in the house as the goat or her own father" (p. 250). These examples can be regarded in terms of them perceiving other's existence as sweet and desirable, as the narrator says, "The unfortunate truth was that Italian invader or not, he made life more various, rich and strange" (p. 251). As seen from the examples, their distinctions do not separate them but rather provide an authentic relationship between them that can be considered as a "con-sentiment" of the existence of the other from the perspective of Agamben's concept.

According to Agamben, the sensation of existence is con-divided, and "friendship is the name of this 'con-division'" (p. 34). Since it is the division of intersubjectivity, it does not mean the relationships between subjects. Agamben refers to the sharing of existence, so being itself is divided and it becomes dissimilar; "Rather being itself is divided here. It is nonidentical to itself and so the I and the friend are the two faces, or the two poles of this con-division or sharing" (p. 34). This other self is called a *heteros autos*; *heteros* means alterity in the sense of an opposition between two, as in heterogeneity, while *autos* means "self". Therefore, when I perceive my existence as sweet, my sensation corresponds to "con-sentiment" which dislocates and deports my sensation toward the friend, toward the other self" (p. 35).

In this sense, the friendship between Captain Corelli and Dr. Iannis can also be seen as a fitting example of the 'con-sentiment' of the existence of the friend. Although at first, Dr. Iannis disliked Captain Corelli, they developed a friendship over time. While Corelli was leaving the island, he had a very touching conversation with Dr. Iannis. Before Captain Corelli left the island, he said to Pelagia and Dr. Iannis, "After so much time with you two, I shall see things and imagine what you would have said. I shall miss you very badly" (p. 429). This statement clearly expresses the 'con-division' of sensation because Captain Corelli saw them as other-selves. Despite his Italian nationality, he embraced his friends' culture and their way of living on the island. Thus, he and his friends can be considered as two poles of this sharing.

Furthermore, Dr. Iannis' statement might be another example of this sharing and con-division. As he said, "Antonio if I have ever had a son, it was you. You have a place at this table" (p. 430). This scene also reflects the intensity of Dr. Iannis' sensation which turns into a consenting of the existence of Captain Corelli by accepting him as his son, as his other-self. As Agamben says, "This intensity is the *syn*, the "con-" or "with," that divides, disseminates, and renders sharable (actually, it has always been shared) the same sensation, the same sweetness of existing" (p. 35). Through these examples, the narrator shows their shared existence, shared way of life, and being together without commonality. In this sense, the only common thing they shared is the *aisthesis* of existing.

At this point, the most notable example of the *aisthesis* of existing in the novel is the story of Günter Weber, who was required to shoot his Italian friends (p. 239). The friendship between the German Nazi, Weber and Captain Corelli started when they were on the beach having fun, drinking wine, or playing football together (pp. 214,440). Despite their different political stances, Corelli and Weber developed their friendship, and Corelli thought that Weber was too young and naive to understand this senseless violence. Despite the political differences between them, Weber joined Corelli's opera club and even organized and delivered a motorcycle to Corelli so he could go places with Pelagia where they had never been before on the island. Furthermore, when Weber was ordered to shoot his friends, he requested that his protest be recorded and put in his file. Since Weber reluctantly agreed to participate in the massacre, he begged for forgiveness from his (former) friends before the shooting:

'Antonio, I am very sorry, I tried'...

'I am sure you did, Günter. I know how it goes...'.

Weber's face trembled with suppressed tears and desperation, and at last he said suddenly,

'Forgive me.'

Carlo sneered, 'You will never be forgiven.' But Corelli put his hand up to silence his friend, and said quietly,

'Günter, I forgive you. If I do not, who will!' (p. 397)

What is notable here is Captain Corelli consented to his shooting which might refer to the instance of the "con-sentiment" of the existence of the friend. By putting emphasis on the word "con-sent" in respect to the existence of the friend, it might be said that Corelli accepted him as a friend such as he was. As Agamben says, "Friendship is the instance of this 'con-sentiment' of the existence of the friend within the sentiment of existence itself" (2009, p. 34). In this sense, Captain Corelli arguably "con-sent" ed to the existence of Weber; thus, he forgave him for the sake of "con-sentiment" of existing which was the only common thing they shared during their friendship.

