

'This Place Should (Not) Exist':
An Ethnography of Shelter Workers and the In-Between

by

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Department for the Study of Religion
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Abstract

This dissertation draws on twenty-one months of participant observation at The Salvation Army Gateway, a shelter for men in Toronto. It pays particular attention to the shelter’s thirty-two workers, to their efforts to be both “the best shelter in the city” and to “befriend the poor.”

The story told here employs Victor and Edith Turner’s theory of liminality as both prompt and foil. The understanding of the liminal it employs and the rationale for deploying it in relation to the Gateway are the subject of Part I. Aspects of the liminal (in-between) stage/state have been paired with various aspects of shelter life – certain repertoires, objects, ideas. There are eighteen such pairings, each provoking a short, ethnographically driven chapter. The interplay between the shelter and the liminal is at times illuminating, ironic, even incomplete.

The chapters are clustered according to four themes – also called the coefficients of life at the shelter: stuckedness, subjunctivity, immaturity, irony.

These four are simultaneously plotted in such a way as to lead the reader deeper into Gateway life. Part II Stuckedness, discusses contexts that surround the Gateway and hold it in place. Part III Subjunctivity, enters the shelter by way of the workers’ own ideas, desires, and intentions for the way the Gateway operates, especially its friendliness. Part IV Immaturity, tells the story of any-given day at the Gateway in order to consider its ambient youthfulness, and the significance of such for the

formation of alternative community there. Part V Irony, unpacks the irreconcilable ironies that the workers live with.

Understanding the Gateway as liminal space offers opportunity to think about whether or not the shelter system ought to exist in a city like Toronto and how all of us are implicated in sustaining it. While this thesis tries to preserve some of the undecideability of such a question, it also seeks to complicate the notion that people ought always to leave shelters in favour of “housing” or having their “own home.” This dissertation ultimately offers “homefulness” as a better measure for what is and is not lacking among the so-called “homeless.”

Acknowledgements

Appreciation belongs first to the Gateway workers and residents who let me in, shared some of their time and their truth with me, who may have always thought my presence there a little bit odd, but who stayed engaged in the process and interested in the outcome, regardless. I'm indebted especially to those who go here by the names of Buck, Eddy, Holden, Jill, Neil, Sam, Seth, and Wes. Much of what follows was hashed out with them over cups of coffee, long car rides, and even longer shelter shifts. This project would have been substantially different without their insight and their friendship, and my time at the Gateway much less profound. To all who donned the blue shirt and hung out at the Gateway during my time there, I offer unspeakable thanks.

I would think it impossible to ask for a better supervisory committee for such an experimental project. I have always thought it an extraordinary stroke of good fortune to have wound up the student of Pamela Klassen. She offered a finely tuned balance of freedom and feedback, and was always a voice I could trust. Ruth Marshall's stunning sentences and fierce courage have inspired me. And I have learned considerable lessons from Simon Coleman's keen attention to detail and his startling breadth of expertise. At the defense stage, Kathryn Lofton's impassioned reading helped me to smooth some of the rough edges, stand up for some others, and decide which was which. Judy Han's notes on what was missing have made this account fuller and rounder than it would otherwise have been.

I've received constructive criticism on portions of this work from audiences at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting, the AAR Eastern-International Regional meeting, the Society for the Anthropology of Religion, the University of Toronto Graduate Student Colloquium Series, and the Youth, Religion and Identity Workshop at the University of Ottawa.

Brian Walsh, students in multiple sessions of his course *Beyond Homelessness*, and the Wine Before Breakfast community which he leads, have all indelibly shaped my thoughts on this topic.

I will always maintain that I would not have embarked on the PhD without the uncanny eye of Dr. William Closson James, who saw some potential in a reticent undergrad.

Over eight years, I have been in awe of the clever community of scholars who make up the Department for Study of Religion at the University of Toronto, especially those with whom I have shared the journey of graduate studies most closely: in the beginning, there was Michael Friesen and at the end Maria Dasios; Erin Vearncombe and I were together in the thick of things all along. Thomas Nicholas Schonhoffer was with me (and all of us) too briefly. Rebekka King went before and generously showed

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Samantha and Joel Fisher have always felt like two external thirds of my own soul. My own sense of home – both its rarity and its fullness only exists in relation to them. Their spouses James Pedlar and Morgan Fisher first taught me what it meant to stretch homefulness further and thereby make it both richer and stronger.

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You who know, and whose vast knowing
is born of poverty, abundance of poverty—

make it so the poor are no longer
despised and thrown away.

Look at them standing about—
like wildflowers, which have nowhere else to grow.

—Rainer Maria Rilke
The Book of Hours, III, 19

PREFACE

Somewhere along the line, I wagered that a doctoral dissertation could be something like Derek Walcott's understanding of a poem: "If you know what you're going to write when you're writing a poem," he proposes, "it's going to be average."¹ As it happens, I didn't know what I was going to write until it was written, and that what follows is other than 'average.'

To begin with, the story of what happens at the Gateway (a shelter for men in downtown Toronto) felt to me like too much: too much to take in, too much to make sense of. After fieldwork but before writing, I remember making a list of all the things I might write about, it ran five or six pages and seemed to baffle anyone I talked to about the project, and maybe most of all me. What would the thesis really be about? And how would it all hang together? It took a long time for these things to sort themselves out. I'm convinced (and I'm certainly not alone in thinking this) that the 'what' and the 'how' of this dissertation only occurred in the act of writing itself. And its ultimate strangeness is less gimmick than necessary device – a more effective way of conveying what has never been a simple set of ethnographic problems.

Twenty-four interrelated pieces have emerged, somehow or other, from this feeling of too-muchness. They began as scraps, picked up here and there by one puzzled person, over many days and many nights, among a hundred people, in a place that never rests. That the chapter titles appear always in lower case is meant precisely to express this small and fragmentary impression: they are bits and pieces. And they are mainly meditations on needling things – things that bothered, provoked, or otherwise seized me. In each one, I move into ideas and away from them, agreeing and disagreeing, knowing and unknowing and knowing again – whatever object or problem or phrase it was that initially instigated the reflection.² In hindsight, I wonder if they aren't something like sermons. Not conversion-oriented or truth-based or all that faithful, but they follow a pattern I picked up a while ago, when I was learning to be a much different sort of sermon-giver. They have a "You've heard it said...but I tell you [something different]" quality to them.³ They try to take what seems ordinary, or obvious, the common wisdom or the so-called way things are, and to think about them hard and long enough

¹ Quoted in Jon Winokur, *Advice to Writers: A Compendium of Quotes, Anecdotes, and Writerly Wisdom from a Dazzling Array of Literary Lights*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), p.108.

² This is also a reference to Derek Walcott. The above quotation continues: "It's not a process of knowing, but of unknowing and learning again..." This preface also draws considerable guidance from the introductory remarks in three more other-than-average works: Joshua Dubler, *Down in the Chapel: Religious Life in an American Prison* (New York: Macmillan, 2013); Margaret Elizabeth Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). These three were astutely recommended by Pamela Klassen. Simon Coleman pressed me with important ethical questions that required discussion here even if they couldn't be necessarily 'solved.' And I'm also grateful to Ruth Marshall for our fruitful conversations about how to (unapologetically) go about the writing of this weird thesis in general and this preface in particular.

³ This is a common trope in sermons attributed to Jesus. I am by no means comparing myself to the speaker, but this common introductory inversion of his resonates with what I have written below.

that they somehow get turned upside down. The way a fork, if you stare at it long enough or repeat its moniker often enough becomes strange, totally unlike the thing you so easily used to eat with. (Eventually though, your mind lets it go back to being just a fork, and that's something of a relief.) I was once taught that the Christian gospel was supposed to be affronting, unlikely, contrary. And that the best sermons – in their translation between the canon and the contemporary, the exchange they allege between the “word” and “real life” – were those which communicated a similar kind of scandal, an inversion of whatever by now passes for normal, turning the default on its head.

Not unlike Protestant sermons in particular which are not always constrained by an official curriculum (the lectionary), what follows picks and chooses from any number of things I might have written about, and it endeavours to stretch little things into much more. Unlike sermons however, these pieces were not written in a week, they were not written with the intention of being heard but rather patiently read, and they generally swap scripture for academic theory.

Together, they attempt a whole-ish picture of what happens at the Gateway – one that seeks to be incisive and analytical without losing the complexity and dimension of the place. The telling is necessarily circumscribed however, by my own subjective position among the residents and workers there. As I've said, the chapters have, in some ways, chosen themselves by being the things that pestered me enough to get thought through. But there's another story too, about who I became in relation to the Gateway, a story that lurks behind the writing for this dissertation in ways I am aware of and likely also in ways I am not.

It hinges on this: in 2010 I snuck Sam home for Christmas with my family.

Sam was my first friend at the Gateway. In a later chapter, I'll cringe a little at the way people claim their friendships with certain people (or certain kinds of people) as a way of saying something desirable, enviable about themselves, especially in relation to the “poor” or the “homeless.” So I'm wary of telling you about my friendship with Sam, but it also seems there's no good way around it. There is nothing so noble or impressive about my friendship with him – he'll agree that at times it has been awkward, fitful, and difficult. It hasn't made Sam ‘un-homeless.’ And it hasn't made me ‘a better person.’ But its flaws have probably helped to make us ‘properly’ friends – it's in the ups and downs that we both have learned to have greater compassion for each other.

I started visiting the Gateway just for two hours on Thursdays, long enough to help host the weekly Art Club in the chapel. A handful of guys would hang out there – some decidedly quite talented and skilled – and work on their art, week by week until it was done and could be sold or hung in the makeshift gallery of the Gateway's hallway. We would listen to The Beatles and eat sweets while we worked. We would encourage and critique each other's artistic endeavours.

Sam's first painting was acrylic on canvas, a sunset descending on a beach. But it wasn't long before he started sharing a very different kind of art with the group. Sam and his case manager had gotten him into a cooking course at the nearby community college. His pastry class was on Thursday afternoons, just before Art Club, and so he would bring whatever he had worked on that day to share with the other artists. If other cooks in his class didn't want to take their baking home, Sam scooped it up too and brought it to the Gateway: a box of goodies for staff, another for Art Club, one to take home for himself, often a little something to leave on his case manager's desk for her to find the next morning.

My field notes often recorded his successes: *Puff pastry today. Scored 79%. So proud of Sam. Lots of guys at art and enough puff pastry to go around.*

The course required math and language classes, so sometimes Sam would bring his homework to Art Club too and he and I would work on it together. At some point, Sam moved out of the Gateway into a rooming house. He graduated from his program and got a couple of jobs – one as a line cook in a local pub, the other assisting the chef who taught the cooking course he'd just completed. He still came to Art, he still took a number of meals at the Gateway, he was often around when we needed a fourth to play cards.

As Christmas approached that year, Sam was working hard at his jobs and working hard to stay clean, most of the time. But even when working so hard, he was also wondering aloud to me if things would ever really get better, if he'd ever be happy or just OK. If he'd ever have what other people have: a steady job, a steady relationship, a home. We talked often about how he really needed people to show him that he's valuable, just because he exists. I found myself asking my family if that could be us, that coming Christmas. I wrote to them to see if he could come have dinner and open presents with us, stay overnight and head back on the train to Toronto the next morning in time for his Boxing Day shift at the restaurant. They graciously, readily agreed. Then they shopped for more presents.

I asked Sam to come – nervous about collapsing the critical distance between myself and my research, but bent on the idea anyway. He was nervous as well, but he wanted to come.

On Christmas day, I spent the morning as usual at the Gateway. Around noon, Sam set out on foot, headed east, and a little while later I left the Gateway by car and picked him up a few blocks away: a clandestine plan. We drove the two hours to my parents' home. We all had a nice time. Sam said he was sorry to leave the next day, wished he could stay longer.

In the New Year, Sam went into a residential addiction treatment program. He had nowhere to leave his belongings, so I agreed to store them in a closet in my apartment. He would call me often, asking for this or that from the stockpile. But for some reason I was reluctant to keep ferrying things to him. I grew anxious that he was depending on me too much, and that I wouldn't be able to support him in all

the ways he would need as he was going through treatment and ultimately trying to stay clean. I know now that much of this anxiety was of my own making. But it was also a function of the secrecy of our friendship – the way I wasn't supposed to be doing any of these things for Sam. As far as the Gateway is officially concerned, friendships are meant to be contained within the Gateway, they are not meant to exist beyond the shelter, in the rest of a person's life. Not a worker, I considered myself somewhat freer from these constraints – I couldn't get fired, for instance, as I knew one or two workers had for similar sorts of things. But like the workers who attempted such things, I wanted to “do more” than hand out meal tickets and towels and toothbrushes and beds.

An entry in my field journal, later that winter, betrays my bewilderment:

The truth is that no one prepared me for what's happening with Sam. And because it's a secret, I'm on my own. And I don't know what I'm doing. No one was just plain honest about friendship. They said, 'we're friends with the homeless.' So I came here and thought, 'OK, I'll be friends.' But what I thought that meant and what they meant turned out to be two different things. Most of the workers here are reticent to do what I did – whether they know better (some) or it never occurred to them to do more (others). They don't invite a person home for dinner, they don't store someone's belongings when he's in-between houses, they don't go to the movies, they never find themselves at the beck and call of someone who has no one else to rely on. "It's dangerous," they say, as I've leaked my story about Sam and Christmas to a few confidantes. The danger is not quite clear, but twice in the last week I've been warned about it, some vague risk, of being too implicated? Or just of being too quickly spent or burnt out? I don't know. "He's in love with you," one of them supposes. "You can't be his Saviour" the same person admonishes me. If only to avoid hearing "I told you so" some more, I go back to hiding it. But the secret only makes it more stressful, precarious, impossible.

Those were weird times. But Sam and I are still friends. We've talked about some of these ups and downs. We've celebrated holidays, in one way or another many times since. He sometimes does the cooking. He hasn't seen my family again but they ask about him often and he about them. He still stays at the Gateway from time to time. He still wonders if things will ever be altogether OK. But by now he knows he has friends he can count on – and not only me. Our friendship now includes my partner; that opens things up even some more, and helps us all.

My friendship with Sam implicates me in the story I tell about the Gateway. In a number of ways, it helped me to sidle up to the workers, to share their peculiar, subjunctive desire for friendship as well as the inherent traps and frustrations of such a posture – all of which I explore in greater detail below. My friendship with Sam has also been a (mutual) attempt at *homefulness* – the measure by which I think a person's supposed homelessness ought to be gauged, and the standard by which (at the end of this dissertation) I propose we develop better shelters. This thesis has emerged in the heyday of the

Housing First initiative.⁴ I do not write against it necessarily, but I do write in its wake and with a corollary. The basic premise is a good one: that everyone needs access to housing, low barriers to admission and few conditions, and that once housed the other aspects and determinants of health (mental, physical, social, etc.) will automatically improve or can begin to be improved upon. The most obvious trouble is that housing is not enough – to be at home is to have more than walls and a roof, more than a lockable door, more than structure. To be at home involves people too, and not just the random collection who come somehow to delicately share a bathroom and kitchen in a rooming house.

The more obscured problem is that Housing First is an economically-based solution to an economically-created problem: it treats the “home of one’s own” as the ultimate hand-out in a culture where the “home of one’s own” is a problematic myth. It’s cheaper than shelters, the advocates say. And that’s probably true, since it downloads responsibility for all manner of homemaking to the individual. The once ‘homeless’ person is newly responsible for their own food, their own bills and electricity, their own self-care, while in shelters such things were in some ways *shared*, or otherwise handled by the state. Instead of being taken care of, people are left alone to fend for themselves. The “fight to end homelessness” and its hallmark “solution” bear with them the same marks of the problem – this idea that everyone is ultimately on their own. But what if “being taken care of” didn’t have only a patronizing ring to it? What if we acknowledged that everyone needs some taking care of? And that individuating and scattering people into “housing” wasn’t so much solution as stop-gap, until the next time a person messes up, reaches the end of their rope, needs some help or a friend, and ends up back at the last place where they felt known, cared for, safe?

As I see it, the Gateway shelter exists somewhere along the line toward homefulness. And a guy like Sam needs some of what a place like the Gateway has to offer. He also needs something more than they are presently able to provide. I suppose I fancy myself part of that “more” – Sam and I check in with each other (and forget to), we celebrate, commiserate, make plans and break them, apologize, relate over time, and hope together that we’ll both someday be OK.

I freely admit that this dissertation is an expression of dissatisfaction with the way things are – the multiple ironies, insecurities and inequalities that hold ‘homelessness’ such as it is, in place. I suppose it’s also a bid for you, the reader, to see it my way – a way of seeing that has only developed haltingly, haphazardly (and I hope humbly) in relation to some people I knew and made friends with over a few seasons at the Gateway.

⁴ Housing First was initially an American initiative, begun in the early 1990s and spearheaded by clinical psychologist Dr. Sam Tsemberis and his organization, Pathways to Home. Housing First in Canada is closely associated with the long-term, multi-sited ‘At Home/Chez Soi’ research project, conducted by the Mental Health Commission of Canada between 2009 and 2013. The \$110 million pilot program provided homes to more than 900 people living with mental illness in 5 Canadian cities and tracked their progress. The study purported that Housing First “works.” See Housing First Toolkit Canada <http://www.housingfirsttoolkit.ca/>, and the At Home/Chez Soi Final Report at <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/initiatives-and-projects/home>. Accessed June 30, 2015.

Part I
Liminality

“this place should not exist”

It strikes me every time I go downtown: that you have to pass through the homeless district to get to the entertainment one.¹

If you happen to be travelling west into Toronto's core, and especially at night, you most certainly have to pass by addicts on corners, and schizophrenics in crosswalks – either sort waving their arms around as they go, muttering to themselves, lost somewhere in between this world and another. You have to pass methadone clinics, divey bars; the so-called “gentlemen's clubs,” and the unassuming side streets rendered vacant but for men milling about outside a shelter with nowhere else to go or, more likely, tethered to those grounds on threat of losing their claim on a bed.

As you go, you watch the intermittent streetlights shine down on the scene, emitting a dull and yellowed glow. They're made to seem all the hazier by the burst of light that accosts you a few steps further, when you reach the heart of this city: the corner of Yonge and Dundas, its 24-theatre Cineplex, its outdoor amphitheatre, its colossal shopping mall. The latter faces a massive wall of screens and billboards, all trying to sell you something or nothing, depending how you look at it: clothes and TV shows and cool.

A few steps beyond some of Canada's richest men and women work on Bay Street, or occupy an ever-growing number of luxury hotels and condo towers. Past that, some of the smartest minds occupy a strip of hospitals and a sprawling university campus.

On any given evening, this assumed trip through the heart of downtown Toronto – this straight shot across the middle of the city – began in the relative darkness of the Don River Valley and then gave way to an almost frightening display of humanity under that streetlamp glow, just before the swift force of money seemed almost to slap you in the face.

It's tough to take in; to register; to stop your eyes from glazing over, gazing past it – this space in-between darkness and light. It's almost impossible to wrap your head around all of these jarring images in the few short minutes it takes to walk those two or three blocks, much less drive them. How can such wealth and such poverty live side by side?

More than the juxtaposition of the beautiful and the damned, the filthy and the immaculate, a narrative device too often employed to alarm you, to shock you to attention, to romance and draw you in with

¹In the spirit of Michel de Certeau's suggestion that walking the city produces “endless possibilities,” an “unlimited diversity” of paths and possibilities, I offer just one trajectory – a walk west, of an evening, along Dundas, from where I live in the east end, toward the centre of the city. As with most things, my walk and my description of it “make some parts of the city disappear and exaggerate others, distorting it, fragmenting it, and diverting it.” Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City,” *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 91-110.

contradictory images and words, I begin here because The Salvation Army Gateway, a shelter and the subject of this thesis, began here, too.² And because the Gateway and the irreconcilable realities of the blocks around Yonge and Dundas Square share an abiding irony.