After the inhabitants in Cephalonia rose up against the Germans and fought them all the way to the sea, Günter Weber ashamedly stayed away from Dr.Iannis and Pelagia's house. Before he left the island, he left his gramophone and collection outside Pelagia's door. He left an envelope underneath the lid, when Pelagia opened it, she found a photograph depicting Captain Corelli and the Lieutenant on the beach, their arms about each other's shoulders. Underneath, Weber had written in Italian, "God be with you, I will remember you always" (p. 441). In this sense, Weber was also pleased with the existence of Corelli, not in the sense of sharing thoughts and acts in common, but through sharing despite not having anything in common. Agamben emphasizes living together without commonality, through what is not held in common. Therefore, friendship is related to the concept of "sentiment", and so, Agamben describes friendship as the experience of sensing one's existence. As he says "To recognize someone as a friend means not being able to recognize him as a 'something.' Calling someone 'friend' is not the same as calling him 'white,' 'Italian,' or 'hot,' since friendship is neither a property nor a quality of a subject" (2009, p. 31). Thus, Agamben associates friendship with existence, without categorizing or objectifying differences.

Departing from the idea of friendship, the idea of whatever singularity can also illuminate this investigation of the problem of commonality between the islanders and

the invaders. Although war and political profits threaten the humans on the island, they also provoke friendship between the different classes and nations residing there. Thus, this situation brings to mind the idea of whatever singularity, emerges with alterity without being indicated by it. Therefore, it is necessary to visit *The Coming Community* to comprehend Agamben's argument in the context of living together without common qualifications.

Whatever Singularity

In *The Coming Community* (1993), Agamben depicts a future community in which belonging is not defined by any criteria and requirements, but non-criterion for a community that marks belonging to the community. Agamben starts his argument by declaring the idea "The coming being is whatever being" (1993, I) which indicates pure singularity without categorical impositions. Therefore, Agamben offers the idea of singularity that only belongs to its uniqueness. The etymological root of whatever singularity is *quodlibet ens*, in which *quod* means "what," *libet* means "desire," and *ens* means "being" (1993, p. 1). What is important in this discussion is establishing the right definition of this Latin statement. *Quodlibet ens* does not mean 'being it does not matter which'. On the contrary, it means 'being such that it always matters'. Therefore, the Latin statement is clearly "a reference to the will (*libet*)" so that "Whatever being has an original relation to desire" (p. 1). As Agamben states, "the Whatever in question here relates to singularity not in its indifference to common property (to a concept, for example: being red, being French, being Muslim), but only in its being such as it is (emphasis added). Singularity is thus freed from the false dilemma that obliges knowledge to choose between the ineffability of the individual and the intelligibility of the universal" (pp. 2-3). Thus, whatever being is like walking a tightrope between the common and the proper because it is in the boundary between the universal and particular (p.21). Since whatever beings do not belong anywhere, without any property or identity, they are exemplars of liminal beings. Since "whatever is the figure of pure singularity" and "has no identity," "belonging is here only the relation to an empty and indeterminate totality" which can be seen as a liminal position (pp. 68-9).

Departing from these ideas, the characters in the novel can fit into Agamben's idea of whatever being as a liminal being. In this context, Captain Corelli can be seen as an example of *quodlibet ens* when he frequently remarked that determination such as nationality was just incidental in his statements of love, such as "...being a Greek or an

Italian is incidental" (p. 355) or "...we are brother and sister before she is Greek or I am invader" (p. 303). Here, as is evident, in this kind of love, the other is desired as lovable not because of the predicates that she has, but she is only referred to as "such-and-such being [...] reclaimed for its being-such, for belonging itself" (p. 2). This, then, contributes to the sense of these characters as whatever beings. As Agamben says, "Seeing something simply in its being-thus- irreparable, but not for that reason necessary; thus, but not for that reason contingent- is love" (p. 25). Therefore, Agamben's concept of whatever being intends to determine any singularity in terms of being pure singularities that are not defined by common properties.

In this regard, *Quodlibet* refers to the one doing the love (the Lover) and the one being loved (the Lovable) with all its predicates, its 'as such'. This acceptance of singularity creates an idea of "whatever you want, that is, lovable"; "Thus, whatever singularity (the Lovable) is never the intelligence of something, of this or that quality of essence, but only the intelligence of an intelligibility". According to Plato, that movement is described as "erotic anamnesis", which is "the movement that transports the object not toward another thing or another place, but toward its own taking-place-toward the Idea" (p. 3). Thus, for Agamben, singularity is defined as lovable, and so it desires all its properties.

In this context, Pelagia can be defined as an example of whatever singularity and as a liminal being since she accepted Corelli with all predicates such as he is. As she said "Who cares about Greece? Where is Antonio?" (p. 390). Being-as-such is the main characteristic of the coming community as is seen in the relationship between Pelagia and Captain Corelli. Both characters rejected their own nationality, resisting belonging to the particular property after they witnessed the disparate facts of their countries.

Pelagia had taken pride in the idea that she lived at the very center, but now, if such a thing is possible, she gave up being a Greek... (t) the barbarity of the civil war had knocked out of her forever the Hellenic faith which her father has instilled in her. She could no longer believe that she was heir to the greatest and most exquisite culture in the history of the earth; Ancient Greece may have been the same place as modern Greece, but it was not the same country and it did not contain the same people. (De Bernières, 1994, p. 462)

Similarly, Antonio Corelli explained why he was ashamed of being Italian and became a Greek citizen:

After the war all the facts came out. Abyssinia, Libya, persecution of Jews, atrocities, untried political prisoners by the thousand, everything. I was ashamed of being an invader. I was so ashamed that I did not want to be Italian anymore. I've been living in Athens for about twenty-five years. I'm a Greek citizen. But I go home to Italy quite a lot. I go to Tuscany in the summer. (p. 519)

In this sense, the love between Captain Corelli and Pelagia represents the ideal of *quodlibet*. Even though Captain Corelli stood for the Greek community after the war, he did it for the sake of his love to border the possibilities of characteristics of Greekness. They were not bound by fixed identities. Rather than relying on normative fixed identities, then, they were bordering the possibilities of whatever singularity; as Agamben says;

Whatever is the figure of pure singularity. Whatever singularity has no identity, it is not determinate with respect to a concept, but neither is it simply indeterminate; rather it is determined only through its relation to an idea, that is, to the totality of its possibilities. Through this relation, as Kant said, singularity borders all possibility and thus receives its *omnimoda determinatio* not from its participation in a determinate concept or some actual property (being red, Italian, Communist), but *only by means of this bordering*. (1993, p. 67)

In this context, the characters, who bordered such fixed categorical identities, were able to see each other as singularities, such as they were. Thus, in this bordering, friendship emerges. As has been discussed in the context of the *aisthesis* of existence, the characters as whatever beings consent with each other's existence such as it is. At this point, Carlo can be seen as the most obvious example of a character who borders normative categories. Carlo was a nobleman who never classified people based on their identities. The following scene, in which he argued with Günter about morality, may be given as an example of bordering fixed categories. As he said, "And science is about facts and morality is about values. They are not the same thing and they don't grow together. No one can find a value on the slide of a microscope. It might be true that Jews are evil or inferior, for instance, how would I know? But how does that mean

that we should treat them with injustice? I don't understand the reasoning" (p. 350). This scene may also indicate that, as he existed on the threshold of fixed categories, he tended to view other people as bordering these categories too. Thus, Carlo rejected the determination of any identity or belonging, rendering him an example of whatever singularity.

After Carlo sacrificed himself for Captain Corelli in the firing squad, Velisarios found his dead body and brought it to Dr. Iannis' home. He buried Carlo under the olive tree in his courtyard. While Pelagia was weeping and Velisarios was kneading his hat in his hands, the doctor made an oration for him;

Our friend, who arrived as an enemy, has passed over the meadows of asphodel. We found him fuller of the knowledge of goodness than any other mortal man. We remember that his many decorations were for saving lives, not for destroying them...the spirit of Carlo Guercio shall live in the light as long as we have tongues to speak of him and tales to tell our friends...He was one who could have said, 'I am a citizen, not of Athens or of Rome, but of the world. (p. 415)

This oration displays a deep affection for friendship and a manifestation of a shared way of life. Carlo as whatever being showed respect for the existence of everyone, and he was praised and loved by the Greek people, too. Carlo was not alienated by the islanders or defined by his alterity, he was considered "a citizen of the world". Furthermore, Dr. Iannis' statement can be seen from Agamben's point that the lover is desired only insofar as it is such. This example stands for whatever singularity's existence in the borderland. In this bordering, friendship emerges and it provides an awareness of the existence of the other.

In this sense, in this bordering, Agamben points out the boundary with an external space which is closely related to the concept of the "threshold" in the 'Outside' chapter of *The Coming Community*. Agamben sees the threshold as an experience of the limit, a passage, and the experience of external space. He says, "The outside is not another space that resides beyond a determinate space, but rather, it is the passage, the exteriority that gives it access. The threshold is not, in this sense another thing with respect to the limit; it is, so to speak, the experience of the limit itself, the experience of being-within an outside" (1993, p. 68). Agamben emphasizes that the threshold provides the

incorporation and the interaction between singularities by bordering the fixed categories that might place them in empty space.