The Gateway was preceded by The Friendship Room, a drop-in centre run by The Salvation Army adjacent to what is now Yonge and Dundas Square. In 1999, the building was expropriated by the city in the interests of Toronto's own gaudy answer to New York's Times Square and London's Piccadilly Circus. The forced closure of The Friendship Room led directly to the founding of the Gateway. Then director of The Friendship Room, Neil, along with other leaders in the Salvation Army, began to plan a more comprehensive program for the homeless, distinct from the Army's other shelter efforts in the city: their discursive commitment to "friendship" and the drop-in format would remain integral to their work, only now it would be complemented by overnight accommodation. Once evicted, the Army moved the operation two blocks east and two blocks south to Jarvis Street.

Nowadays, the Gateway can be found right in the middle of what amounts almost to a homeless district in the city of Toronto. This "emergency hostel" shelters 108 men on any given night, within easy walking distance of the two largest shelters in the city (together providing another 694 shelter beds), major addiction and rehabilitation centres, a number of transitional/supportive housing units, myriad other social service agencies, not to mention a smattering of dusty pawnshops and the most conspicuous drug corner Toronto can boast. The Gateway is equally close to Moss Park, a site made infamous for the brutal beating death of a homeless man by military trainees in 2008,³ and to St. James Park, the site of 2011's Occupy Toronto protest. Protestors set up shop in that park, because, as alluded to above, the shelter is also mere steps from Toronto's central business and entertainment districts. Money flows not far away and ever closer it seems: the forces of gentrification in the lower downtown east side of Toronto have literally wrapped the Gateway with a 530-unit condominium project, on three sides. "And homeless near a thousand homes I stood," goes a line of Wordsworth's; an image which assumes new meaning on the Gateway's stoop.⁴

Back at Yonge & Dundas, your brain is likely on overdrive – trying to take in so many moving images, to make sense of the cacophony, to navigate so many people: buskers, preachers, advertisements, store windows, revolving doors, reflecting glass, cars, trucks, streetcars, cyclists, pedestrians meeting almost

² I have changed the names of all the shelter's staff members and in some cases obscured certain details about them to preserve confidentiality, but I have used the actual name of the shelter. "The Salvation Army Gateway" is a public place and its existence a matter of public record, it is locatable in the geographical location I'm describing here. What's more, as I'll explain below, the name itself, is integral to my understanding of the place, more generally.

³ See Shannon Kari, "Reservists Plead Guilty to Beating Death of Homeless Man," April 16, 2008, <http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=452736>; Betsy Powell, "Two Soldiers Convicted of Beating a Homeless Man to Death in a Downtown Toronto Park Took the Stand at Their Sentencing Hearing Today and Apologized to the Victim," *Toronto Star*, April 30, 2008.

http://www.thestar.com/news/crime/2008/04/30/soldiers_who_killed_homeless_man_apologize.html.

⁴ William Wordsworth, "Guilt and Sorrow," in *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (London: Cosimo, Inc., 2008).Section XLI.

wildly at the intersection, designer clothes, the beeping crosswalk signals, the impatient car horns, the smell of street meat, the lure of flashy and familiar restaurants – maybe it's all too much. In the midst of it, maybe one doesn't have the mental energy to think about Toronto's homeless problem anymore. It's not that you didn't see the poor. It's that you've already forgotten that you saw them. They've shrunk back into the dimmer light of ordinary, run-of-the-mill streetlamps, while your brain is being washed clean in the aptly named “liquid crystal display” (LCD) which ensconces the square.

In this ethnographic work, however, I seek to unhide that which exists on the real and metaphorical edges of downtown Toronto. I consider the everyday life of a Toronto homeless shelter, especially via the behaviours, attitudes and repertoires of its thirty-some-odd workers.

* * * * *

The Gateway is a narrow, 4-storey, yellow-bricked building, almost inconspicuous except for a sign denoting its name, underscored with their motto: “The Hand of God in the Heart of the City.” Each floor has four tall but narrow, sectioned windows – many of them covered by vertical blinds, a slat missing here and there, adding to the haphazard look of the place. The entrance descends along a dark ramp, by the side of the building. The major indication that this is a homeless shelter is the handful of men often lingering along the railing: smoking, talking, waiting for something...

Once inside, the people who work here would want you to notice that the door opened freely to you when you pulled on it; it was not locked. They also expect that you will be greeted, unobstructed, by a friendly face behind the counter. After just a few minutes standing there, you will notice the slow but steady stream of people, in and out, the almost metronomic click of locked glass doors being released, opened, and closed all around you, doors that lead to the rest of the shelter. You'll take in the sound of a television or radio, of questions and permissions passing back and forth between workers and residents, of laughter.

Where you go from there will depend on who you are. Are you here to see someone in a second floor office? Take the door behind you once it becomes unlocked by a worker, released by a button behind the front desk. Take the stairs.

If you have a bed here, the person behind the desk will most likely know your face and click a second button without much more than “Door please” as bidding. You'll tug on the door opposite the entrance, which leads down another ramp to the Drop-In – the shelter's main living space.

If you happen to work here, you'll go through that same second door, but turn left instead of right, disappearing almost immediately through another door in order to find yourself back at front desk, but on the other side of the counter. You'll punch the time clock, and settle in for a twelve-hour shift.

But many afternoons that second door rests ajar: the Drop-In is open, 1:00-7:00pm and people, whoever, any grown man or woman, may come and go as they please. The noise from the Drop-In is louder now: the sound of bad reality TV competes with even louder voices, to the consternation of players in the odd chess game or to the guy who just wants to look at the paper, do the crossword, read a book, in peace. The population swells to fit the number of available red and black metal chairs at eleven large round tables. As soon as one chair is vacated it is quickly filled. Some mill about in hope or wait in the smoking pit outside, watching through the floor to ceiling windows for a space to open up.

While quiet is not something you're apt to find here on any given afternoon, you are quite likely to have a good time. It's not too hard to believe that many come here to the Gateway to feel not so lonely and to have a proper meal. The people who have beds here mainly tolerate the Drop-In guests. Many make plans to be away from the shelter in the afternoons, waiting out the chaos, until evening when they can return and 'have the place to themselves,' such as it is. In the mornings and evenings, it's a tiny bit easier to imagine that this is their home: they watch the news, tap away on the odd bargain laptop, talk, play cards, share food they have picked up along their way.

It's hard to peg any of them; maybe if you hadn't seen them here, you wouldn't know they were homeless. Young and old, new to Canada and seasoned citizens, ailments and addictions both visible and invisible. Lots of smiles. All manner of jokes.

Come six o'clock, the workers announce that "the floors are open" and residents who have spent the day without access to their bed or belongings may once again go freely between upstairs and down. Between six and bed check, the shelter takes on a spaciousness it does not have the rest of the day: one hundred and eight men are not so concentrated in one place but spread out between five spaces or more: the Drop-In, the smoking pit adjacent to it, two dorms – each with fifty-four, simply-sheeted, steel-framed beds, and fifty-four grey metal lockers – and the entrance way which often seems to spill out the door to a second, unofficial smoking area.

I've heard this place called the "Royal York of shelters;" a somewhat melodramatic reference to the swanky early-20th century hotel where the Queen of England stays while she's in Toronto, which stands gallantly, not too far away. Workers and residents alike claim that *friendship*, a familiarity and camaraderie between people who work there and people who live there is the mark of this place. "They/we *really* care" is a common claim from both sides of the front desk.

But the director of the Gateway is also fond of saying "this place should not exist; everything about it is just wrong." The more often this came up, the more questions swirled in my mind.

Some of those questions were basic questions you might ask of anyone complicit in a contentious institution – any prison, refugee camp, social service, or even the stock market: what is it like to live in

this incongruity? To be constantly aware that the place where you work, should not exist? What's it like to get up in the morning and everyday commute to a place you disagree with? But especially when you understand yourself in relation to a particular set of religious practices and commitments; traditions that both motivate you to work here *and* invigorate your critical stance toward it?

Other questions were rather more systemic: How far back can we follow this irony? Where did it come from? How does it persist? What sort of political and economic energies and social imaginaries sustain it? What happens when something that should not be there is left to languish indefinitely?

The most unsettling questions were more moral: Are we talking about an exponential wrongness? Layers of mistakes and inconsistencies and lies, all of which keep this place living? And, is there any possible way to rectify or remove them now?

While a dissertation of this length and kind cannot hope to take up all of these questions simultaneously, let alone give reliable answers to many of them at all, I will use this idea as a frame: the Gateway, according to its own self-understanding, should not exist...but it does, and has for some 15 years now. The Gateway has never succeeded in putting itself out of business, nor does it appear presently engaged in such an effort or indeed, ever in earnest to have tried. Instead, we might say that the workers at the Gateway are *making do in the meantime* – however indefinite that meantime might be.

Assigning the shelter to the rhetorical space of the *ought not* is certainly a serious and worthwhile lament. But that's not all there is to say on the subject since the Gateway goes on existing, day-in and day-out – as do other (Salvation Army) shelters and services in the Gateway's geographical vicinity, as well as further afield. What holds them in place? Whether or not each Gateway worker independently agrees with Neil that by virtue of its *ought-not -ness* “everything about this place is just wrong,” they collectively go on working there, anyway. What are they doing while they're there? How do they occupy this ironic middle, the space in between what ought not to be and what plainly *is*?

For the workers at the Gateway the ideal answer to this question is that they're loving, caring for, or otherwise *making friends* with the homeless. The stuff of everyday life at the shelter is definitely made up of things we may very well call friendship, even love – as we'll see in later chapters. But those relationships, as I see them, are profoundly shaped by the ironies which encircle and undergird the Gateway itself – both its situated place in what I've described as Toronto's “homeless district” and this idea that even though their leader claims to regret the very idea of a shelter for the homeless, they continue to run one.

rethinking liminality

In naming the Gateway, its founders deliberately opted for something that would denote a passageway, a positive sort of movement from homelessness to something else. I've taken this deliberate notion of threshold, of transition, as a nudge, a hint to understanding (and describing) the Gateway more fully. Over time, I came to believe that “in-between-ness” might be the most coherent thing I could say about the place: that the Gateway, as I see it (and will attempt to show) is indelibly marked by its *liminality* – all of the subjunctivities, immaturities, ironies and tensions inherent in *the middle*. The idea I noted at the outset – this notion that the Gateway *should not exist* – is, in itself, an incongruity that allows an iffiness to spread throughout the rest of the place. And there are all kinds of things at the Gateway which are not quite one thing and not quite another, things suspended midway between the ideal and the real, the new and the old, the good and the bad.

One can hardly say anything about the in-between without reference to the *liminal*, an anthropological concept and analytical tool initially invoked by Arnold Van Gennep in 1909.¹ The liminal for Van Gennep was the necessary middle step in the ritual process, in between separation from and re-aggregation to a group; the moment right before an initiate is made ritually clean or otherwise new. In the 1960s, the notion of the liminal was fleshed out and popularized by Victor and Edith Turner²: they claimed to have taken seriously a gap, opening up (maybe for the first time) the “fruitful darkness “of the murky middle.³ They understood themselves as attempting to peel back the edges of the obvious – those readily visible and easily discernible social facts – in order to see something they claimed they had never paid much attention to before: “the social fact that was not a social fact,” the “betwixt and between.”⁴ It seemed to come almost as a surprise to the Turners to find in the liminal such a provocative and fecund analytic domain: something that was not quite there but very *there* indeed. The Turners presented the liminal in seductive terms: easily overlooked, often veiled in mystery, it was hardly spoken-of either as a matter of deliberate secrecy (no one may know how the magic initiates or transforms us) or disinterested banality (what could be so wonderful about what happens in the meanwhile? Surely what happens at the beginning and the end are what really matter.)

¹ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Psychology Press, 1960).

² According to the custom of his day, and in keeping with the fact that while Victor was alive, he alone among them occupied an official academic position, the bulk of their work was published under his name. But according to recent work by Matthew Engelke, based on extensive interview material with Edith herself, and close reading of their published and unpublished materials, Engelke lets us in on the truth: Victor and Edith wrote together. Every detail discussed between them, sitting across the table from one another, either in his office or at their home, Edith at the keyboard, typing whatever it was that would later be published. The point is that we can't know for sure where Victor ends and Edith takes over, impossible to parse out what came from her mind or his. See Matthew Engelke, “‘The Endless Conversation’: Fieldwork. Writing, and the Marriage of Victor and Edith Turner.” in *Significant Others: Interpersonal and Professional Commitments in Anthropology*, ed. Richard Handler (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 6–50.

³ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967). See also Engelke, “The Endless Conversation’: Fieldwork. Writing, and the Marriage of Victor and Edith Turner.”

⁴ Edith Turner, “Preface,” in *Blazing the Trail: Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols*, ed. Edith Turner (University of Arizona Press, 1992), ix – xxi.

The Turners' conversion to the liminal coincided roughly with their adoption of Catholicism, and the relish with which they presented it may well have shown how the liminal was not so far removed from the allure they found in the Church's own shadows and mysteries, its own rites of transformation and renewal. Indeed, their version of the liminal is rife with Christian tones and problems, of which I'll say more below.

Since the Turners, scholars in a host of disciplines have invoked the charged category of the liminal in order to better understand refugees, widows, and the disabled; homelessness and adolescence; dreamers, inmates, and spirit mediums; chess players, candidates for baptism, pilgrims and the dying; among, I presume, many more.⁵ But liminality has become at once more powerful and shallower with age and overuse. Reduced almost to a buzzword, dropped into the middle of a paragraph, one tends nowadays to say with it so much and so little at the same time. Seductively simplistic, the word on its own – the liminal – seems to many a writer sufficient to conjure up the middle space, as if it's enough to gesture toward the in-between's abject and paradoxical qualities while leaving lots to the imagination and much of the theory under-treated. Morphing its way into the vernacular of certain academic disciplines (anthropology, sociology, religion, youth studies, and lately international relations, to name a few), liminality has become almost cliché, a mere stand-in for an intricate theory that took the Turners decades to develop and an empty approximation of something the Turners knew was too complicated to conclusively, concretely set down in writing.

Over the course of a few substantial essays on the liminal, the Turners told us (in often contradictory terms) that the liminal could be represented as *margins, peripheries, thresholds, corridors, and tunnels*. They imagined the liminaries as *status-less, anonymous, naked and nameless*; they found them *sequestered* on the edge of things, *separate* and *submissive*. The liminal, they said, was troubled by manifold *paradoxes* and *ambiguities*: the simultaneity of “lowliness and sacredness,” for instance, the ever-contingent forces of presence and absence, life and death, or the treatment of initiates as both human and animal. There was said to be *fun* there, *play* and *mocking*, the *ludic*, the *spontaneous*, and all kinds of *experimental behaviours*.

⁵ On refugees, see Iver B. Neumann, “Introduction to the Forum on Liminality,” *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 2 (April 1, 2012): 473–79. On widows, see Lotte Buch, “Derivative Presence: Loss and Lives in Limbo in the West Bank,” in *Anthropology of Absence*, ed. Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup, and Tim Flohr Sørensen (New York: Springer, 2010), 83–98. On the disabled, see Jeffrey Willett and Mary Jo Deegan, “Liminality and Disability: Rites of Passage and Community in Hypermodern Society,” *Disability Studies Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (July 15, 2001); Robert Francis Murphy, *The Body Silent* (New York: Norton, 2001). On homelessness, see Kim Hopper, “Public Shelter as ‘a Hybrid Institution’: Homeless Men in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Social Issues* 46, no. 4 (January 1, 1990): 13–29; Kim Hopper, *Reckoning with Homelessness* (Cornell University Press, 2003); David A. Snow and Leon Anderson, *Down on Their Luck: A Study of Homeless Street People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). On adolescence, see Vered Amit, “Before I Settle Down’: Youth Travel and Enduring Life Course Paradigms,” *Anthropologica* 53, no. 1 (2011): 79–88. On dreamers, see Amira Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). On inmates, see Dubler, *Down in the Chapel*. On spirit mediums, see Eric Gable, “Beyond Belief? Play, Scepticism, and Religion in a West African Village,” *Social Anthropology* 10, no. 1 (February 1, 2002); Frederick Klaitz, *Death in a Church of Life: Moral Passion During Botswana’s Time of AIDS* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). On chess players, see Robert R. Desjarlais, *Counterplay: An Anthropologist at the Chessboard* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). On candidates for baptism, see Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Penguin Books Limited, 1974). On pilgrims, see Simon Coleman and John Elsner, “Performing Pilgrimage: Walsingham and the Ritual Construction of Irony,” in *Ritual, Performance, Media*, ed. Felicia Hughes-Freeland (London: Routledge, 2003), 46–65. On the dying, see Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*.

The liminal was thought to be hovered over with an air of *possibility* and *hypothesis*, the discovery of things *not yet known* – whatever *may be, might have been, or is no more*. The liminaries were said to *shed old ties, old pretensions, old names* and *emerge* if not more mature, then at least *new*.⁶

With all of this rich language, I fear it's not enough, as many have done, to lock up the theory of liminality in one sentence or two about the vague and inevitable in-between. It's my sense that while the theory of liminality has been widely and repeatedly invoked (and to the point of irritation) it has also been too long hidden under the cloak of simple, sweeping and vacuous statements that pay its twists and turns little mind. While perhaps annoyingly ubiquitous, it is also in need of rehabilitation. It's possible it is so well used precisely because of its emaciation – a project which incidentally began with the Turners themselves, in a somewhat clumsy attempt to give the theory both wider and weaker hold. For reasons I'll elucidate below, an ethnographic encounter with Christian workers in a homeless shelter is just such an opportunity for restoring complexity and subtlety to the liminal.

Later, in the 1970s, the Turners sought to stretch the theory of liminality beyond the setting they first used to explore it; they proposed to divide their theory of the in-between in two, in order to account for phenomena on either side of the Industrial Revolution.⁷ The result was two genres: the properly *liminal* and the somewhat less authentic, less genuine *liminoid*. The liminal, they claimed, was the province of simple, highly structured, collectivist societies, and a necessary part of the tribe's social organization, tied up with its central processes and rhythms.⁸ The liminoid on the other hand, was a way of describing *liminal-like* experiences in complex societies that lacked a sacred or overarching cosmic structure pressing people into collective rituals. The liminal was understood to reflect a common experience or shared meaning among a mass collective, while the liminoid was “more idiosyncratic and quirky, generated by specific individuals and in particular groups.” The liminal was integral to the working of the social order, a way of dealing with friction or crisis, but the liminoid was rather less necessary, less than obligatory, merely a commodity for sale on the market, something freely chosen, paid for, and especially for the purposes of leisure or entertainment: things like art, sport, games, and the like. In post-Industrial societies – where work had been strictly cordoned off from play and where people enjoyed a major degree of freedom – the Turners wagered that use of the liminal to describe what happened there “must in the main be metaphorical.”⁹ It might *resemble* the liminal in some ways, but would be almost trifling by comparison. Unlike the liminal, the liminoid would not be “bound up

⁶ Word in italics are drawn from the Turners own text. See Turner, *The Ritual Process*; Victor Witter Turner, “Variations on a Theme of Liminality,” in *Blazing the Trail: Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols* (University of Arizona Press, 1992), 48–65. Victor Turner, “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology,” Originally Published as: “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology,” Part of the *Rice University Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 3, Summer 1974 (Houston: Rice University) pp. 53–92, July 1974; Victor Turner, “Morality and Liminality,” in *Blazing the Trail: Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols*, ed. Edith Turner (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 132–62.

⁷ Turner, “Variations on a Theme of Liminality”; Turner, “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual.”

⁸ The distinctions here are primarily drawn from Turner, “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual,” p.85–86

⁹ *ibid* p. 62.

with ones membership or desired membership in some highly corporate group;” it would not be *work*, it would be *play*; it might critique the way things are, but it would not literally be part of how society functions. To resign the liminal in this way – as if to say that “metaphor” is mere imitation or approximation of the “proper,” original version of the liminal – seems to me a somewhat muting or otherwise truncating move, undermining not only liminality but the power of metaphor itself, in the process.

For literary theorist Mieke Bal, metaphor isn't, as the Turners suggest, the diminishment of theory; theory *is itself metaphor*.¹⁰ Theories, like metaphors, involve the substitution of one word or idea for another, a kind of cognitive displacement that elicits some similarity or some difference and might even leave something else leftover. Metaphors (and theories) dislodge something of our expectations, our comfortable or casual understanding of an idea, and in doing so they are just as likely to yield informational surpluses as they are deeper obscurities. Metaphors necessarily produce new meanings, in their own shortcomings or excesses, by the gains and losses that exist, fittingly, in between the original idea and the metaphor used to illuminate it. The *limen*, the metaphorical basis for the theory of liminality is, for our purposes, a handy example of this.

In English, the *limen* is primarily a physiological term: it refers to the threshold of sensory perception – the cusp of pain, for instance, or the point at which a person can feel something hot or cold on their skin. But threshold is itself a metaphor that has developed even wider imaginative connotations: it brings to mind the image of a doorway, an entrance, or the moment just before one encounters something new.¹¹ As such, *threshold* implies an inside and an outside, as well as the sense of being not-yet-inside, or not-yet-outside. And so now, we also have implied here the idea of *marginality*, too – of being on the *edge*. The Turners used the language of “thresholds” and “margins” almost interchangeably in their work, characterizing the liminal in both terms without taking too seriously the metaphorical gap necessarily being pried open by the difference between them.¹² Tellingly different than thresholds, margins are those white spaces on the outside of a page. They don't move around, free-floating in space; they sit there, at the edge of things, stuck.

¹⁰ Mieke Bal, “Scared to Death,” in *A Mieke Bal Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 149–68. Note that ‘metaphor’ fittingly and literally means *a carrying over or carrying across*.

¹¹ By using “threshold” as the basic image of his theory that all of life consists of separation, transition and re-aggregation, Van Gennep has been discounted by some as “bourgeois.” That is to say, apparently, only rich people live in houses with walls and doorways and corridors and thresholds may enjoy some resonance with his theory. A respondent to a paper I gave at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting in November 2013, helpfully pointed this out to me. I won't, however, admit to her full criticism. She seemed to be accusing me too of subscribing to a narrow, elitist, normative notion of homelife by re-employing Van Gennep via the Turners. In this dissertation, I am indeed concerned with the ways in which people seem to be pressed into certain kinds of homes as a measure of their so-called success. But I hope that the fuller treatment I give to *homefulness* below will bear out my own commitment to stretching the notion of home(fulness) well beyond the narrow, “bourgeois” definition of home which local, contemporary society implicitly and explicitly seems to agree upon and operate within. See “of housing kits and homefulness” in Part V.

¹² Neumann suspects that the Turners were actually more concerned with margins but were retaining the original language of Van Gennep. Neumann cites the Turners as re-thinking liminality as “not just between two stages in ritual but the being betwixt and between socially established categories.” I tend to think this is not readily obvious in the Turners own writing and that we need work like Neumann's to help tease it out. Neumann, “Introduction to the Forum on Liminality,” p. 473

Thresholds bear with them an air of indistinction, of becoming, of being on the verge. Margins, on the other hand, are more often associated with division, with boundaries, with clear demarcations in space. It could indeed be supposed that the Turners had so little concern for this discrepancy because in their understanding of ritual, boundaries and limits were precisely the site and means of transformation into connections – that being *at the edge* of things was precisely where the liminary was most likely to *cross over* and be made into something new.¹³

But what if the discrepancy should also alert us to something else, something which seems always to have hovered implicitly over the Turners' theory: the possibility of a permanent liminal state, an in-between-ness that exceeds the temporality we initially expect, and instead persists?¹⁴ Probing the metaphor in this way begs the neglected question: what happens when a ritual transformation isn't completed and instead gets caught? The case of homelessness offers an important opportunity to hold both connotations in tension at once, forgoing the temptation to neatly opt for one over the other. A major figure in the field of homelessness research, Kim Hopper, has called his object “a liminality stalled.”¹⁵ It is not so much a “passing crisis” as a “structural” problem, extending indefinitely. It hangs somewhere in between a fluid process and an absolute state.¹⁶ And it exists as both *a temporal* and a *spatial* exceptionality – not just on the way to somewhere but on the outside of things too.

The metaphorical slippage here also brings us back to two things I left hanging above: the problem of Christianity and the question of choice in modern versions of the liminal. On the one hand we now have the shadow of stuckedness in the liminal state, but on the other hand we have the Turners suggesting that we moderns cannot be subjected to such a stuckedness, that getting in and out of the liminoid is for us a mere matter of choice.

In her collection of essays, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, Carolyn Walker Bynum rightly critiques the Turners' theory of liminality for being applicable mainly to men – and a certain type of Christian man, at that: elite, educated, and most importantly, electing.¹⁷ While I might suggest that Walker Bynum's

¹³ See Bernadette Bosky, “Liminal Places and Liminal States in John Crowley’s *Little, Big*, by Bernadette Lynn Bosky,” *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, no. 292 (November 2012): “Here a distinction must be made between boundaries and thresholds, but a connection must be made as well. As stated by that quintessentially liminal figure, Hedwig of Hedwig and the Angry Inch, “Ain't much difference/Between a bridge and a wall.” On the simplest level, that which separates is often also that which joins; one example is the semicolon.

More mythically, one of the goals of ritual is to turn boundaries into thresholds, as when a shaman crosses the barrier between our world and the other world and then personally forms a bridge between them or as a culture hero makes those boundaries less impermeable.”

¹⁴ As I'll note below, this is not necessarily a new idea or extension of the theory – the Turners thought of this possibility explicitly in relation to mendicants and monks – but according to Neumann it is also a suggestive “shadow” that has hovered over the Turners' theory of liminality from the start.

¹⁵ Hopper, *Reckoning with Homelessness*. See also Marybeth Shinn and Beth C. Weitzman, “Research on Homelessness: An Introduction,” *Journal of Social Issues* 46, no. 4 (January 1, 1990): 1–11.

¹⁶ See Joanne Passaro, *The Unequal Homeless: Men on the Streets, Women in Their Place* (Routledge, 2014).

¹⁷ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991). I owe a debt to my colleague Erin Vearncombe for directing me to Carolyn Bynum Walker's critique. Without reading the Turners back through the lens of her critique, I might not have noticed the incompleteness and irresolvability of certain liminal states that Walker Bynum trains our attention on. For example, women cannot become un-

critique sort of picks and chooses the examples that best serve her point, rather than taking on board all of the Turners' (admittedly disorienting) ideas about the liminal, the bulk of her point is well taken here. To be sure, I would have to think twice about applying the theory of liminality if I were not studying here precisely a collection of young, Christian men. But the problem of choice – of liminality as being mainly applicable to *choosers* is something that still hangs me up – and the Turners too, it would seem. Walker Bynum's critique hinges on the Turners' discussion of mendicant movements and monastic orders and she thereby uncovers the problem of Christianity in the Turners' own thinking. If, as the Turners would later assert, the genuinely liminal exists only where there is little choice (as in the tribal society of the Ndembu they studied first) where people must participate in a collective ritual as part and parcel of their social work in the broader community, or in order to attain full membership within it, how then does election to become a monk or mendicant (out of a range of possible Christian practices and experiences) not resign itself to their other version of the middle – the *liminoid*?

Christianity is arguably a pre-industrial logic and a post-industrial practice at the same time, and as such it straddles the Turners' liminal/liminoid dividing line in more ways than one. Take too their division of work and play as problematic: is monastic life (as unpaid work) best understood as leisure or occupation? Or, consider how Christian practice is both a matter of structure and agency; how Christian subjects understand themselves to be both acting of their own will *and* being acted upon by God (or, put differently, as both the subject doing the work *of* a practice and subject *to* a power working on them from “above” or subject to a set of prescriptions to which they must adhere).¹⁸ Finally, what should we make of Christians who conceive of themselves as perpetually in passage, as always living in between sin and redemption, between heaven and earth? In all of these ways, Christianity blurs the line between the liminoid and the genuinely liminal, and it trips up the Turners in their efforts to forge a dividing line between them. They admit, in 1974, that their “crude” attempts a carving out the liminoid was only ever exploratory and the problems with it are never quite cleared up. I tend to follow Sharon Rowe in thinking that it was only ever a false distinction – somewhat arbitrary and less analytically useful than the original.¹⁹ In a way, Walker Bynum elucidates this for us, too – even though it seems somewhat inadvertent and beyond the scope of her primary interest in a useful feminist critique of the Turners' work. Walker Bynum is not concerned with the Turners' later digressions toward the liminoid but she does show how the Turners were at one point prepared to call some kinds of “choice-based” experiences *genuinely* liminal. It's possible then, that ‘choice’ as a hinge between the two genres of the in-between is not worth preserving, that hemming off the full breadth of the theory of liminality from application to modern societies is not worthwhile.

liminal, reagggregated as it were, into men.

¹⁸ See Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 11. See also Matthew Engelke and Matt Tomlinson, "Meaning, Anthropology, Christianity," in *The Limits of Meaning: Case Studies in the Anthropology of Christianity* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), p. 11-13.

¹⁹ Sharon Rowe, “Modern Sports: Liminal Ritual or Liminoid Leisure?,” in *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance*, ed. Graham St. John (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 127–48.

The heralding of ‘choice’ is something Slavoj Žižek might bemoan as “totalitarian disavowal.” In thinking that freedom so defined their age, they lost sight of the fact that they were also governed and held in place by such pronouncements. According to Žižek, the more one trumpets his or her freedom the more they are beholden to its rhetoric and to keeping up its appearances. Freedom has always been something of a trap, tricking us into wanting it without delivering on its promise; it seems to constrain just as much as it allows. Instead, a person can only make choices within a horizon of possibilities; no one shops in an infinite, endless market. The idea that “you are free to choose anything” is only one such realm of possibilities and bears with it the ideological fallacy that you and your free choices alone will take care of everything that needs taking-care-of.²⁰

To understand the crisis of homelessness then, I propose instead to use the full range of the Turners’ liminal dimensions: the language I culled above to describe the liminal is drawn indiscriminately from work on the liminal and the liminoid. In the case of having homes and lacking them, I think we have reason to think in non-optional terms. Home/homelessness is not a commodity-based or leisure experience. As I’ll argue below, what we do collectively with the crisis of homelessness is something integral to the way our society works, it is an inverse reflection of what we value and share in common, and it is most certainly a question of one’s membership in the collective.

If we were to take only the liminoid as possible in the here and now, we would be less likely to consider the liminal in relation to those edges, margins, and middle spaces we (rather collectively) continue to create and the complex experiences of whomever among us continues to occupy them. Iver Neumann has attempted to set the record straight on this matter in his introduction to a forum on liminality in the field of international relations – a discipline concerned with migrants and refugees, variations on the kind of homelessness I’m interested with here:

...liminality is a function of categories. It would by definition be impossible for a social world to exist without shared categories. If we grant that no scheme of categorisation can be all-inclusive – a post-structural credo that it has been hard for opponents to shoot down – then it follows that liminality will exist within any social order. We are left, then, with a Foucauldian insight: any social order has its marginalised groups. What liminality as a category can do for us, is to focus our gaze on these groups...²¹

²⁰ This is one of the hallmark ideas of neoliberalism. See Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Harvard University Press, 2009); Loïc Wacquant, “Three Steps to a Historical Anthropology of Actually Existing Neoliberalism,” *Social Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 66–79. See also Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *Prison Religion: Faith-Based Reform and the Constitution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) where she shows how the so-called “free moral self” is ironically heralded but hemmed in a Christian self-improvement program in an American prison.

²¹ Neumann, “Introduction to the Forum on Liminality,” p.477.

Liminality “sensitizes us to the glitches left by structures,” Neumann argues and to those living within those glitches – not by free and independent choices but because they live “in sites between categories forged by others.”²²

In spite of the Turners’ attempt to hem it in, I think the theory of liminality is so provocative and so persistent in scholarly (as well as popular) literature because we feel (however implicitly) that there are forces pressing (some of) us into collective rituals, into transformations, into margins – no matter how drunk we are with this idea that we’re free. We know, for whatever reason, that some people *just don’t fit* into whatever categories pass for normal. The initial impetus the Turners cited for paying attention to the liminal was its abjection, its obscurity: that the middle, the gap, had not, to that point, been the focus of attention. To this day, there are many things we cannot so easily explain or so clearly see. And even easy recourse to the liminal (or liminoid) tends to mark that lack, to stand-in for something we can’t quite make sense of. If we refuse to settle for simplistic versions of the liminal we would take more seriously how the gaps and margins are formed and held in place by our shared categories, and how some people get routinely left out.

If, as per the Turners and Van Gennep, (genuine) liminality is a step in the ritual process, in between separation from and re-aggregation to the group, then I want to suggest that home-making – movements and gestures in the direction of home, of dwelling, is indeed a modern collective ritual.²³ To come to find home, be *at home* is a rite, a matter of passage, and an inescapable social drama in which we are all, by and large, engaged.

The initial problem posed above was the Turners’ suggestion that genuine liminality was precluded wherever complexity and freedom had dismantled the kind of broad-based support that would require members to undergo an initiatory process before taking up new roles or social obligations.²⁴ But “freedom” and “choice” are also words pundits have used to mystify the structural reasons for homelessness and so we have good reason to mistrust them. They tend to redirect attention to individual laziness, apathy, and other personal failings instead of things like unemployment, mental illness, migration, racism, a tangle of issues to do with scarcity, excess, and instability.²⁵ Freedom and choice are ideas that have remade the modern individual as “self-sufficient,” someone who can and should take care of herself. Such a view of the person has in turn sustained the steady privatization of

²² *ibid* p. 476

²³ Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” in *Basic Writings: Second Edition, Revised and Expanded* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 343–64.

²⁴ Sharon Rowe has troubled this notion with the case of sport: not easily separated by the secular/religious divide, sport exists at the centre of collective experience. Highly ritualized, she argues, it is found in every culture, changes little over time, and extends well beyond the expression of individual identity. Rowe, “Modern Sports: Liminal Ritual or Liminoid Leisure?”

²⁵ Leonard C. Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter: Homelessness, Democracy, and Political Exclusion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Vincent Lyon-Callo, *Inequality, Poverty, and Neoliberal Governance: Activist Ethnography in the Homeless Sheltering Industry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Andrea Muehlebach, “On Precariousness and the Ethical Imagination: The Year 2012 in Sociocultural Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist* 115, no. 2 (2013): 297–311; Loïc Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2013); David Wagner, *Checkerboard Square: Culture and Resistance in a Homeless Community* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993).

social services and healthcare in Anglo-America, not least in neoliberal leaning Ontario where we find the focus of this study, the Gateway shelter.²⁶ Together, neoliberal ideologies of the self-reliant individual and the minimalist state create and perpetuate margins. They make the prospect of having a home easier for some and more difficult for others. Those who don't have well-paying, secure jobs, who cannot (for various reasons) "take care of themselves" (whatever that means) are rendered almost partial persons – at least until such time as they can claim a kind of propertied independence.²⁷ Having "a home of one's own" is inherent in this expectation, a salient if not hegemonic ideal or goal in such a context, and the surest reflection of a person's citizenship (even humanness) in that world.²⁸

In Toronto, the high-stakes real estate market and the sorry state of social housing together create a crisis of affordable homes and point in equal measure to the "home" as a reflection of wider social values in this city. Having *your own home* is vitally important, worth significant struggle, expense, and patience. At the time of writing, the average cost of a home within the city limits was \$613,933 while the premium choice – a single detached home would run you almost \$1 million.²⁹ Until recently, there were more than 70,000 Toronto residents waiting an average of 6.65 years for rent-g geared-to-income housing.³⁰ Although even if a person or family finally secures subsidized housing, they may also have to face the Toronto Community Housing Corporation's astounding repair backlog which analysts say will take \$896 million and 30 years to deal with.³¹

Where scholars of various ilk consider the notion of *home* we find myriad definitions, offering up a repertoire of the usual notions: home is a site of inclusion and exclusion (certain members are in, while certain others are necessarily out); it's a site of belonging, identity, and subject formation; it is the locus

²⁶ See Janine Brodie, "The Great Undoing: State Formation, Gender Politics, and Social Policy in Canada," in *Western Welfare in Decline: Globalization and Women's Poverty*, ed. Catherine Kingfisher (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 90–110;

²⁷ Chris Hedges points out the tragic irony – read *hypocrisy* – of this idea. He argues that it is really only the poor and middle classes who are expected to be self-sufficient – the rich actually have lots of help. See Chris Hedges, *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* (New York: Nation Books, 2014), p.101ff. Catherine Kingfisher and her colleagues also make brilliant observations about the gendered nature of these ideals. See Catherine Kingfisher, *Western Welfare in Decline: Globalization and Women's Poverty* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

²⁸ My discussion of home here draws on a number of important and insightful sources: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Mary Douglas, "The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space," *Social Research* 58, no. 1 (1991): 287–307; Samira Kawash, "The Homeless Body," *Public Culture* 10, no. 2 (1998): 319–39; Pamela Edith Klassen, *Blessed Events: Religion and Home Birth in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Shelley Mallett, "Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature," *The Sociological Review* 52, no. 1 (February 1, 2004): 62–89; Joseph Rykwert, "House and Home," *Social Research* 58, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 51–62; Aviezer Tucker, "In Search of Home," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 11, no. 2 (October 1, 1994): 181–87. For a theological perspective on home as an issue of primordial loss, see Steven Bouma-Prediger and Brian J. Walsh, *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008).

²⁹ Susan Pigg, "Sales Were up a Stunning 16.9 per Cent, Year over Year. While the Average Sale Price Briefly Touched on \$1 Million Last April, It Had Dipped down by the End of That Month to \$965,670.," *The Toronto Star*, March 4, 2015, http://www.thestar.com/business/real_estate/2015/03/04/average-price-of-toronto-detached-home-shoots-past-1-million.html. See also the Toronto Real Estate Board website's announcement: (http://www.torontorealestateboard.com/market_news/market_watch/) Posted April 7, 2015. Retrieved April 22, 2015.

³⁰ See report published by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association:

http://www.onpha.on.ca/onpha/Content/PolicyAndResearch/Waiting_Lists_Survey_2014/Resources/Housing_Summaries/Toronto.pdf

³¹ Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis, Socio-Economic Analysis: Value of Toronto Community Housing's 10-Year Capital Investment Plan and Revitalization (<http://www.cancea.ca/?q=node/80>). Published March 2015. Retrieved April 22, 2015

of certain intimate and meaningful relationships; it's a place of safety and security. And for the most part, it's accepted that we don't need to agree on the specifics – nor that everyone has a positive experience of home on which to draw.³² But still, *home* tends to occupy a significant if generalized place in our collective imagination.

At the Gateway, certain people are allowed in and others excluded – in accordance with shelter's own rules and restrictions. Workers try to keep the place safe. There are secure doors on the shelter and on lockers for the keeping of personal belongings. The shelter is often a cheerful place: people laugh, play games, eat hot meals, form bonds and habits with each other. And yet many a person would take one look at a bedroom with 54 matching beds lined in perfect rows – each covered in plain white bed sheets, one white pillow, one tan-coloured blanket – and then decide that this wasn't quite what they imagined as “home.”

Along Toronto's Don Valley riverbank, scattered in and around its port lands, or perched above its almost rural Rosedale Valley Road,³³ people have cobbled together walls and roofs and private spaces. Shacks, lean-tos, tents, sometimes in clusters of encampments – a community of people looking out for one another, should the river rise, the cops come by, or a thief. They have home (are home-full) in a way many are not. They can say, “I built that home with my bare hands.”³⁴ And yet for many reasons – to do with their apparent lack of comfort, privacy, security, or their more obvious lack of ownership papers, property tax payments, and insurance– these places don't easily count as 'home' and their occupants are quickly filed as 'homeless' according to the peculiar social categories of our time and place.³⁵

In the ritual process, the third stage, the consummation of the passage would see the newly reintegrated citizens now adhering to their new social roles within the community: they would behave according to the customary standards and norms which are binding on members of their social position; they would emerge from a state of relative instability and be stable once more, again enjoying the rights and responsibilities of full membership within the group, equal with the rest.³⁶ I'm suggesting that 'home' represents a similar ritual arrival in a North American city like Toronto. In order to be fully a citizen (to vote for instance, to be counted in the census, to be recognized in community consultations

³² See Kawash, “The Homeless Body”; Klassen, *Blessed Events*; Rykwert, “House and Home.”