In this respect, Velisarios did not leave Carlo's dead body in the firing area and brought him to Dr. Iannis even though he was an Italian invader. They buried him in his courtyard which might have symbolized a passageway between the Greeks and the Italians. In this way, Carlo's grave can be seen as a representation of their friendship that borders stable categories. This might suggest that Dr. Iannis had an experience of being within an outside that placed him on the threshold. Despite his Greekness, he accepted Captain Corelli as his son, and then he made a space for Carlo's grave. These scenes clarify that although he possessed the characteristics of Greekness, he only belonged to the whole; however, he was in an empty space. He stretched his limits and bordered the possibilities of being in external space. At this point, Agamben defines whatever as the experience of "empty space", "the experience of a pure exteriority"; thus, it is "*the event of an outside*". Since "whatever adds to singularity only an emptiness", it is "indeterminable" (p.68). In this sense, a majority of the characters in the novel can be seen as the exterior actors of their categorical groups. They all stand in their empty spaces in which they are neither categorical nor determinable. As it is seen, Dr. Iannis even accepted a member of the occupying army as a potential son-in-law; as he said to Corelli, "Only the living need forgiveness, and, as you know, Captain, I must have forgiven you, or I would not have given you permission to wed my daughter" (p.429).

In addition, near the end of the war, Pelagia and Drosoula, Mandras's mother, found a baby on their doorstep, whose "father could have been a Nazi or a Communist, and its mother might have been any unfortunate girl at all" (p. 454). They adopted the baby and named her Antonia after Corelli. Here, the doorstep might represent the threshold in which Pelagia and the baby's stories are developed. In this threshold, then, Pelagia and Drosoula encountered a baby, the existence of an other, who changed their life. Therefore, the image of the doorstep might represent a metaphorical or symbolic threshold for the future community which clearly depicts a sense of desire for a heterogeneous community. However, the invasion of the Nazi regime and ELAS created difficulties for these whatever beings who preferred living in diversity. The Nazi and ELAS forces can be seen as the source of massacres, which perhaps bring to mind the massacre carried out in Tiananmen Square. As Agamben explains in the 'Tiananmen' section, "Whatever singularity, which wants to appropriate belonging itself, its own being-in-language, and thus rejects all identity and every condition of belonging, is

the principal enemy of the State. Wherever these singularities peacefully demonstrate their being in common there will be a Tiananmen, and, sooner or later, the tanks will appear" (p. 87).

It is clear so far that the Nazi occupation of the island aimed to establish a homogeneous community on the island. Nazis and Fascists tried to spread their own supremacy by shaping the community according to their own, proper identity in the novel. Their aim was to reduce diversity into a single identity and produce a homogeneous society. Therefore, the execution order was given for Corelli and his soldiers because they helped Greek villagers. Corelli and his allies were considered as traitors and constituted a treaty against their own legitimate government; thus, Günter Weber had to shoot them since he was ordered by general, Herr Major. In this context, Agamben's other concern is the decline of heterogeneity which has been replaced by the universal petty bourgeoisie. Agamben claims that fascism and Nazism represented the characteristics of the national petty bourgeoisie, and they have not been overcome, (p. 70). In this respect, in the 'Without Class' section, Agamben emphasizes that in the universal petty bourgeoisie which has developed under globalization, distinctions have disappeared; therefore, the particular characteristics of cultural lives such as linguistic differences, dialect, and ways of life have lost any meaning in the because in the universal petty bourgeoisie "all the old social classes are dissolved" (p. 63-64).

However, the interaction between the characters, the relationship with the other, and the diversity destruct the national petty-bourgeois ideology and reveal heterogeneity on the island. Even if only for a short time, they border all possibilities by living together without sharing a common identity. Thus, Agamben claims that singularity without identity would be an opportunity to destruct the national petty-bourgeoisies instead of searching for a proper identity in the already improper field (p. 65) because "the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging" (p. 86).