³³ All of these are places in the Gateway Outreach Team's catchment. Among other Outreach Teams sponsored by City of Toronto initiative Streets To Homes, the Gateway is responsible for a certain geographical area, reaching out to people living outside, befriending them, supporting them in the search for stable housing.

³⁴ According to Heidegger, “building is for dwelling...to be human is to dwell,” Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.”

³⁵ Philosopher Anthony Steinbock, has argued that homelessness is one half of a “conceptual dyad,” home/homelessness shape and organize our basic understanding of intersubjectivity. Following Husserl's categories of homeworld and alienworld, Steinbock shows how one's construction of home exists in co-constitutive relation to homelessness, and becomes integral to subjectivity. It seems that homeworld and alienworld follow roughly along the same lines as the homefulness-homelessness spectrum that I'll develop in Part V. At any rate, Steinbock emphasizes the priority of similar categories for self-understanding and social organization. Anthony J. Steinbock, “Homelessness and the Homeless Movement: A Clue to the Problem of Intersubjectivity,” *Human Studies* 17, no. 2 (April 1, 1994): 203–23.

³⁶ See Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

on various issues, to possess certain kinds of ID) one has to have a home address. Sure, some people have an address where mail can be sent but they don't live there. And, by the same token, a person as I've imagined above, living in a tent in the Don Valley can have something that might pass for 'home' while mail is not delivered to them there. It's clearly about more than postal services. On one level it's about organization and order and the government's ability to get in touch with its constituents; but it's also about more ephemeral things like responsibility and respectability – and how having a home somehow proves your ability to sustain both, demonstrates your character even.

Having a home certainly imposes such behavioural norms on a person: one has to consistently pay for it, return to it, clean and repair it. Things like rent and mortgage payments, upkeep and home-improvement (not to mention neighbourhoods which have specific standards for these things) are, I think, a set of expected behaviours to which a homed person is believed to “arrive” and to “settle down” into. Such things are binding insofar as the rest of us will withhold the full rights of citizenship from a person who (for whatever reason) lacks them. A person who doesn't have “their own” home or occupies any kind of alternative or irregular dwelling is not afforded full membership and equality with the rest of us. At best, citizenship for the homeless goes about half way – if only in that it takes much more time and effort to secure what comes more easily to those with homes: good healthcare, for instance, a living wage, official identification, a voter's card, an audience with a city councilor, a supportive (and bed-bug-free) living situation.³⁷

To live just shy of all of this, I'm suggesting, is to live in the liminal. And this is a liminality of significant colour and dimension, of considerable play and messiness; a genuine liminality just as contradictory, as constraining, as creative as the Turners initially imagined it to be.³⁸ In what follows then, I'll use the full range of the liminal in order to discuss what it's like in an urban homeless shelter, its limits and edges, its waffling and contradictions, its irony, abjection, solidarity, potentiality and hope. The provocations of liminality will trigger each of my reflections on the everyday life of the shelter, and will frame our understanding of how the staff members in particular tend to occupy that space.

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³⁷ See interesting work done linking homelessness to the social determinants of health at Canadian organizations Upstream Action (<http://www.thinkupstream.net/tags/action>) and The Wellesley Institute (<http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/>). On access to ID, see Ross Gordon, “Community, Use It or Lose It?,” *Anthropologica* 54, no. 2 (2012): 253–66. On access to a city council representative, see Prashan Ranasinghe and Mariana Valverde, “Governing Homelessness Through Land-Use: A Sociolegal Study of the Toronto Shelter Zoning By-Law,” *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 31, no. 3 (2006): 325–49.

³⁸ A note here about using “imagine”: I originally had “discovered it to be” but that sounds too matter of fact for a work of ethnography. Much as some might contend it's a science, involving the discovery of facts, I cannot subscribe to so cold and calculating a notion. “Imaginary” need not necessarily denote something make-believe, but the shared meanings we give to something – made up perhaps, but no less real. I take the Turners to be imagining the liminal – not conjuring it up out of nothing, but neither are they simply describing something that just anyone could plainly see by merely looking.

Let me make one more argument for this rehabilitation of liminality, at least for my purposes here. I'll take a kind of roundabout way of getting there, however, beginning with a few short stories about the Gateway and the trickiness of home.

One. St. James Park amounts almost to the Gateway's backyard. Need to cool off -- temperature-wise or temper-wise? Take it to the park, a worker might say. Want to have a beer, light a joint? Take it to the park. Fresh air, sunshine, relaxation – not too far from home. It's their lawn. And for a while, I would make a point of cutting through there on my way to and from the Gateway. On the way there it was the first sight of friends. But at the end of the day, it often struck me as awkward: I was on my way home. Should I mention that, in parting? Would it hurt somewhere inside a person if I did? The mere mention of home injure the so-called homeless?

But I can remember, around that same time, a worker spending the better part of a week on the front desk computer, searching websites for a new apartment. Chatting to whoever would listen, she would lament how hard it was to find precisely the right place – clean enough, close enough, cheap enough. That worker was not similarly worried that the mere mention of home would offend the so-called “homeless.” At worst, the worker hadn't thought about it all, and I suppose that's possible. But at best, that worker didn't think of the Gateway's residents as entirely, categorically, irretrievably homeless and instead thought they all – workers and residents alike – had something in common: the ongoing search for some home that was clean and close and cheap. She may even have imagined that the Gateway fulfilled all three: better than cheap, it's practically free to residents; its centrally located; and well, it's clean enough. Being a woman, she couldn't live here herself, but should it not be home for these men who could?

Two. I was in the shelter's Drop-In just before dinner on a particularly busy Monday in November, leaning against the wall at the far end of the room since there wasn't a single place to sit down. The worker I call Ian came my way to clear up the afternoon coffee. He asked me what I was doing but answered his own question before I had a chance: “just observing?” he said with a mischievous grin that twitched the thin ginger moustache he'd been growing lately (he always found my presence at the shelter slightly amusing). On his next trip past me, in between the coffee station and the kitchen, he remembered something he had confided to me while ago: “When did I tell you that this place felt like 'home' to me?” he asked. I took a guess: about a week and a half ago? He agreed that it was recently. He went on, rather gravely: “It's funny how as soon as you say something out loud, it changes.”

I asked him what was different – what had troubled the feeling he once had, that without a father or brothers of his own, this was the place he belonged, felt safe and respected, even loved. If nothing else, the Gateway was a place that felt fairly constant to him, despite a number of recent apartment moves. That evening, he told me that it must have something to do with guys/residents/friends-of-his, who

had once seemed to be doing really well – getting clean, getting jobs, getting housing – but were “screwing up,” however they do, and coming back, looking for beds at the shelter. “It makes me wonder what we’re doing here,” Ian lamented.

This wasn't the first time I've heard something like this, just the first time from him. Ian is a guy rather optimistic in the great scheme of things, a guy rather known for his jokes and his simple joy in being here. A guy who never gets too flustered, but shrugs when something threatens to upset him: “It is what it is,” he's fond of saying. And I've come to think that phrase sort of sums him up: he takes things just as they come. But I was struck then by his loss of faith in a way that I was not usually moved – I took a short leave from “just observing” to encourage him with something I had long ago noticed: “Maybe what you're doing here is creating the kind of place those guys *can* come back to...”and he agreed that's true – this was obviously home for them too. Still, something had disrupted his ease. He felt less comfortable here now than he once did. The more homeful the homeless felt here, the less homeful it felt for himself. Strange.

Three. It was mid January when I ran into Riley on a cross-town streetcar, first thing in the morning after having spent a late night sitting across the front desk from him the evening before. We said hello and laughed a little at how the streetcar's lurching had sent him stumbling twice on the short walk from the front to the back of the streetcar. He went by me and sat near the back, taking out his newspaper puzzle page; as far as I had seen, he was almost never without it.

At Nathan Philips' Square – the site of Toronto's City Hall and an outdoor public skating rink – a father and his young son boarded the streetcar, skates in hand, and sat just in front of Riley. When I got up to get off the streetcar and was waiting at the exit, I could see that some of our fellow passengers were bemused by this little boy. Kneeling on his seat to see out the window, he was precociously commenting on whatever he saw go by. Riley was utterly engrossed in his puzzle, unfazed. Even when the child exclaimed in disbelief and with a surprising maturity: “There are people sleeping outside in *this* weather?!” Riley didn't look up, but I was almost knocked over by the irony. No one but me knew that a “homeless” man was sitting among them; it's not so easy to tell.

Riley has been at the Gateway a long time, but he's no real “street guy.” He carries a worn canvas rucksack, wears work clothes and boots. His glasses actually fit him. His beard is trimmed. He's always carrying a newspaper, as I've said. He's up on the news. He once studied engineering at Queen's. And he has a system, a pattern for living, that's all his own – maybe it's the thing that keeps Gateway life livable, year round. He stays out of the shelter all day if he can help it, picking up odd jobs. He comes in late for his “saved supper” – something he arranged with his case manager a long time ago when he had steady work and a real reason to miss the meal. Since that ended, no one has thought to remove Riley's name from the list and insist that he show up at dinnertime. So, he doesn't. He eats alone, around 10 o'

clock, every night, just as everyone else is heading to bed. Then Riley stands at the front counter, almost pressed into the far corner, and works on his puzzles. When he get frustrated with a particular word or Sudoku combination, he ducks out briefly to fetch a chocolate bar from the gas station across the street – often coffee crisp, sometimes a kitkat – and what just might be a cup of hot chocolate to top it off: his fix. And then it's back to that spot at the counter until whenever he gets stuck again or finally finds himself tired. Only then does he go up to bed. In the morning he sleeps as late as he can – not past 7:45 by the rules – and he disappears shortly after breakfast. No one sees him around there again until bedcheck. This is Riley's life – his homelife.

* * * * *

Neither homelessness nor the *home* upon which it depends are these neat and easy things; moreover, there can be no such thing as a tidy solution to the problem of not having something that is fairly incoherent in the first place.³⁹ With the three stories above, I've introduced the possibility that the Gateway and other shelters like it are – and perhaps depending whom you ask and when you ask them – versions or instantiations of home. For some people the shelter acts as if it is home, stands-in for home, or simply helps to obscure a person's so-called “homelessness.” At the Gateway, home is a shifty idea: the Gateway can feel like home one day and not the next. Plans to leave the Gateway for another kind of home sometimes lay bare the reality that by comparison rooming houses and subsidized apartments are much less homey than here. Move-outs often lead eventually to moving back in since so much of what one tends to associate with being at home – comfort, familiarity, safety – one finds at the Gateway, in greater measure than they do anywhere else. Maybe certain shelters are as-good-as-home, good enough for now, or at least shelters *could be home* if such a notion were to be taken seriously and intentionally fostered (something which I'll propose by way of conclusion to this thesis).

So much work on homelessness fails to account for the slipperiness of *home* in the first place and has little imagination for alternative home-like spaces. In my estimation, this makes the authors' good intentions about solving or ending homelessness rather dubious. With interview data and statistical evidence, sociological research on homelessness tends to deal with strictly delimited slices of the story: soundbites, narrative fragments, piecemeal observations, this many interviews, conducted in this particular city or that, about one specific issue in a sea of thousands. The result is a veritable flood of narrowly delineated fragments, the researchers are all careful to cordon themselves off from other studies with their highly circumscribed test cases, their finely tuned research questions, their exacting results. I appreciate their precision, but I've also found myself looking around for discussions of

³⁹ See John Law, *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* (London: Psychology Press, 2004). Law advises: “...simple clear descriptions don't work if what they are describing is not itself very coherent. The very attempt to be clear simply increases the mess.” On the whole, Law's introduction is a little melodramatic about the usefulness of mess and his point feels overstated, but I still take work like this as encouragement to use the liminal.

homelessness that push deeper and stay deliberately *uncertain* about their conclusions, even at the risk of *saying* less.

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (housed at York University and dubbed “The Homeless Hub”) boasts more than 30,000 resources on homelessness.⁴⁰ A startling collection of work, the Homeless Hub library includes work on a list of variation and variables I could not hope to exhaust here. There is research specific to age, race, aboriginal status, class, gender, sexual orientation, education, nationality, geography and location. There is work done on various types and degrees of violence, mental illness, trauma, brain injury, victimization, addiction, stress. There are myriad links made between homelessness and other determinants of health: food security, nutrition, obesity, sexual habits, and access to healthcare or visits to the doctor. There is work on people who have runaway, were once in foster/state care, have been part of intergenerational homeless families, have contracted certain STDs, have served in the military, and/or spent time in prison. Various studies factor in employment history, immigration status, the particular ways in which specific substances are taken into to the body. There is a plethora of stuff which evaluates the effectiveness of assorted policies, programs, supports, schemes, therapies, theories, and social purpose enterprises, as well as those which gauge the difference between such things offered in public or private settings, in urban, suburban, rural, international, and arctic contexts.

The reigning research agenda on homelessness seems to be that if we collect enough samples and find a broad cross-section of interviewees, we'll ultimately collect all the pieces of the jigsaw. But I follow the anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano in preferring “puzzlement” to puzzle pieces. I would stretch to homelessness research something anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano put so well:

...I mistrust, at least heuristically, most sociological and psychological explanations. As often as not, they are like just-so stories that perpetuate ideological formations by offering us solace when we are confronted with the morally confusing, the cognitively puzzling, and the seemingly unknowable.⁴¹

After two years of participant observation, and three more of research and writing, the bottom lines at either end of socio-economic homelessness – its initial seed or its final solution – are both still largely a mystery to me. And the people I watched working at the Gateway didn't seem to know much more than I did about how and why homelessness, on the whole, exists; about why the shelter is the best we've done so far to handle it; about what it would take to close up shop and consider the problem done with.

⁴⁰ Find library at http://www.homelesshub.ca/search-resources?publication_date=1970-01-01%2000%3A00%3A00

⁴¹ Vincent Crapanzano, *Imaginative Horizons: An Essay in Literary-Philosophical Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 6.

Anthropologies of some uncertainty and open-endedness – like that found within the theory of liminality – are perhaps the only meaningful way of talking about something that doesn't quite make sense and will not be easily resolved. And for very practical reasons as much as anything else: at the Gateway, the left hand doesn't necessarily know what the right hand is doing. This worker on days doesn't know what that other worker did last night or the day before that. More than one hundred people move in and out of that narrow 4-storey space on any given day, all with their own stories, trajectories, grievances, expectations, experiences. The building is not much wider than a city street but requires far more interaction – personalities bumping up against each other, lugging all kinds of actual and metaphorical baggage. And so the way I tell a story about this place must also emerge in snatches, fuzzy images, scraps of information, good intentions and a humble incompleteness. At the shelter, a place raw with honesty and mental illness, a person can arrive, drop a part of themselves in front of you – some deeply personal piece of information, some fragment of their story – maybe they'll drop it on the table where you're playing cards, or on the desk where you're handing out towels, and then maybe they'll leave as quickly as they appeared, even never to be seen again. Then again, maybe they will reappear, but it could be days, months, years later. “*Guy showed up...*” is the off-the-cuff beginning to many a good Gateway story. And that's the rather telling truth of the place: people, things, intentions, friendships, behaviours, theories, truths and certainties, they all show up and then disappear. And so we need a way of talking about what happens there that can handle (if not also account for) its fleeting, fragmentary, and flexible everyday.

The liminal – as much in its analytical incompleteness as the state it describes – is a way not of locking things down but opening things up. By the Turners' own admission, and by their numerous attempts to edit and re-articulate it, the liminal has always been just a start, a kind of adolescent idea, always a bit tentative, experimental and ultimately a mess.⁴² So what if, as a matter of discipline, ethnographers trained themselves to let that be OK?

João Biehl and Peter Locke have posed such a question in their “anthropology of becoming,” and I've taken it rather to heart. They go even a step further and propose that anthropologists nurse rather than deny the “perennial” tensions they wrestle with between “the raw unfinishedness of experience and the false closure of theory, and anthropology as literature versus anthropology as lab report.”⁴³ To be sure,

⁴² See discussion of Turner(s) in Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); see also Simon Coleman on *communitas*. According to Coleman, theoretical terms (like Turner's *communitas* which is so often set starkly against another predominant theory in the study of pilgrimage – contestation) are mostly aspirational modes of understanding. For Coleman, “neither *communitas* nor contestation should themselves be fetishized in order to produce neatly symmetrical anthropological theory,” a caution we may well extend beyond the study of pilgrimage of and Coleman's chosen tropes. Simon Coleman, “Do You Believe in Pilgrimage?: *Communitas*, Contestation and beyond,” *Anthropological Theory* 2, no. 3 (September 1, 2002), p. 361.

⁴³ João Biehl and Peter Locke, “Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming,” *Current Anthropology* 51, no. 3 (June 1, 2010): 317–51. See also Clifford Geertz, *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton University Press, 2012) and Barbara Myerhoff, *Number Our Days* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980).

in “moving away from the overdetermined toward the incomplete,” Biehl and Locke recognize that anthropology will need “bolder experiments in writing and genre.”

A similar argument is made by John Law in *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. While we might not go so far as to agree with Law that we are in some kind of post-methodological academia, we might still take his point that maybe “we need to rethink our ideas about clarity and rigour and find ways of knowing the indistinct and the slippery without trying to grasp and hold them tight.”⁴⁴ Instead, he suggests, “knowing would become possible through techniques of deliberate imprecision.”⁴⁵

Such a model has already been well set by scholars in the study of religion. Religion as a kind of “affectivity, a desire,” or a “gesture toward the outside”— is potentially something so mysterious as to tempt suspicion and self-protection in the face of it.⁴⁶ But, as we’re told by the crafters of some of our most interesting work on religion, to be standoffish would be a woeful mistake.⁴⁷ Instead, Robert Orsi believes it is “chastening and liberating to stand in an attitude of disciplined openness and attentiveness” to that which we cannot easily comprehend.⁴⁸ And he has called this posture itself an “in-betweenness.”⁴⁹ A long tradition of such humility and receptiveness has grown-up in the study of lived and living religion, both before and after Orsi, much of the work eschewing the temptation toward firm, decided observations and concrete conclusions in the interest of telling a good story, “tickling the imagination” or asking more (and better) questions we might not otherwise have thought to ask.

The last bit of reflexive wisdom I’ll include on this topic (from which I gain considerable encouragement) belongs to the phenomenological anthropologist, Michael Jackson:

I waive the conventions of lineal argument and the search for firm or final conclusions, embracing Wittgenstein's view that to say something is often less interesting than to disclose connections, not only because statements can never convey everything that is existentially and most immediately the case but because our most illuminating glimpses into the nature of things emerge in the shifting spaces between statements, descriptions, and persons, and in the course of events.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Law, *After Method*, p.3

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Marshall, *Political Spiritualities*, p. 49-50.

⁴⁷ See especially compelling work by Ghassan Hage, “Hating Israel in the Field,” *Anthropological Theory* 9, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 59–79; Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Klassen, *Blessed Events*; Marshall, *Political Spiritualities*; Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn, Updated and Expanded Edition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter*. Myerhoff, *Number Our Days*; Robert A. Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women’s Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁴⁸ Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 8.

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p.158

⁵⁰ Michael Jackson, *The Palm at the End of the Mind: Relatedness, Religiosity, and the Real* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2009), p. xii-xiv.

In such a vein, and in the spirit of Bal's notion of metaphorical theory discussed above, you'll find one or two Turnerian descriptions of the liminal at the outset of the dissertation's following chapters; they exist mainly as semi-poetic metaphors which are meant to shed a little light on what follows, to provoke thought, inspire riffs, move us into corners and out of them again, and come only as close as I can to telling you what it was like at the Gateway. As isolated, lonely words they are both flush with excesses and cut with sharp edges and interpretative gaps; an understanding of the Gateway exists somewhere in between them. It's possible the reader will know better than I how well this interpretation makes sense – equally so where there are dropped threads, missed connections and other possibilities, and I want to let that be. I could not hope to tie up this particular (or perhaps any) homeless shelter in a tidy bow. What is written here remains (both intentionally and otherwise) messy, under-determined, and incomplete. The fact of the dissertation's format – its more-than-usual-number of shorter-than-average chapters – stems from and tries to convey the muddling character of what happens at the Gateway – muddling both in the sense of a muted chaos and of just getting by in the thick of it.

I have tried to sort out my reflections according four overarching themes, around which I think the various aspects of the liminal tend to cluster and cohere: *irony*, *immaturity*, *subjunctivity* and *stuckedness*. To a certain extent, this constellation is a work of my own analytic imagination – the Turners and others who have engaged the liminal have not necessarily labeled the various aspects of their sites and subjects in categories like these. But in gathering the various observations made about the middle, it seems to me that many (if not all of them) could be roughly plotted along these four lines. More importantly, I take these to be the four coefficients of everyday life at the Gateway: its paradoxes, its youthfulness, its as-if-ness, its indefiniteness are the constant and cooperating elements that shape what happens at the shelter.⁵¹ I have already hinted at each of these with respect to what happens at the Gateway; but in each section that follows I will unpack and trouble each of them as metaphors/theories in themselves: they both make up the in-between and are in-betweens in and of themselves.

The plan of the work is to draw you deeper into the life of the shelter. It begins broadly with the Gateway's geographic, social, and organizational contexts (Part II Stuckedness). It enters the Gateway by way of its own suppositions, desires, and quite intentionally by way of its front door (Part III Subjunctivity). It uses a day-in-the-life of the Gateway to consider the intricacies and implications of the alternative community it attempts to form (Part IV Immaturity) before using the nighttime as an opportunity to introduce some of its aspects which are harder to reconcile (Part V Irony).

⁵¹ The idea for “coefficients” comes from Robert Desjarlais (discussed in detail in the section that follows – “ritual keepers of the in-between”). Desjarlais frames his discussion of subjectivity in a shelter for the homeless mentally ill in terms of 5 coefficients: impermanence, conversation, rhetoric, power, obscurity...and a overarching sixth: 'weirdness.' See Robert R. Desjarlais, *Shelter Blues: Sanity and Selfhood Among the Homeless* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), p.39-44

ritual keepers of the in-between

In all of the Turners' talk of a sequestered and separate liminality, there is little mention of those powers which impose it or hold it in place – whoever it is, for instance, who does the “stripping away” of the liminaries' old names/ties/roles. Does that happen spontaneously? Do the initiates know innately how to conduct themselves in the liminal? Isn't someone in charge? That's what I'm curious about here: the elders, if you will – even though in this case those “elders” aren't necessarily that much elder, or older at all. How do those figures occupy the middle? And, more precisely what happens when they claim to be *making friends* in the middle?

The shelter workers seem to me akin to the shadowy figures who act as ritual leaders in the Turners' analysis – whoever oversees the liminaries in their separation and seclusion, setting the parameters of that space, ensuring certain behaviours there, guiding experiences of inversion, play, humility, anonymity and the like. As I've said, the Turners don't tell us much about them; these characters exist just beyond their gaze. I seek to bring shelter workers into sharper focus, not only because the Turners mainly overlook whoever protects the in-between, but also because scholars of homelessness have, more often than not left out, or worse caricatured, whoever runs a shelter or hosts the homeless.⁵²

* * * * *

My attention to the workers at the Gateway seemed to come as much by chance as by choice. It was, I later realized, the random convergence of three books read in relative succession, and one real-life conversation that only together set this project in motion. It seems impossible to me now to overestimate the influence of these four instances on the project. It's equally hard to say precisely in what order all of them affected me; it would be more accurate to say that they swirled around for many years, trading places, shifting foreground to background. Only looking back at my various notebooks do I realize that they were all happening rather concurrently. In an act of necessary reflexivity, I want to situate myself in relation to those three ethnographies and to my original association with the

⁵² In many ways this is understandable. In the rush to “give voice to the voiceless” it's easy to overlook those we perceive as having enough power and voice in the first place. But it's possible that in the case of homelessness research we have swung too far and merely replaced one voiceless subject with another. While they have otherwise produced fascinating work, examples of this tack include: Rebecca Anne Allahyari, “‘Ambassadors of God’ and ‘The Sinking Classes’: Visions of Charity and Moral Selving,” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 16, no. 1/2 (December 31, 1996): 35–69; Hopper, *Reckoning with Homelessness*; Tanya M. Luhrmann, “Down and Out in Chicago,” *Raritan* 29, no. 3 (January 1, 2010): 140; Lyon-Callo, *Inequality, Poverty, and Neoliberal Governance*; Wagner, *Checkerboard Square*. I want to mention the work of Michele Lancione in particular; he has done amazing work on perceptions of and interactions with the poor in the United States and his native Italy. But one article in particular, which purports to talk about problems of “love” and “charity” in a Catholic meal program fails to offer any account of the workers own understanding of love, charity or whatever it is they think they're doing when they hand out clothes and food. Lancione starts with the rather esoteric (or at least institutional) level of official Catholic teachings on love (which, as a geographer not obviously concerned with religion elsewhere in his work, it's possible he is ill-equipped to decipher in a sophisticated way) and jumps right to the (admittedly woeful and problematic) implications of certain kinds of charity on the poor who partake of it. He doesn't once talk to the middleman, though. And this, to my mind, is a startling omission. Michele Lancione, “Entanglements of Faith: Discourses, Practices of Care and Homeless People in an Italian City of Saints,” *Urban Studies* 51, no. 14 (2014): 3062–78. See also, Michele Lancione, “The Spectacle of the Poor. Or: ‘Wow!! Awesome. Nice to Know That People Care!’” *Social & Cultural Geography* 15, no. 7 (October 3, 2014): 693–713.

Gateway. I want to think about how it was that I got caught up in what happens at the shelter in the first place; about what I was and wasn't looking for; and about how both my entanglement and later my ambivalence as both participant and observer has inevitably shaped the project.

Shelter Blues by Robert Desjarlais was assigned reading for class in my first year of doctoral studies. In that class, it was the only book I bothered to read all the way through – each page seemed alive with urgent insight into the complex subjectivity of some people living with mental illness in and around a Boston shelter.⁵³ The writing itself is stunning; the analytic breadth and density of detail was unlike anything I'd seen to that point. It is written in short, sharp chapters (forty-one in all), which, by Desjarlais' logic is a kind of “ragpicking through a crowd of objects, surfaces, voices, bodies, images, and stances [in order] to detail their makings.”⁵⁴ Impressively, he links such intricacy to “complex swirls of cultural, political, economic, sensorial, psychological and biological forces” working around and upon the homeless mentally ill people he knew at the Station Street Shelter.⁵⁵ The chapters often bear provocative titles transposed from his field notes like, “A Crazy Place to Put Crazy People,” which talks about the architecture of the building – made of a corduroy concrete and designed in the aptly named *brutalist style* which itself acts on the residents in such a way as to exacerbate rather than soothe their mental fragmentation and confusion.⁵⁶ Or, “Ragtime,” which tries to make sense of the way his informants talk in short, rhythmic but also disorganized and disconnected sentences, making much less sense to the hearer than the speaker.⁵⁷ “Pacing the Labyrinth,” makes a final case for his phenomenological approach to homeless subjectivity, an approach which accounts for more than “meaning and language,” more than “indexes and icons,” and instead tries to study “flesh-and-blood” things like the “need for food, sleep, comfort, privacy, or nicotine...noises, smells, surfaces, distractions, worries, aches, pleasures, and desires common to each acutely public day.”⁵⁸ Every page of Desjarlais' book has since been scratched with my own marginalia –many times over – desperate as I have been to trap every perceptive and startling thing he has written, and wishing I was capable of managing anything like it.

Toward the end, I began to think about a small gap, or at least a slight alternative to the story he was telling. By Desjarlais' own admission (and out of necessity) the staff do not figure prominently in *Shelter Blues*; his point of view is slanted in the direction of the residents, since to sidle up to them ethnographically meant to position himself at a distance from their opposite, their antagonists, the staff.⁵⁹ The workers then, appear in glimpses, and always en masse, as this one, unified thing: “the staff thought...,” “the staff tried...,” “the reluctance of the staff,” and so on. Indeed, for Desjarlais their

⁵³ Desjarlais, *Shelter Blues*.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p. 6

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *ibid.* p. 44–54

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 159–168

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p. 237–249

⁵⁹ *ibid.* p. 41

authoritative “we-ness” is sharply juxtaposed with the weakness of isolated, individual residents who only have the command of “I” language and power over themselves (if that, seems to be the implication). Desjarlais' impression of shelter workers is also as a decidedly *negative* sum total: they are, at their best, backdrop to what he really cares about at the shelter and at their (more often) worst, “the conduit for larger structural and political forces” pressing down on the homeless and forcing them ever further into “the makeshift margins of the capitalist state” in Boston, Massachusetts.

When Desjarlais does consider the role of the staff in the everyday life of the shelter, it is mainly to show how they collectively unsettle their “guests”—indeed, even by calling them guests, Desjarlais argues that the Station Street staff consistently make the shelter feel temporary, regimented, uncomfortable, and definitely *not home*.⁶⁰ What's more, he observes how they seem to lord their might over those who do not have as many strategic powers as they do – workers maintain their separation from residents in their unique ability to keep the schedule, keep the rules, keep records and case files.⁶¹

Late in the work, Desjarlais plots on a table the three phenomenological “worlds” he has been constructing over the course of his ethnography, the worlds of “Street people,” Residents, and Staff.⁶² To the residents he assigned the following one-word descriptors (among others – all of which are fleshed out considerably over the course of the book): liminal, tactical, subjective, episodic, conversational, makeshift, indirect. The staff world comparatively, is not in-between, but by Desjarlais' spatial-temporal logic, fully *inside* the shelter. Their world is strategic, calculating, clinical, concerned with making firm and reasonable plans. This is of course to crudely reduce a rich and clever array of details to a few sentences, but I do it to show how the idea for my project began with Desjarlais and proceeded with his description of shelter staff as a foil.

After paying a kind of attention to shelter workers which Desjarlais' material could understandably not afford, I am tempted to take Desjarlais' resident and staff worlds and shift the descriptions, or at least blur those two worlds a little. To begin with, staff at the Gateway are not an undifferentiated unit; they do not always act as one mind and one voice, for better or worse. And they do not always unsettle whoever is staying at the Gateway – *some* of them do *some* of the time, I admit, but there is also a fair bit of hanging around, talking and playing games in the meantime, and not rushing people out the door. The workers there refer to the men who stay at the Gateway as “residents” rather than “clients” or “guests.” The change is meant to signal a greater acceptance on the one hand, but it simultaneously makes more permanent their association. Workers and residents, as I'll show, engage with each other over stretches of time and some even become friends.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, p.37-39; 150ff. Desjarlais even tells how the shelter manager once claimed to be interested in the final results of Desjarlais' study in order to find new ways of making the shelter even less comfortable. See p. 40

⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 184

⁶² *ibid.* p. 210

If shelter staff are indeed a “conduit” of larger forces (which I would argue makes them more liminal than the residents – not unlike the Turners' “tunnel” metaphor for the liminal⁶³) it is only imperfectly and incompletely so in the context of the Gateway. There are all kinds of ways in which the Gateway workers subvert, neglect, ignore, and defy the city/The Salvation Army/the status-quo, in their daily delivery of services and by working at the Gateway in first place. Most of what they accomplish there is done in an *ad hoc*, piecemeal kind of way, sometimes only by accident. Some of the workers also toe the line while others do so only when they feel like it. The power they yield over residents is sometimes clumsy and awkward, sometimes obfuscated, sometimes deliberately (tactically) given away. And perhaps especially because of their good intentions (and arguably fair-weather commitment) to “friendship” or to “love” the residents, the workers’ position at the Gateway is often very “makeshift” and messy, indeed. They are not Desjarlais' clinical and calculating professional social workers. So who are they? And what might attention to shelter workers (and not just any but *these* shelter workers) yield?

I admit these are questions to which I might not have paid much attention had I not also, around that same time, read Courtney Bender's *Heaven's Kitchen*, and had one crucial conversation with Neil, the Gateway's director. At the time Neil was an acquaintance and I was sent to interview him for another research project I was conducting for The Salvation Army's Ethics Centre.

Bender first. Bender's exploration of “Living Religion at God's Love We Deliver”(GLWD) tells the story of less-than-obvious religion in a less-than-obvious place: a charity which provides hot, nutritious meals to people living with HIV/AIDS in New York City. It was Bender's attention to *love* and charitable volunteers that initially drew me in, but it was her unlikely attention to the not-explicitly-religious that sustained my interest in her story. Over time, GLWD had become an avowedly “secular” charity: reference to “God” in their name was meant to be non-sectarian to begin with, and had since become even more generic, now conflated/interchangeable with love more generally, meant to communicate the basic, vital idea that “someone cares for you.” This was a setting, Bender claimed, in which “God, religion, and spirituality were not entirely accepted – and indeed were in some instances radically rejected – by its clients and constituents” and yet, “religion was far from absent.”⁶⁴

We know so much more about how “[r]eligious life is lived in great festivals, yearly holidays, public commemorations, and public speeches,” she argued. But we know much less about “daily rituals and fleeting interactions” which take place beyond overtly religious institutions and the home. We have (as of the time of her writing, at least) paid far less attention to the way small, multivalent, unlikely habits in social settings *act out* – or are infused by – people's religious meanings, and the ways in which these

⁶³ See Turner, “Variations on a Theme of Liminality.”

⁶⁴ Courtney Bender, *Heaven's Kitchen: Living Religion at God's Love We Deliver* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 29; vii

are always tangled up with “other important goings-on” in everyday life.⁶⁵ In the context of the kitchen at God's Love We Deliver, this meant not only the overarching HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1990s, but the mundane details of procuring and preparing nutritious and delicious food. It involved getting along with others who may or may not share the same view on either of these big issues or a host of smaller ones – like how to properly cut lettuce or chop onions.⁶⁶

But, while *Heaven's Kitchen* had encouraged me to look at the way services are *delivered* not just received, and to consider the *creativity* and *subtlety* with which people enact religion in such an offering, there remained, as in Desjarlais' *Shelter Blues*, this untold backstory of the staff. While Bender's attention was necessarily on those who worked at GLWD here and there and for free, there were professional cooks and administrators who had a different kind of investment and authority in the place. What did it mean to do this charitable work as a job? Perhaps to call such employment a religious expression? And if employees called their work “love” what did it mean to get paid for it?

It's a set of questions I thought might be brought into sharper relief if posed in the context of a “Christian” charity where love was a common trope, and more importantly where religion is *motivation* for service but not necessarily a *component* of that service.⁶⁷ To put it another way, we might look in a place where faith is the reason people conceive of themselves as working there, but in such a place – not unlike Bender's kitchen – where faith is not universally or unproblematically shared among the group, regularly made explicit, or even conceived of as the ultimate goal of their goodwill. In certain Christian settings that exist in what we might only awkwardly, tentatively call the “post-secular,” religion is just as likely to be something downplayed as declared.⁶⁸ Such is the case at the Gateway where, as I'll show, the members descend from a variety of Christian traditions and denominations but seem to share in common a general disdain for social services which make evangelism – the sharing of one's faith and the express intention of converting others to it – a built-in, indispensable part of the service they provide. There are, following Bender, other ways of being Christian in the public sphere.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p. 2; 8; 22

⁶⁶ See especially *ibid.* Ch. 3, pp.42-61

⁶⁷ This is a distinction helpfully elucidated by Sullivan, *Prison Religion: Faith-Based Reform and the Constitution*, p. 13

⁶⁸ On ambience, see Engelke, *A Problem of Presence*. On Christians and Love in the public sphere, see Nicola Reynolds, “Discourses of Love, Compassion, and Belonging: Reframing Christianity for a Secular Audience,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 30, no. 1 (2015): 39–54. On the debate over the “post-secular,” especially as it pertains to the study of Christianity, see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2011); Fenella Cannell, “The Anthropology of Secularism,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39, no. 1 (2010): 85–100; David Kyuman Kim et al., *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society* (NYU Press, 2012); Pamela E. Klassen, “Christianity as a Polemical Concept,” in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Janice Boddy and Michael Lambek (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2013), 344–62; Ruth Marshall, “Christianity, Anthropology, Politics,” *Current Anthropology* 55, no. S10 (2014): S344–56.

⁶⁹ On Christians who think of themselves as “redeeming the city” see James Bielo, “Purity, Danger, and Redemption: Notes on Urban Missional Evangelicals,” *American Ethnologist* 38, no. 2 (May 1, 2011): 267–80. On Christians who think of themselves as necessary heretics and much-needed critics of mainstream Christianity see Rebekka King, “The New Heretics: Popular Theology, Progressive Christianity and Protestant Language Ideologies” (Thesis. University of Toronto 2012). On Christianity and politics, see Marshall, *Political Spiritualities*. On Christianity and healthcare, see Pamela E. Klassen, *Spirits of*

Before beginning my fieldwork at the Gateway, I had known Neil only a little, for a year or two, and mainly because we sat on a Salvation Army committee together. That committee had commissioned me to compile some research and resources on certain social issues and so I had arranged a meeting with Neil to talk about what I might report back about homelessness – what should be The Salvation Army's main concern in its approach to homelessness? What message should they get out to their members?

About that meeting, over breakfast, in a diner just down the street from the Gateway where I have since eaten many times, I by now only remember two things: “Love is the solution to homelessness,” Neil said in response to my research question; and “There's a Case Manager's job open at the Gateway, you should come work for us.”

By the next day, the job offer had been retracted – the job couldn't be given to a woman since they already had one woman case manager and the prevailing opinion back at the Gateway was that there couldn't be two. The seed of an idea had been planted, however. I was only a year into PhD studies and I wasn't prepared to abandon them. Was there a way to do both? To hang out at the Gateway and to get my degree at the same time? And what of *love* as the solution to homelessness? What does that look like? I had been looking for a new angle on an old interest in The Salvation Army; could this be it?

This brings me around to the third ethnography integral to this project: Barbara Myerhoff's *Number Our Days*.⁷⁰ In 1978, Myerhoff's study of Jewish old people in Venice, California was groundbreaking – both for its experimental narrative style, hovering somewhere between social science and literature, and for the ethnographer's own proximity to and involvement in the culture she had chosen to study.⁷¹ Recognizing that she herself “would be a little old Jewish lady one day,” she thought it “essential” to know what growing old was like, “in all its particulars” – an admission all the more poignant since Barbara Myerhoff died of cancer in 1985, before getting very old at all.⁷² Reflecting back on the project, Myerhoff found it was still impossible to decipher whether her study had been “anthropology or personal quest.”⁷³ Knowing she would one day be one of them, she thought that methodological aloofness from her interlocutors was impossible, even undesirable. In a way that was strikingly innovative for her time, she became intricately woven into the fabric of the community and into the story she would ultimately tell about it. Her monograph is laced with intimate details of her characters and with her own struggles, concerns and irresolvable puzzlements. By the end, difficult and

Protestantism: Medicine, Healing, and Liberal Christianity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). On Christianity in prisons, see Sullivan, *Prison Religion: Faith-Based Reform and the Constitution*. See also Omri Elisha, *Moral Ambition: Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), and Brian Steensland and Philip Goff, *The New Evangelical Social Engagement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁷⁰ Myerhoff, *Number Our Days*.

⁷¹ Barbara G. Myerhoff, *Remembered Lives: The Work of Ritual, Storytelling, and Growing Older* (University of Michigan Press, 1992); Barbara G. Myerhoff, Marc Kaminsky, and Mark Weiss, *Stories as Equipment for Living: Last Talks and Tales of Barbara Myerhoff* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007); Terrence R. Whaley, “Ethnography or Fiction: An Essay on Confounding Reader Response in Barbara Myerhoff's *Number Our Days*,” *Linguistics and Education* 5, no. 1 (1993): 39–51.

⁷² Myerhoff p. 19; tragically, Barbara Myerhoff died of cancer in 1985, before getting very old at all.