As has been emphasized above, national petty-bourgeois characteristics aim to establish a homogenized society to manifest its single identity. Likewise, ELAS tried to establish its own supremacy over the Greek people. ELAS, with its connections to the Greek Communist party (p. 229), aimed to fight against the fascist and Nazi occupations; however, it turned against the Greek people and started to attack the islanders. They

destroyed the village and killed the people whether they were communists or not. They broke into Dr. Iannis's home and took him away on suspicion of being a bourgeois fascist, and then, they beat Pelagia with a chair. Mandras was so proud to be a member in his red star of ELAS uniform, and he found his party right to take Dr. Iannis away from their home, "There would be reasons. The party is never wrong. Whoever is not with us is against us" (p. 447). His statement emphasizes the idea of a particular community that was based on fixed commonalities. He continued, "Soon I shall be a commissar, and we will have a nice big house to live in. When shall we get married?" and then, he quoted the *Communist Manifesto*, "Bourgeois marriage is, in reality, a system of wives in common" (p. 447). However, ELAS was already another destructive force for the Greek community; thus, it can be said that the common point of these destructive forces was to constitute a fixed community that refused the idea of diversity.

Although Mandras joined ELAS to protect Greece from bourgeois fascist/Nazi rule, he was, in the end, devastated by his experiences with ELAS. He accused Pelagia of being a "traitor slut", and attempted to rape her. He was then forced to leave the home at gunpoint by her mother, Drosoula. He accused the Greeks and, especially, Pelagia, of betrayal because of being with the Italians. Thus, ELAS corrupted him completely and he became both a victim of war and a war criminal. He eventually decided to commit suicide which can also be understood in terms of the corruption of ELAS on its member's life.

After many years, Corelli and Pelagia were reunited on the island in their seventies. At that time, Cephalonia had become a favorite place for tourists and these new outsiders gave rise, once again, to diversity on the island. Among many of these distinct groups, Pelagia, because of her trauma in the past, could not get along with the German customers but she enjoyed speaking with Italians in her taverna. The Italians reminded her of her sweet memories with Corelli, however, she could not feel the same way towards her German visitors; as she says to Corelli, "I still have trouble being pleasant to Germans. I keep wanting to blame them for what their grandfathers did. They're so polite and the girls are so pretty. Such good mothers. I feel guilty for wanting to kick them" (p. 523). However, when they had a conversation about the past events, Pelagia recognized the "penance that everyone is doing", and she said to Corelli, "Everyone's doing penance. We've got the civil war, you've got Mussolini and the Mafia and all these corruption scandals, the British come in and apologize for the Empire and Cyprus, the Americans for Vietnam and Hiroshima. Everyone's apologizing". Then Corelli added,

"And I apologize" (p. 524). In this respect, this statement can stand for hope for harmonious relations between different communities, and hope for the future community on the island. The newcomers to the island might maintain togetherness that can be developed by a shared way of life. At this point in the argument, alterity on the island might allow the other to be seen as whatever being in the Cephalonia of the future, and celebrate the distinction in its being such as it is.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the questions of being with others and living together within their alterity and how friendship emerges without reducing to sameness. Accordingly, de Bernières' novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* celebrates the possibility of togetherness without imposing the common. Therefore, different communities on the island can live together within their alterity without reducing to sameness. In the midst of the war and crisis in Cephalonia, togetherness which is not based on common property provides a ground for analyzing the novel from the perspective of Agamben's whatever singularity. Furthermore, the friendship between pure beings offers a positive ground for a future community without a definitive common identity. Thus, this paper aims to discuss the community without a central commonality in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* by combining Agamben's *The Coming Community* and 'The Friend' essay.

In this context, de Bernières' novel celebrates alterity and living harmoniously together. Concerning togetherness, the characters have been analyzed from the perspective of Agamben's whatever singularity with respect to *synaisthanomai* (consent) of the other. As Durantaye says, "This is an idea of singularity not of indifferent importance but, on the contrary, conceived of in all its rich difference from other singularities – whatever they may be" (2009, 162). As can be seen from the examples, the characters, who can be defined as whatever beings, have distinct qualities and they border between spaces. In this borderland, friendship emerges and it makes possible the co-existence through "con-senting". As Agamben says, the friend does not belong to any particular class, therefore, friendship only brings the self and the other into a close encounter. As a result, the other cannot be eliminated or objectified according to its characteristics as Agamben says the friend cannot be recognized as something (p. 31). In conclusion, the main characters in the novel are on the 'threshold' and stand in an 'empty space' where each can bear their alterity. Rather than representing them

as belonging to fixed categories, it provides a basis for togetherness without the common that helps to develop an ethical relationship. In this way, the only common thing they share is the togetherness and experience of the other.

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