⁷³ Myerhoff p. 12

uncomfortable though it was at times, Myerhoff would consider it a rare gift to have had “through this work, an opportunity to anticipate, rehearse, and contemplate my own future.”⁷⁴

While it was never inevitable that I would become a Salvation Army shelter worker, there is a sense in which, I must admit, this study is the indeed the opportunity to “rehearse, and contemplate” an alternative kind of future – one in which I had found a way to stay within The Salvation Army, the religious affiliation of my youth. Some workers at the Gateway were people I had known as a young Salvationist; we had worked at camps together. They had gone on to Bible College and to shelter work while I had (on my parents' insistence) defied some expectations of what was considered acceptable Christian behaviour and attended a secular university. Still, I shared with the workers at the Gateway an almost inherent attunement to, and desire to help whoever seemed most in need of it – to talk to panhandlers on the street, to volunteer in soup kitchens, to raise money for social causes, to be especially concerned with people who struggled with addiction by holding always to idea that if they would only abstain from such things as we did, they might finally be “saved.” These things were the bread and butter of one's upbringing in the Salvation Army; we were raised on a rhetoric that fed our self-understanding as an essential (and essentially different) Christian denomination. The Salvation Army I grew up in, as I'll discuss below, believed itself to be doing something most other Christians only talked about: sheltering, feeding and clothing the poor, not to mention getting them cleaned up, into a Salvationist uniform, and ultimately into Heaven.

By the time I came to the Gateway, I was a few years removed from being “a soldier in good standing” in The Salvation Army. My family had broken some ties with what had once been a fairly totalizing cultural influence in our lives – almost the entire horizon of our social world and future possibilities. In relation to the workers at the Gateway, I was about the same age, and not so different from many of them in religious and socio-economic upbringing. But I was both more and less ensnared in the Army than the people who worked there. On the one hand, I was no longer collecting a paycheque from the Army, wearing its logo on my clothes daily, or otherwise identifying myself with the organization, as they were. But by virtue of growing up in a Salvation Army church (which has a kind of franchise structure and ethos – familiar everywhere you go), I had an acute sense of how things worked around there, how decisions were made, how the hierarchy functioned, how the party-line was touted. I recognized all of these even though the shelter's association with the Army did not seem to deeply concern them. “I do Gateway,” Jill, a senior manager said to me one day, “I hardly feel the Salvation Army's presence here at all.” And I envied her, in a way; I never had the luxury of feeling like that. For me, so much about the Gateway was inevitably tied to its parent organization – even, and perhaps especially in the way it thought of itself as unique and rather indifferent to that which preceded and had given it life (of which I'll say more in Part II). I have called irony, immaturity, subjunctivity and

⁷⁴ Myerhoff, *Number Our Days*, p.19

stuckedness the coefficients of the Gateway; I've a hunch that a similar set of arguments could be made about The Salvation Army more generally, but I have opted instead for a situated look at one of its units – the extent to which these can be applied to the broader Army remains for future consideration.

Still, as with Myerhoff, there is a kind of “personal quest” involved in this project. It was an opportunity to consider something I knew quite well – The Salvation Army – from a perspective I had never taken, and would perhaps not otherwise have tried. I was from small-town Ontario. The Salvation Army in my town operated a Thrift Store, a food bank, a lunch program, a camp for underprivileged children. There was a woman at our church who had a pager that beeped when anyone needed an emergency hotel room or bus ticket, but there was (and still is) no shelter in our town, no 24-hour service of any kind. It had been pressed upon me from a young age that I should grow up to be a Salvation Army officer, which would mean that the Salvation Army could pick me up and send me anywhere in Canada (or even further afield) in order to work in any number of its churches or other services. I had, after graduating from university, made certain steps to concede to such a life, still I had never so much as thought of working in one of its shelters until that conversation with Neil. I'm not sure why not. But I cling to this as a crucial source of critical distance in my work as participant-observer. Although by the end of my fieldwork I would, just a couple of times, don the blue Gateway shirt and cover a 12-hour shift voluntarily when they just couldn't eke out a paid relief worker, I was not ever a member of the Gateway staff. As a group, living in the thick of socio-economic homelessness, the Gateway workers are braver, kinder, more gregarious, and more optimistic than I could ever hope to be. My admiration for them and gratitude to them runs ever deep.

Myerhoff once hoped that her work “would be a full-length portrait, light and darkness with more shading than sharp lines,” and since impartiality was decidedly impossible she intended at least that her characters emerge “as real in their entire human range and variety, arousing admiration and disappointment, laughter and tears, hope and despair.”⁷⁵ While I have not been able to attend to each worker in such dimension, I have attempted something similar with the Gateway as a whole and with the Gateway's director, in particular. Both are complicated characters. I have at times provided an excess of detail in order to show both the questionable and unquestionably good aspects of this place and its leader. I have often let the workers' own words stand mostly un-interrogated in order to let the reader pass some of his or her own judgments about which is which. What I have conveyed is of course highly selective, and much remains unsaid on both scores. I confess that it has sometimes been a struggle to be charitable and critical in equal and useful measure. The imbalances which remain stem from my own shortcomings as novice ethnographer and ordinary human being.

⁷⁵ Myerhoff, *Number Our Days*, p. 28

The Gateway Staff

In the table below, I have listed the workers who will appear from time to time in the pages that follow. I have decided to use some demographic basics, that you might see how relatively young and how overwhelmingly male workers at the Gateway tend to be. Their race is significant too, but to note the only member of a visible minority in this list would be to compromise the confidentiality I have tried to protect. By and large, these are young white men caring for older white men, who seem mainly to leave unasked questions of racial, ethnic, cultural and class diversity among themselves and among their clientele. As far as I know, there are also no members of the LGBTQ community represented here. Of the thirty-two, twenty-five are married or in long-term heterosexual relationships. At the time of fieldwork, fewer than ten of them had children but by now that number has doubled.

I have also tried to give you a sense of their tenure – no term is exact but where I have given a number or estimate of years, that person no longer works there at present. Where I have listed the worker as “long-term” I mean that they have been there at least 5 years, and often more like 10; that they were employed at the Gateway a number of years before I arrived and as far as I know, work there still, as I write. Where a worker was newly hired during my fieldwork I have noted it. And when I say “cycling in-and-out” it is because they have resigned and resumed a position at the Gateway at least once, if not more than once; it seems to me they are not alone in feeling a pull to this place, as I'll discuss below.

In the fourth column I have crudely accounted for their religious affiliation. Where I say “participating” I mean that they (semi)regularly attend church and claim a definitively “Christian” motivation for working at the Gateway. By “nominally Christian” I intend to show that they do less in the way of formal religious observance/practice but still call themselves Christians and their reasons for being at the Gateway remain a matter of devotion to/faith in God or Jesus. I have only called workers “atheist” where they themselves have claimed the label, while “post-Christian” is a label I admit I have chosen to apply myself – to those who disclosed to me a past religious life, which they have, for whatever reason, let slide since. There are a few idiosyncratic labels in this column, the fuller story of which will be told in later chapters.

I have also chosen to disclose the workers' level of participation in my ethnography. Of all the workers I approached for interviews, only 1 declined. All of them, however, formally agreed to be observed, consulted, and discussed in this project. Where I note a “tertiary” participation, it is because I didn't know the workers long or well, since they mostly kept to themselves – perhaps also keeping me at a distance. I have noted in advance the workers who will be treated as prominent characters in the stories I tell, the ones who appear more often than (and sometimes as representations of) the rest. Where there appears an asterix [*] next to a “primary” participant, I mean to denote that this worker, while not for

whatever reason a central figure in the writing itself, was an integral part of the research process as a key interlocutor and friend.

Finally, so as not to reduce any worker (but especially those who are merely mentioned here) to a list of static details, I have opted to include a few notes on the worker's character or demeanour – these are purely subjective and will certainly betray my own biases and entanglements in the staff group. But I also hope they are mainly charitable and give a slightly more human slant to this list of pseudonyms. The items in all of the columns are rough approximations on purpose – these are real and complicated people who should not be reduced to a number, a category, a label, a status, a box on a table. And yet, for your reference:

1st Floor/Front-Line

Day Shift:

| | M/F | Approx. Age | Tenure | Religion | Participation | Notes |
|---------------|--------|-------------|------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Buck | male | mid-50s | long-term; ongoing | culturally Catholic; non- practicing | primary; prominent character | swift judgment; own sense of fairness |
| Corey | male | early 30s | ~3 years | practicing evangelical Christian | secondary | ambitious; seemingly un- interested |
| Daniel | male | early 30s | long-term; ongoing | practicing evangelical Christian | primary | even-tempered; calm; playful |
| Erin | female | mid 20s | long-term; ongoing | practicing evangelical Christian | secondary | keen sense of propriety; attention to detail |
| Felix | male | late 20s | long-term; ongoing | atheist | secondary | quiet; disciplined; critical |
| George | male | mid 60s | ~5 years | practicing evangelical Christian | primary | warm; gruff; sympathetic |
| Holden | male | late 20s | cycling in-and- out | “working out his something” | primary; prominent character | thoughtful; reflexive; deliberate; kind |
| Ian | male | early 30s | ~5 years | practicing evangelical Christian | primary | inquisitive; friendly; funny |

Night Shift:

| | M/F | Approx. Age | Tenure | Religion | Participation | Notes |
|----------------|------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Charlie | male | mid 30s | new at time of fieldwork; ongoing | post-Christian | secondary | quiet; thoughtful; funny; kind |
| Jordan | male | late 20s | new at time of fieldwork; <2 years | “spiritual” | primary | creative; staunch advocate |
| Lou | male | early 30s | ~3 years | post-Christian | primary; prominent character | funny; at first standoffish; critical |
| Ryan | male | late 20s | long-term; ongoing | practicing evangelical Christian | primary | cheerful; helpful; keen |
| Seth | male | early 30s | long-term; ongoing | nominally Christian | primary* | loyal; observant; |
| Zack | male | mid 20s | long-term; ongoing | nominally Christian | secondary | simple; kind |

Relief:

| | M/F | Approx. Age | Tenure | Religion | Participation | Notes |
|---------------|------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Evan | male | early 30s | new at the time of field work | practicing evangelical Christian | secondary | cheerful, easy-going, optimistic |
| Joe | male | early 30s | cycling in-and-out | post-Christian | secondary | friendly; outgoing |
| Justin | male | mid 30s | cycling in-and-out | post-Christian | secondary | rebellious; critical thinker |
| Mickey | male | late 30s | cycling in-and-out | practicing evangelical Christian | primary | jovial; easy-going; well-liked |
| Will | male | mid 30s | cycling in-and-out | post-Christian | secondary | creative; independent |

2nd Floor:**Case Managers, Housing Workers, Outreach, Administration & Chaplain**

| | M/F | Approx. Age | Tenure | Religion | Participation | Notes |
|----------------|------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Adam | male | late 30s | ~10 years | practicing evangelical Christian | secondary | decisive; confident |
| Alex | male | late 30s | long-term; ongoing | practicing evangelical Christian | secondary | methodical; thorough |
| Andrea | female | early 30s | ~3 years | practicing Christian | secondary | precise; hardworking |
| Cameron | male | mid 30s | long-term; ongoing | nominally Christian | secondary | receptive; reliable; reserved |
| Carolyn | female | late 40s | 5+ years | practicing evangelical Christian | tertiary | enthusiastic; colourful |
| Eddy | male | late 30s | long-term; ongoing | atheist | primary; prominent character | inquisitive; deeply engaged |
| Jill | female | late 20s | ~5 years | practicing Christian | primary* | seeking/ gaining new insight; encouraging |
| Julia | female | ? | ? | ? | tertiary | seemingly hardworking; keeps to herself |
| Neil | male | 40s | 12 years | practicing Christian | primary; prominent character | visionary; critical |
| Rich | male | 40s | long-term, ongoing | practicing evangelical Christian | secondary | independent thinker, leader, bold |
| Rory | male | late 20s | ~7years | practicing evangelical Christian | secondary | joking, opinionated, committed |
| Shawn | male | late 30s | long-term; ongoing | ? | tertiary | ? |
| Wes | male | late 30s | long-term; ongoing | practicing evangelical Christian | primary* | laid back; thoughtful; wise |

Notes on method and language

I spent roughly two years hanging around the Gateway. I use the phrase “Hanging out” quite deliberately; it’s my preferred way of talking about ethnography at the shelter, and it is also the way my interlocutors talk about shelter work. “Hanging out” yields a particular kind of data: the things I saw at the Gateway often felt shifty and episodic rather than intentional, deliberate or sustained. By nature of my position there, I was free to wander, to allow my attention to float around and to come and go as I pleased. To move in between participation and observation, joining in and sitting back, playing and resting, is precisely what is meant when a person talks of “hanging out.”

Four to five days a week, I would participate in the regular life of the shelter, sometimes in various useful capacities: serving meals, sorting clothing and food donations, cleaning, leading the art club. But in ample in-between-times, I learned to play euchre and cribbage and foiled the prevalent notion around there that a girl couldn't be much good at either. I tried to earn my keep, mostly in small, inconspicuous ways: cleaning up the front desk area, running for photocopies, couriering messages, unlocking doors that needed to be opened, making coffee, wiping tables after mealtimes, making up meal tickets, answering the phone, stuffing envelopes, taking minutes at meetings. This participant-observation was divided up into seasons; each season I trained my attention on different functions and services the shelter offers: frontline shifts, night and day, the community Drop-In, the street outreach program, the social-purpose laundry enterprise, case management and housing services, chaplaincy, addictions counseling, and educational street walks. I participated in all staff meetings and social events over the course of the study, as well as resident meetings. I followed the director to public presentations and fundraisers. I eavesdropped on whatever was going on. I conducted and recorded 27 semi-structured interviews with willing staff members, across various roles and most departments. The access I was given might be the envy of any ethnographer – the staff of the Gateway, almost entirely without reservation, let me in on what they were doing.

I note with regret the conspicuous exemption of the Gateway’s housekeeping and facilities staff from what I write. They were, it seemed to me, treated as outsiders to the central workings of the Gateway. They were not invited on staff retreats, on the supposed premise that they were needed at the Gateway to keep the place in working order during weekdays and there was no relief list to cover in their absence. Only once in a while were the people who made the beds and cleaned the floors invited to other staff socials; when they did appear, they sat together and mostly kept to themselves. They, generally, did not match the demographics of the rest of the shelter staff: not necessarily young, not necessarily white, not necessarily Christian. My primary focus was necessarily on frontline workers and what happened *downstairs* at the shelter. But, to be sure, this cannot be neatly parsed from what happens on the second floor, too. There was from time to time some movement between roles on different floors – promotions and the like – as well as considerable interaction between the two staff

groups. It should be noted also that the Kitchen Staff at the Gateway are not employees of the Gateway; they are employed by a contracted caterer, although they serve their employment post always in the Gateway's kitchen; that is, they sometimes cook food that is taken to other sites, but they work full-time at that location. The catering staff members are primarily Ethiopian immigrants, as are the owners of the company.

To the residents, my presence there was often met with attention and questions, I was weird (a woman and not a worker) and I was willing to listen: a peculiar combination.⁷⁶ I was usually amazed and always exceedingly thankful for their individual and collective trust. For lack of a better word to use when talking about residents, I'm going to follow the Gateway workers' own regular habit of referring to them simply as "guys." "The guy," is a way to talk about whoever workers themselves don't know by name, or when they're talking to someone else who doesn't know (or doesn't need to know) that person's name. I did not seek approval from the University of Toronto's Research Ethics Board to study the residents in-depth – enough has been said in anthropological circles about the homeless themselves; but, as I've said, much less about those they relate with in social service settings. I had, however, gained permission, to talk to them casually about the staff, their experience of and interaction with particular workers or in general. Many residents of the shelter were more than willing to fill me in on what goes on there; to share lists of good workers and less-than-good workers; to give me their complaints and ideas for improvement. Some residents sought me out for talks like these. Anyone who shows up in these pages, by their own name, by some pseudonym, or is simply referred to as "a guy" is someone who understood my role there, knew what I was doing, and was willing to have a fragment of their story told here. As do the Gateway workers themselves, I mean no disrespect when I call someone "Guy." It's just that, at the Gateway this is how they (and now I, too) talk *of* residents, with a kind of familiarity and friendship.⁷⁷ There is still an important distance opened up by this idea that I speak "of" residents, and in this aloof kind of way – I do not speak "about" them and certainly not "for" them. I am not equipped to do any of those things. And while the reader may judge that I have left the residents of the Gateway in a kind of dispossessed obliqueness, I have intended instead to respect that which I cannot (yet) understand.

I have chosen to take an intimate and everyday look at a particular shelter. But I have also tried to keep an eye to how that one, small-ish shelter fits into 'the great scheme of things.' I've heard that one should write a book she herself would be glad to happen upon, a book she would want to read.⁷⁸ And somewhere along the line, I realized that I wanted to read a book about homelessness that attended to the really small things and really big things at once. I wanted to read a book that sought to portray intimate and ordinary things about what it's like day-in and day-out in a place like this, a shelter. I

⁷⁶ Desjarlais found something quite similar in his fieldwork.

⁷⁷ I will not always so uncritically adopt the language and folk categories of the Gateway (their use of phrases like "the poor" or "our friends on the streets" for instance, will be examined in Part II).

⁷⁸ Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2007).

wanted to think about the mundane and the everyday together with the social imaginaries and social structures that mandate (in one way or another) that such a place exist. I wanted to think about how we even have homelessness in the first place. About how we relate to different sorts of people. About how ideologies of home and adulthood and responsibility are all tied up in the details, the non-events even, in a place that is, intriguingly, neither strictly workplace nor homespace.⁷⁹ As I've already noted, it seemed there was already lots of research somewhere in the middle – social science, policy documents, work on funding concerns and piecemeal solutions, there were interviews, copious amounts of statistical data, and workable insights into specific subsections of the homeless populations. But I've found myself largely sidestepping that kind of work – it's practical and likely much more usable on the ground than what I've written here. But I didn't have a knack for it. Or, perhaps more truthfully, I didn't have the data to support that kind of research. Instead, I had gaps and silences and intuitions and grievances and gut-reactions and frustrations and 'friends I wasn't supposed to have.' I had an entanglement in what was happening at the Gateway that I could not clean up, parse out, deny.

Why did things feel so messy, disorienting, confusing? Why were people saying and doing contradictory things? Why couldn't I get my head around this place? And say something definitive? Something that I could be sure of? My field notes, committee meetings and friendly conversations were full of such things, anxieties actually. The anthropologist Michael Jackson once observed that "Stories enable us to live with ourselves and with each other."⁸⁰ The story that has emerged here is very much an act of living with myself and my friends at the Gateway, of living with our shared and disparate problems, opinions, impressions, points of view. Our shared and disparate bafflements, prickly reactions, modes for getting by.

As I understand it, ethnography itself exists in the "intersubjective in-between," a co-creation, a disciplined dialogue where both parties are, to borrow a phrase, "jostled from [their] assumptions," and only *together* construct something that is highly dependent on the two of them, and might not otherwise have existed.⁸¹ And the self is an integral tool in this interchange. When I confess to thinking, feeling or doing something – especially within the ethnographic moment but also in the act of writing itself – it is not consciously an inscription of superiority but instead, an honest account of *encounter* and of struggle – as honest an account as I am (at that moment) capable of rendering. On the one hand, I'm conscious of the limited utility of attention to the self – the way that confession and

⁷⁹ This idea that everyday non-events are the breeding ground for larger problems – in the extreme, mass violence – is profoundly articulated by Nancy Scheper-Hughes in Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Gray Zone: Small Wars, Peacetime Crimes, and Invisible Genocides," in *The Shadow Side of Fieldwork: Exploring the Blurred Borders between Ethnography and Life*, ed. Athena McLean and Annette Leibing (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 159–84. She asks anthropologists to consider "the disparate threads of daily practice that seem to allow genocidal-like behaviors toward certain classes of dispensable people." See also Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 3 (June 1, 1995): 409–40.

⁸⁰ Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Variations on a Theme by Hannah Arendt* (Denmark: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2013).

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 15; Vincent Crapanzano, *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p.11.

reflexivity can become self-serving, both unhelpful and uninteresting. Whether the reflexive turn in anthropology has turned too far is an imperative question.⁸² The perfect calibration of such things is tricky: I have tried to be wary of the places where inserting myself does not explicitly serve the argument, the insight, the point.⁸³

But on the other hand, my understanding of what happens at the Gateway is inescapably negotiated between myself and the workers (and also inevitably other, outside interlocutors). Any insight this dissertation purports to have cannot be attributed to the other/the informant, nor to myself. I, as ethnographer, certainly do not have any “privileged access to lucidity” relative to the workers.⁸⁴ But the workers haven’t necessarily done what I’ve done either – withdrawing to think and to write (what David Mosse called the “anti-social exit” of ethnography,) they did not necessarily “take things home” the way I did, turning them over in their minds until they had lost all their flavor or gained new flavor in the process.⁸⁵ And if some of the workers have indeed done this, they have done so in a different ecosystem of influences (theoretical and otherwise) than the one I have enjoyed/employed here. The discipline of anthropology, it seems to me (and I’m certainly not alone in this), is at its best when it constantly tacks back and forth between the self and the other, checking assumptions, emotions, frustrations on both sides.⁸⁶ “Knowing otherness seriously” is intense, emotional work.⁸⁷ The ethic, I think, is to *engage* rather than dismiss the times when I bristled or disagreed with what was going on. That was the choice, I thought – to engage or dismiss, rather than a choice to be kind/unkind.⁸⁸ It was also important to show how people disagreed with me, too. And to go on being disagreed with.

As I hope will be evident by the end, the workers know what I know (see especially ‘solution(s) to homelessness?’ in Part V). And I could not know much of anything about the Gateway without them. In many, many instances, my observations, interpretations, critiques stem directly from things I record the workers to have said themselves. But I should make special reference to the workers I call Seth, Wes, Jill, Buck, Holden, Ian and Eddy – they were (and are) particular guides and friends. What I write

⁸² On the reflexive turn see Vincent Crapanzano, “Hermes Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 51–76. The question of its limits is probed in compelling ways in Hage, “Hating Israel in the Field.” See also Erve Chambers, “In Both Our Possibilities: Anthropology on the Margins,” *Human Organization* 68, no. 4 (2009): 374–79; Athena McLean and Annette Leibing, eds., *The Shadow Side of Fieldwork: Exploring the Blurred Borders Between Ethnography and Life* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

⁸³ On the need for an explicit relationship between evidence and argument see Matthew Engelke, “The Objects of Evidence,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14, no. S1 (January 1, 2008): S1–21; Kirsten Hastrup, “Getting It Right Knowledge and Evidence in Anthropology,” *Anthropological Theory* 4, no. 4 (December 1, 2004): 455–72.

⁸⁴ Crapanzano, *Tuhami*, p.x.

⁸⁵ David Mosse, “Anti-Social Anthropology? Objectivity, Objection, and the Ethnography of Public Policy and Professional Communities,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12, no. 4 (December 1, 2006).

⁸⁶ See especially Crapanzano, *Tuhami*; Crapanzano, *Imaginative Horizons*; Hage, “Hating Israel in the Field”; Michael Jackson, *Minima Ethnographica: Intersubjectivity and the Anthropological Project* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling*.

⁸⁷ Hage, “Hating Israel in the Field.”

⁸⁸ Ju Hui Judy Han, “Neither Friends nor Foes: Thoughts on Ethnographic Distance,” *Geoforum* 41, no. 1 (2010): 11–14.

below has emerged expressly in conversation with these seven thoughtful, creative, resilient people (and some of these conversations are on-going and yet incomplete). I hope they will recognize themselves in what I have written, their assessments, their commitments, their hopes, and their courageous making do; the extent to which they do not is entirely my own shortcoming and fault. These workers and others first articulated many of the critiques I offer, while my job has been to elaborate on these from my position of relative marginality.

As per my understanding of the theory of the liminal, the margin is not necessary at a remove, at a stalwart, arms-length distance from what's really going on. My marginality as ethnographer, like the liminal, is both inside and outside, half-in/half-out, both participation and observation, both involved and superfluous. My marginality means not taking it for granted either that I ever achieved sameness nor retained total difference. Even as I attempted the former, I could not shake the latter. One way of preserving my own in-betweenness was then, not to disappear, but to stay implicated in the story.

That I have kept the 'I' and the 'We' in place throughout the narrative highlights too the basic contingency of the story I tell. As Vincent Crapanzano has observed, many an anthropologist tells the tale of their arrival in place, their initial encounter with or initiation to a particular group, and then they seem to disappear.⁸⁹ Such effacing lends the work a timelessness, a frozenness, and a capital 'T' truth, all of which it does not merit. By staying present in the story I tell, I wish (albeit implicitly) to bound my observations – to the length of my stay with them and to my thinking about them. My perspective changed during fieldwork and during the work of writing; the presence of my own reckonings of situations alongside discussions of the workers' ways of reconciling things are meant primarily to preserve the limits, contingencies, and the necessary partiality of interpretations.

The writing of this dissertation was an act of anguish and of advocacy – both with and for the workers and residents at the Gateway. And yes, sometimes, especially at its extremes, maybe more on my own behalf than anyone else, belying my own anxious participation in the problems. The reader may find below comments which can be read as hypercriticisms and indictments (especially relative to The Salvation Army and the Gateway's leadership). These were things I thought or heard and could not shake. But I offer them along with the chastening words of Nancy Scheper-Hughes on this subject:

Obviously, social and political critique must extend to self critique, to illuminating how ordinary, everyday ways of thinking, loving, and being in the world are implicated in the violence that we are trying to understand and to overcome. The demons have not fled – we have faced the terrorist and she is us.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Crapanzano, "Hermes Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description," in *Writing Culture*.

⁹⁰ Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Gray Zone: Small Wars, Peacetime Crimes, and Invisible Genocides," in *The Shadow Side of Fieldwork: Exploring the Blurred Borders between Ethnography and Life*, p.178.

My overarching concern is with our collective attitudes toward a certain class of ‘dispensable people’ and how Christianity (particularly the one by/with which I have been most affected) participates in this – both explicitly and implicitly, both positively and potentially in the opposite direction. I have been mindful of my own repeated use of the problematic language “homelessness,” my reification of a homeless other even as I argue against such construction, and my own failure to relate to a person in such a way that they come to no longer qualify as homeless.

Much as doctoral studies are often made up of such things, surety, self-satisfaction, total critique, unequivocal observations, final readings, and sovereign control over the material were not things of which I understood myself capable. Instead, the focus of this work has necessarily been on mess, uneasiness, and trying to have things more than one way. I ask the reader’s patience with this.

I offer this inconclusive and experimental project as an original contribution to the field of homelessness research, to religious studies, and to the ethnographic discipline. It is a slice of anthropological knowledge we didn’t have before – this group, a (very) particular (and not particularly cohesive) kind of Christianity. More precisely, it’s a view of *workers* in a homeless shelter who, as an integral part of social service provision, are often under-treated in the literature. Most importantly, this is a telling of the Gateway workers’ everyday survival tactics – heroic in their way and fraught with difficulties, at one and the same time.

A final note on the use of ‘us’ and ‘we’ in what follows: it takes at least three forms, all of which also depend on my basic in-betweenness as teller. First, the reader will note the times when ‘we’ refers to some constellation of people who occupied a particular scene at the Gateway during my time there. Secondly, there are references to the momentary bond between author and audience in the act of writing and reading, and to the assumptions and observations the writer is making on behalf of both. Often, this particular ‘we’ will refer to the community of scholars who are interested in refining theoretical ideas and expanding the field of knowledge. Finally, there is also a broader, blurrier ‘we,’ as in formulations like “our collective response to homelessness,” or “our shared categories of homed and homeless.” This collectivity is indeed hard to pin down. But I take it to mean, at its basest, those who inhabit a society where a shelter is the organizational solution to the problem of homelessness. I take this ‘we’ to be whoever pays taxes to and/or benefits from a government whose response to homelessness takes the form of a publicly funded “emergency hostel” or “shelter.” Since that ‘we’ shares certain institutions they might also be said, by reverse inference, to share certain underlying and sustaining ideas.⁹¹

⁹¹ For an argument asserting this link see Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

Part II
Stuckedness

I GET THIS WORD 'STUCKEDNESS' from the Lebanese-Australian anthropologist Ghassan Hage. I met him at a workshop in the summer of 2012, early in the writing stage of this thesis. The workshop was a meeting of prominent scholars in the humanities who were trying to think of a way to work together on a long-term interdisciplinary project: *Belonging Differently*, they called it. I was just there to take notes and try sum up what they had talked about. The project didn't take off but some of Dr. Hage's comments stayed with me, unshakably. I remember him telling the group what a privilege it was to be among them – he recalled his usual feeling when he told other scholars (I presume anthropologists in particular) what he was thinking about: “they look at me like they're thinking: What is he on? What is he smoking?” he said, or something to that effect. I liked him immediately. I went home and read whatever I could get my hands on – startling work on racism and migration and waiting.¹

His work on all three shares an unlikely convergence: in a globalizing world, Hage observes, there is a powerful desire for what he calls “existential mobility,” an “imagined/felt movement.”² Migrants, he claims “are looking for a space and a life where they feel they are going *somewhere* as opposed to *nowhere*, or at least, a space where the quality of their 'going-ness' is better than what it is in the space they are leaving behind.”³ Racists, Hage says, suffer from a kind of “mobility envy,” – as compared with others newly arrived nearby, they feel they aren't “moving 'well-enough'.” But existential mobility, Hage argues, only makes sense in relation to what he calls “an imagined existential stuckedness” – not necessarily the actual *lack* of mobility or the *inability* to move, but the *feeling of being stuck*. The co-existence of these two phenomena becomes especially clear when he thinks about “waiting.” In times of crisis especially, he observes how the “celebration of one's capacity to stick it out rather than calling for change” amounts to a kind of “heroic endurance” in the meantime.

In 1998, a group of local activists formed the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee in order to spotlight what they called “a state of emergency.” Homelessness in this city had reached the status of a crisis, they announced. But while all three of those words – disaster, emergency, and crisis – denote a particularly pressing and immediate temporality, the so-called problem of homelessness in this city has long since exceeded such urgency. The crisis itself is fairly stuck, and, I would argue, the people who continue to occupy the homeless spaces in Toronto (and not just those experiencing homelessness but those working with/for them, too) are attempting this “heroic endurance,” waiting out something that never ends – and maybe isn't likely to, any time soon.

¹ See Ghassan Hage, *Arab-Australians Today: Citizenship and Belonging* (Melbourne University Publish, 2002); Ghassan Hage, ed., *Waiting* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2009); Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (London/New York: Routledge, 2012);

² Hage, “Waiting out the Crisis.”

³ *ibid.*

I'm interested here in some of the things that help hold homelessness in place. Much has been said elsewhere about the complex structural factors which conspire to produce socio-economic homelessness in our time and place. I can't say more or say it better than work by certain outstanding, critical scholars of poverty and homelessness: Robert Desjarlais, Leonard Feldman, Kim Hopper, Vincent Lyon-Callo, and Loïc Wacquant, to name just a few of the very best.⁴ Instead, I'm interested more precisely in the persistence and perpetuation of charities which (exist to) help homelessness. To this point, academic work done on homelessness (even by those listed above, among others) has not adequately accounted for the ways in which *religion* helps to stabilize, and naturalize, homelessness. I'm not interested in the easy swings conservative critics might take at faith-based organizations (or indeed more secular charities) for making poverty easier and more comfortable on the poor.⁵ Such comments are exceedingly uncharitable and unhelpful; they get us nowhere. Alternatively, I propose a more nuanced look at the discourses and practices that help sustain a particular charitable endeavour – those that surround and profoundly shape the Gateway. In this section I'll consider charitable volunteerism in general; the construction and re-inscription of a homeless-type or homeless other which seems to necessitate acts of charity and intervention; as well as the internal logic of one charitable organization in particular, The Salvation Army (the Gateway's parent organization). The overarching point of analyzing each of these is to show the stuckedness of a supposedly temporary and transitional emergency state, and the ways otherwise well-meaning people are (in)advertently helping to keep things as they are. Or, to put it differently, the way charitable organizations set certain boundaries that tend to further thwart or prolong the problem they are trying to solve.

Certainly I am not the first to understand homelessness in structural terms, but I try here to offer analyses of some specific ways in which such structures are sanctified, employed, held in place by (particular strands of) Christianity. I don't mean to negate altogether the good that is being done. Instead I'm trying to acknowledge the bind that they're in; the way spaces of supposedly temporary necessity have become entangled in a long-term non-profit industrial complex.

In Part V, I'll return to 'stuckedness' in order to consider its upside: the way enmeshment and *staying put* is integral to the notion of home. For now, however, I consider something of a conflict of interest: those who seem to need the homeless to stay homeless in order to know who they are, in order to understand themselves as being helpful (and to go on getting funded to help).

⁴ Desjarlais, *Shelter Blues*. Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter*; Hopper, *Reckoning with Homelessness*; Lyon-Callo, *Inequality, Poverty, and Neoliberal Governance*; Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts*.

⁵ Interestingly, faith-based organizations often conceive of themselves as counter-acting such an accusation with their attention to "the whole person" or their insistence that whoever they help learn accountability, responsibility, respectability and submission to God, through the provision of social help they offer to the poor. See for instance the Christians depicted in: Ram A. Cnaan and Stephanie C. Boddie, *The Invisible Caring Hand: American Congregations and the Provision of Welfare* (New York: NYU Press, 2002); Lew Daly, *God's Economy: Faith-Based Initiatives and the Caring State* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009); Omri Elisha, *Moral Ambition: Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Robert Wuthnow and John Hyde Evans, *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

“do-gooders”

(nakedness, namelessness, anonymity)

In the winter of 2013, a small controversy hit the local news: an Ontario sculptor was having trouble finding a permanent place for his latest piece, a bronze statue, something he was calling “The Homeless Jesus.” A Jesuit seminary on the University of Toronto campus finally agreed to have The Homeless Jesus installed outside their front door, at a reasonably busy intersection, kitty-corner to Ontario's legislative buildings at Queen's Park. By the time of writing, versions of The Homeless Jesus have been successfully installed in both Catholic and Episcopal settings in Chicago, Orlando, Davidson, North Carolina, and as far afield as Perth, Australia. A smaller version was presented to the Pope in Rome.⁶ But it found its first official *home* here in Toronto. Reaction was mixed.

The sculptor himself, Timothy Schmalz, claimed to be presenting “one of the most important messages of the gospel,” otherwise overlooked: “[if] you go to Rome and go to all the beautiful cathedrals,” he reasoned, “you will not see a representation of Jesus that shows him so close to the marginalized people.”⁷ In Schmalz's depiction, a life-size figure lies on what is meant to be an ordinary park bench, sleeping, mostly covered by a single blanket, only bare feet exposed. Each foot is marked by an impossibly pristine indentation – to my eye, almost cartoonish: could crucifixion stakes leave such clean holes in a person?

There is little here which is subtle; instead its subtext risks becoming over-articulated and fairly obvious. In interviews, the sculptor outlines his expectations for his audience, including the steps he anticipates passersby taking on approach. Schmalz wants them to, at first glance, think the statue is an actual homeless person sleeping on a bench; he anticipates that they will have certain disdainful reactions about the nuisance of homelessness in general, but upon looking harder or coming closer they will be confronted with the unmistakably imprinted feet and be convicted of their misapprehensions; they will see Jesus ‘as he really is.’⁸ With little room left for interpretation, and an almost evangelical force to its message, would anyone (more versed in such things than I) care to dispute it as properly art? The news coverage surrounding the protracted search for a installation site merely re-articulates the artist's premise over and over: no home for Jesus.

⁶ See Stephanie MacLellan, “Sculpture Depicting Jesus as a Homeless Man Was Rejected by Cathedrals in Toronto and New York, but Could End up near the Vatican after Pope Francis Expressed His Admiration,” *Toronto Star*, November 28, 2013, accessed April 26, 2015.

http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/11/28/homeless_jesus_statue_gets_audience_with_an_admiring_pope_francis.html

⁷ See Vlog posted on Schmalz' YouTube channel. Posted June 28, 2012. Accessed April 26, 2015.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rAys_ON8rg.

⁸ Other than the nail-hole indentation, the feet of the statue are impossibly smooth and pristine. Proper foot care is one of the more pressing problems on the street – clean, dry socks, good shoes, and regular opportunities to take them off and give your feet a break are all fairly hard to come by. “Cookie foot” is the slang given to a crack addicts version of “trench foot,” usually a war-time problem – you spend so many days up, walking around, sweating in your shoes, that you develop blisters, open sores, fungus and the like. That a so-called Homeless Jesus would have such lovely feet is almost laughable.

A friend of mine who runs a Drop-In not far from the Toronto installation, has lamented on behalf of her community the way the statue, for all its supposed piety, appears to take up a perfectly good park bench on which the so-called homeless might otherwise find rest, themselves. This being especially problematic in a city where so many public benches have been outfitted with armrests in the middle, precisely to prevent such a thing.⁹ But my friend's reaction to the statue made something else clear to me, too: if this is “how Jesus would be living today” then there's an important nuance to be gleaned. If Jesus was in fact homeless, in such a way that we would recognize today as homeless (although, in truth, I doubt it¹⁰), it's interesting that the sculptor and supposed audience all recognize homelessness as a person sleeping on a bench, alone, that this image is more familiar to everyone as *homelessness* and a *problem*, than the scene I encountered everyday at the Gateway (as does my friend at her Drop-In). That is, groups of people hanging out mostly in company, often among kindly friends, passing time the way anyone might with card games and cups of coffee and conversation. What makes sense as “homelessness” to the artist and his audience alike is this image of a person sleeping in the open air, on an uncomfortable bench – when he could find a bench at all – in seasons both warm and cold, and all by himself. For all the irony and romanticism of this idea that Jesus was homeless, if you look at the statue closely enough, it's not only slightly preposterous but unsettling, too – and maybe not in the way initially intended. This Jesus is made of solid bronze: he's not getting up to walk away anytime soon. But instead of gleaning from the Jesus statue's very materiality the sense that there is no easy way out of his predicament, one is perhaps more likely to stay focused on the solitary, shivering, bench-sleeping figure as an easy index for poverty and an easy hook for charity.

When I went to see the Homeless Jesus statue for myself, I was oddly transported to a scene two Christmases before.

On my way between the Gateway and a mainline Christmas Eve service, I had passed through the middle of downtown Toronto and by its city hall. There, outside what is now Toronto's city courthouse, I happened upon something I've since come to think of as a shrine to homelessness. A person was lying there, covered from head to toe in multiple blankets and a sleeping bag (maybe on top of a grate, although the pile of cloth made it impossible to say). He or she appeared to sleep or seemed otherwise unaware of the widening array of food items literally encircling the makeshift bed, there on the sidewalk. Four and five and six cups of coffee representing all the major coffee chains in the vicinity, not only a few brown paper bags from the nearby McDonald's, more than half a dozen juice boxes and homemade lunches surrounded the silent figure. As I recall it, the street lamp above cast a warm,

⁹ Angie Hocking, “Ground Motive: Perspectives from a Park Bench: A Guest Post,” accessed May 22, 2015, <http://www.groundmotive.net/2013/11/perspectives-from-park-bench-guest-post.html>.

¹⁰ On the nuanced and integral differences between Jesus' supposed homelessness and the socio-economic state we recognize as homelessness today – as well as the moral implications of conflating them – see fascinating work by Robert Myles: Robert J. Myles, “Probing the Homelessness of Jesus with Žižek's Sublime Object,” *The Bible and Critical Theory* 9, no. 1–2 (December 25, 2013); Robert J. Myles, *The Homeless Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Sheffield Phoenix Press Ltd, 2014).

almost auspicious glow down upon the scene. And in the rush of people going past, getting to this-Christmas-gathering or that, the sleeping figure was, by contrast, the picture of peace. Why did this scene remind me of an altar? All that was missing was for someone to light a candle, or to leave flowers instead of food. I suppose that the loot this person would awake to find was meant to symbolize the generosity and goodwill of this city's citizens; instead the whole thing almost accosted me with its excess, and dare I say, its absurdity. Did whoever left these Big Macs and cellophaned sandwiches really think that the object of their alms would wake from a frustrated and freezing outdoor nap to be overwhelmed at the miracle of these gifts? Did they expect she would be glad of the opportunity for holiday overeating and down it all in one go? Did they imagine he would delight in having been made such a spectacle here on the sidewalk?

How many other impromptu shrines to the homeless popped up across the city that Christmas Eve? And how did these philanthropists pass by the people sleeping on sidewalks and grates on any other given day of the year? I anxiously snapped a photo with my cellphone, worried I'd be observed sanctifying this scene by capturing it with a camera but wanting to walk away and keep thinking about it. To be fair, that night, the excesses of the season – especially in relation to the supposed poverty and lack of the homeless shelter – were already on my mind; my cynicism already on high alert.

* * * * *

I had chosen to officially start my participant observation at the Gateway around Christmas and ultimately carried it out over two Christmases more. The Salvation Army has recently called itself “synonymous with Christmas,” and taken to cordoning off Yonge & Dundas Square on a Friday evening in late November each year, in order to “kick-off” their “kettle campaign” (the hanging bubbles in shopping centres to be filled with loose change and hopefully paper money and healthy cheques too). With such an event, moreover, they understand themselves as kicking off Christmas, writ large. Indeed, the Salvation Army is more visible at Christmastime than they are the rest of the year, and so I was curious what it would be like at a Salvation Army shelter around that time of year, too.

My earliest recorded memory of the worker George has him slamming down the phone that first Christmas Eve and continuing to speak – nay, yell – in its disconnected direction, free to finally say what he wished he had the nerve to say while the caller was still on the line: “fuckin' do-gooders,” he chastised whoever had just called. “Where's your Christmas Spirit the rest of the year?”

George, realizing that I was watching him, took a minute to muster a kind of excuse for his outburst: “If you're not bent on the way in, you're definitely bent on the way out” he said to me, a warning.

Will, listening in too, agreed that everyone who works at the Gateway has become a little bit rougher, more skeptical – and it seems also more apt to curse and swear – as a consequence their presence here

at the Gateway. If they used to be sort of well-meaning and similarly inclined to “do-good,” many of them have since mislaid some of that simpler sense of charity, ceased succumbing to the benevolent pull of the season, given up giving just because it makes you feel good to do it.

Will answers the phone the next time it rings and tells the caller that the volunteer slots for Christmas Day have been filled up for months now. It seems no matter who has the misfortune of answering these Christmas Cheer Calls sort of bites back their frustration at being asked about this so often and so late in the game.

Each year, there is a Christmas Day coordinator who marshals a band of volunteers for the day: she's been giving up her own Christmas Day in this way for all the years since she used to work at the Gateway fulltime. She's a somewhat familiar face in the flow of one-off volunteers, but I eventually discover that she doesn't show up much (at all?) around the Gateway in the months between Decembers. For her, too, Christmas is exceptional.

That first Christmas Eve, I had yet no idea how staff scheduling worked at the Gateway, so I asked everyone on shift that night: how did you draw the short straw and have to work on Christmas?

George:

“All the young guys have got families so...”

His response trailed off, the implication clear. George has a daughter who is spending Christmas with her boyfriend. He'll catch the bus to go see her the next morning.

Will says something similar:

“I'm not going to see my family until Thursday [Boxing Day];
and I'm not doing anything else, so...”

Buck:

“It's because I don't believe in shirking responsibility. It's my day
to work, so I do.”

Buck purses his lips, closes his eyes, and shrugs, a gesture I've now seen enough to recognize as “no big deal.”

Jimmy:

“It's an expression of faith. That's what you want to hear, isn't it? I'm not going to say that the money doesn't help – time-and- a-half. But it's an expression of faith. I've worked probably the last 3 or 4 Christmases. I work every year.”

That was the first and only day I ever saw Jimmy working at the Gateway. There was no sign of him next Christmas or the Christmas after that.

Felix:

“I don't celebrate Christmas. I don't really celebrate anything. Birthdays maybe, but it's better to be working than bored somewhere, while everyone else is doing their stuff.”

At the end of my shelter stint that night I said to Felix: “Well, I won't wish you a Merry Christmas, then. In fact, I hope it's a miserable day!” He laughed a small laugh and I left.

If I was surprised at the answers I found that night, if I had harboured some notion of working Christmas as a noble calling, it wouldn't last long. While at a Staff Devotion meeting during Advent, leading up the following Christmas, I took note of someone referring to the Gateway's residents in their prayer: “We pray that we can be peace and home and family to them on Christmas.” But I also noted that none of the people in that room – all second-floor staff members (case managers, housing workers, administration and the like) who adhere to a Monday-to-Friday, 8-to-4, schedule which afforded them weekends and holidays off – none of them were on shift that next Christmas either. Instead the staff group that second Christmas was a variation on the same theme as the year before: workers who had nowhere else in particular they needed to be, indifferent to the holiday, or otherwise not inclined to disrupt the schedule and take the day off. Same again the year after that. Instead of a group of well-meaning Christians spending time with the poor on Christmas, we had a handful of people who saw little higher meaning in the whole thing, at all. Those for whom Christmas held significance often had other places they needed to be that day; maybe on such a weighty occasion traditional family easily outranked the other kind of family being fostered here.

That second Christmas was the Christmas of the apparent Hobo Shrine outside City Hall: that seemingly sacred site of Christmas charity on the sidewalk.¹¹

¹¹ I'm using the word 'Hobo' here – contrary to better judgment perhaps – in order to emphasize the affronting nature of this scene. Justin, a worker at the Gateway, once called the Gateway's habit of taking youth groups on “street walks” “Hobo Tourism,” a word he chose for reasons equally ironic and critical. The word Hobo – which has a particular lexical genealogy in the English language, initially a reduction of the expression Homeward-Bound, or “Hoe-Boy” and referred initially to migrant

The morning after, I turned up again at the Gateway to find the whole place crawling with volunteers, even though they seemed mostly to stick to the shadows and to keep their distance. There were far more do-gooding-volunteers than the Gateway would ever need on a single day, and so they were sent out on short errands from the upstairs office which the coordinator occupied as a kind of Christmas Day headquarters. The room was chock full of things to give away. The volunteers packed “stockings” of gifts which were actually gym bags filled with personal items, junk food, and that year's big ticket item: a sports jersey. They set up games in the chapel: chess, Scrabble, cards. They ran a fairly disinterested game of bingo in the Drop-In. They made rounds with trays of clementines – fruit is a rare and rather welcome gift anyway. They rolled the lunch cutlery up in napkins – a touch of something special, I suppose.

But lunch that day was ordinary for a Wednesday: a peameal bacon sandwich and a pile of salad. Because it's Christmas, though, a stranger in a hairnet, a plastic apron, and latex gloves hands lunch to you at your table, instead of you having to line up for it, as usual.

The fuller, fancier, traditional Christmas dinner had been served almost 2 weeks before, on a Thursday afternoon, and a similar plastic-clad parade of strangers had put your plate down in front of you, not just on the ordinary Drop-In table, but one covered in a red or green plastic table cloth, with a cheapish votive-candle-and-pinecone-centrepiece in the middle. The room had been full. But less so at the first sitting – at 4:00 in the afternoon – which seemed to many too early to eat.

The attempt to dress up the Drop-In for the official Christmas Dinner, and the invitation from volunteers to “just sit down and we're going to serve you tonight” seemed a little lost on some of the residents (as it was again on Christmas Day)– ordinarily they can come and go as they please and get whatever they need: utensils, condiments, juice. But today someone was occupying the juice dispenser and preventing them from helping themselves – that is presuming that the juice-seeker had even gotten that far; they were more likely intercepted along the way: “I'll get that for you,” some stranger probably chimed. The volunteers bustled about, to and from the kitchen, dropping things down on the table in front of people without much in the way conversation.

Equally suspicious of these good turns, the staff members refused to be served themselves and took food on their own trays to vacated tables after the rush of the second-sitting was over. Until their turn to eat, the staff mainly stood at the side of the room, watching this happen, only begrudgingly offering

workers who rode the rails and/or sought casual labour on farms. They were not necessarily lazy or unwanted. In fact, by some accounts, they had a code of respectability and had chosen a life of relative freedom and adventure. But by now it's a colloquial catchall for anyone out-of-work and out-of-doors. It's not a good, useful word in our present context. Nor, I'm contending, was the site/sight I'm calling a Hobo Shrine a good or useful display of charity. Both are rather empty and ultimately degrading. On such language see Rick Fantasia and Maurice Isserman, *Homelessness: A Sourcebook* (Facts On File, Incorporated, 1994); Teresa Gowan, *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Hopper, *Reckoning with Homelessness*; David A. Snow and Leon Anderson, *Down on Their Luck: A Study of Homeless Street People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Phillip K. Tompkins, *Who Is My Neighbor?: Communicating and Organizing to End Homelessness* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009).

answers to volunteers' questions: where can I get more napkins? More forks? A new pair of gloves – these got dirty? Some of the workers told me they had no idea today was the day for the Christmas Dinner until the special red and green meal tickets were delivered to the front desk around noon, to be handed out to residents and whoever happened to “drop-in” that day. The event is organized almost single-handedly by the Volunteer Coordinator. It seems she can't say 'No' to everyone who wants to help out during the holiday season and so she tries to train their efforts onto this one occasion. Sometimes it's groups of co-workers who all appear to have a good time working on this project together, even when washing the dishes. The usual dishwasher isn't exactly relieved of his duties for the evening; he scurries awkwardly around his proxies, trying to make sure the dishes are done right.

Dessert, while otherwise not served at the Gateway, amounts on such an occasion to just a couple of gingerbread cookies on a plate. I noticed that the uneaten ones are unceremoniously dumped by volunteers from plates-that-must-be-washed onto the middle of the table and left there: surely someone will want them later.

Christmas #3: It's 11:00 pm on Christmas Eve and everyone is full. There has been a steady parade of “do-gooders” marching through the Gateway all week, and by now their appearance here just feels intrusive. A few of us are playing cards, the usual curfew extended for the special occasion, when someone at the front desk allows a group of Seventh Day Adventists through the locked door and down the ramp into the Drop-In – into what might as well be considered the shelter's living room. They have turned up, uninvited and unannounced, and they're handing out all kinds of things – clam chowder and underwear and books about Mary Magdalene – and it's impossible to concentrate on the card game any more – not because my fellow players are so allured by the things on offer, but because the relative quiet of a Christmas Eve “at home” has been forfeited. I can't help dreaming up something to say to our guests: “no one would barge in on you at this hour, expecting you to want whatever they have to give.” But I sit quietly instead and wait for it to be over. When they are finished doling out their wares, the card game has dissolved, and so I follow them up to the front door.

Outside, the group of do-gooders asks Eddy, who also happens to be leaving, for directions to Seaton House (commonly known as the city's biggest, shittiest shelter and called Satan's House instead). Eddy tells them how to get there, but always quick to share his insider wisdom, advises them not to go there in such a large group and to leave their women and children behind. A guy hanging around out there having a smoke backs him up: Eddy has the right idea. But the leader of the group keeps speaking over top of the warning – “We'll just go,” he keeps saying, shrugging, no matter how Eddy tries to dissuade them. Watching, I get the impression they think that nothing bad can touch them...or even that putting themselves in a little bit of danger is, after all, the point. They certainly don't understand that Eddy is also, if only implicitly, asking them not to traipse this group up George Street to Seaton House, as

much for the sake of the men who have nowhere else to be tonight as anybody else. He worries that they'll be made a fool of and might rather be left alone. Eddy can't win. Off they go.

Come Christmas morning, no one wants to eat the dismal lunch of hot dogs and chips that's once again being served to them at their tables by an altogether different group of volunteers – albeit familiar in their hairnets and plastic-aprons. There's something funny about their hygiene protocol; it usually belongs on just the one or two in the kitchen who spoon out supper through the server window. But today, the dining room is practically crawling with people who came to the Gateway ostensibly to do something kind and friendly for the homeless but who remain rather distant in their sterility. The risk of contamination now isn't just a matter of food preparation but of person-to-person contact.

Residents are stuffed full of so much donated food. Their stomachs, the Gateway's fridge, and the generosity of the wealthy all equally busting at the seams – on this one day of the year. If it wasn't this person or this gift of food, it would be someone else with *something* else, no doubt about that. They eat it. We all eat it, in fact. Feel inevitably stuffed. And wait for the season to be mercifully over and things gone back to some version of normal.

* * * * *

As a sure mark of the liminal, I want to highlight the anonymity inherent in the above ethnographic fragments, on both sides of what seems best described as charitable transactions. There are nameless/faceless recipients: quite literally in the person (maybe man, maybe woman, who knows?) who slept under a (heap of) blanket(s) – whether as art (across from Queen's Park) or reality (outside the Court House). We can't rightly see either of them. And we can't (or don't) ask their names. They exist as still images more than anything else. As silent any-hobos. And as altars for leaving gifts (to the gods). And maybe it can't be any other way; there are a lot of people in need. In 2013, The Street Needs Assessment counted 5,219 homeless people in Toronto, and a staggering 604, 048 who live, more generally, in low-income precarity.¹² For various reasons, people come-and-go as they please from the city's shelters and drop-ins and food banks and services; they can't or don't have to stay put. Charities are designed with such a *habitus* in mind, or they eventually bend to it. Once a spot in a (good) program or bed in a (good) shelter is vacated there is always someone else to take their place – a new name on a meal ticket, a new name to write on a case file or bed list, a new person to try to get to know.

But the volunteers become just as nameless and faceless in the context of the Gateway (if not other Toronto charities) too. As in the narrative above, those “doing good” were literally obscured by their white plastic hairnets and aprons and gloves – they all looked the same. They, too, tend to come-and-go and there are too many of them to really register faces, names, and intentions. Their presence was

¹² See the Street Needs Assessment 2013. Accessed April 26, 2015, <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-61365.pdf>

rather imposed; the over-supply of good will at Christmas demanded that the Gateway find a need for the filling. As a result, residents were somewhat over-stimulated by the attention and the constant presence of strangers seemed to annoy them, rendering them disinclined to engage. While there is always an onslaught at Christmas, the rest of the year the Volunteer Coordinator often finds it a struggle to get consistent, reliable volunteers for the shelter's other initiatives: someone to host the chess club, teach art classes, help clean or fix things up, serve a regular old lunch on a Wednesday. Consistency is a problem, longevity too, sticking it out. Volunteers who seem to begin with enthusiasm soon find other things get in the way of commitment and seem to prefer a drop-in/drop-out kind of posture of their own – concentrated especially at the heights of meaning and on the highest holidays. Volunteer coordinators like the ones I knew at the Gateway, seem to train themselves to be satisfied with this reality. They adopt an almost pre-fabricated volunteer format for times like these and they plug people in – *whoever* calls up the soonest.

But some of the Gateway workers are vocally skeptical of such quick and easy charity – perhaps especially because they're stuck there, day-in and day-out, facing the revolving door of homelessness. With fits of charity that are rather short-lived and shallow (the placing of one plate of Christmas dinner before a person with whom you don't bother to converse, for instance) the label “do-gooder” given disdainfully by George and others, is meant to highlight particularly and ironically a problem of *not enough* doing-good, or, perhaps more precisely doing *not-enough-good*.¹³ “Doing-good” as we've seen here, treats poverty as this simple and immediate problem with a definable fix (they're obviously hungry: they need a meal), while it simultaneously obviates attempts to see it as deeper, more complex, and fairly stuck. Homelessness is a problem which evidently exceeds individual volunteerism, temporary generosity, charitable one-offs, and countless compassionate acts. And yet so much of our broader, collective response to homelessness is made up of such (trifling) things.

To be sure, there is a safe and protective anonymity on both sides of the charitable transaction: the “poor” person gets something to eat; the “do-gooder” gets to feel good for a while (or at least feel their guilt over not doing enough temporarily assuaged). On the face of things, it's fairly quick and painless, and not all that messy. It happens a million times a day, and has been going on for as long as we can remember. Think of that Christmas Eve shrine piled higher with food concentrated from across charitable time and space; a veritable mountain. A voluntary hour given over here and few dollars donated over there, numerous needs neatly identified and met on both sides of the equation. Inevitably though, they will all need a fix again soon: a cycle of heavy supply and demand, ever on repeat; the consumptive wheels of “compassion,” ever turning over.¹⁴

¹³ In a further irony, in the United States, the Salvation Army has taken for its motto the rather immodest tagline: “Doing the most good.”(Emphasis added).

¹⁴ On endless cycles of consumption, see William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008).

It's a story as old as The Good Samaritan:

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' He answered: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" [NRSV]

Being peripheral to my ethnographic focus, and discussed here primarily for the ways in which the charitable sector is *context* for what happens at the Gateway, I admit that I know next to nothing about the “do-gooders” own (conscious or unconscious) motivations, ethics, sentiments, affects; I can only see (some of) their actions, and discuss how those actions appear to me. In order to make some sense of the scenes I've described above – the statue of the Homeless Jesus, the figure I've described as the centre of a Hobo Shrine, and the troubled ambience of Christmas – I rely on what other scholars have written about compassion and charitable acts, especially those that make critical reference to the story of The Good Samaritan. To a certain extent, I agree with philosopher Eric Gregory that the parable of The Good Samaritan is a prominent piece of the “Anglo-American, neoliberal canon.”¹⁵ In Gregory's estimation, no matter how supposedly “secular” the society, the story of the Samaritan helps to shape the collective understanding of what counts as care and compassion, for better or worse, in the struggle for a welfare state in late capitalist societies. Robert Wuthnow, in his late 20th-century investigation of American volunteerism claimed something similar: that even when the people he interviewed first denied any specific religious teachings which informed their voluntary acts of compassion, they turned out to be “surprisingly well-versed” in the story of the Good Samaritan; the story had sort of “rubbed-

¹⁵ (Along with some parts of the Sermon on the Mount, and the Love commands.) Eric Gregory, “Agape and Special Relations in a Global Economy: Theological Sources,” in *Global Neighbors: Christian Faith and Moral Obligation in Today's Economy*, ed. Douglas A. Hicks and Mark Valeri (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), p.35.

off on them” he wagered.¹⁶ The tale is “one of those ancient myths that embodies the deepest meanings of our culture” he sums up his findings. But Wuthnow and Gregory both write from the perspective of a somewhat more circumscribed “we” than I’m comfortable with. For Wuthnow, the “we” he’s speaking for and about – those who seem to carry around with them various highly individualized versions of the story, all seem (including Wuthnow) to have attended Sunday School at some point or other; the figure of the wealthy Samaritan was likely pinned to a felt board by a well-meaning parishioner in a church basement; the story necessarily kept quite simple, never probed for any deeper socio-historical significance. And Gregory, too, is American and a particular kind of Christian – both contexts in which the Good Samaritan is especially familiar and discourses which themselves tend toward hegemony, taking in all they see. We need to be somewhat cautious with such statements about just how far and wide the story of the Good Samaritan applies and animates people’s activities. Still, the story is worth thinking about, especially insofar as “Samaritan” has come to cover all manner of doing good in the English lexicon – it stands alone as the name given to certain charities or spontaneous acts of individual generosity. For legal theorist Jeremy Waldron, the parable of the Good Samaritan is that “*classic* treatment of moral distance.”¹⁷ For British political theologian Richard Owens Griffiths, “the wider debate about the whole future of the welfare state has been informed, as well as obscured, by the parable of the Good Samaritan.”¹⁸ And for literary scholar Marjorie Garber, it is “the best known biblical example” of *compassion*, and an integral part of her genealogy of the term.¹⁹

The primacy of the parable of the Good Samaritan and peculiarly modern interpretations thereof, help Garber to track the etymological erosion of compassion, over time:

From the fourteenth century to the beginning of the seventeenth, the word (deriving from Latin *com*, together, and *pati*, to suffer) was used to describe both suffering together with one another, or ‘fellow-feeling,’ and an emotion felt *on behalf of another who suffers*. In the second sense, compassion was felt not between equals but from a distance – in effect from high to low: ‘shown towards a person in distress by one who is free from it, who is, in this respect, his superior.’ When the first sense fell out of use, which it did fairly quickly, the remaining sense hovered between charity and condescension.²⁰

The devolution of compassion from mutual suffering to mere pity is evident, Garber claims, in the way that the “Goodness” of the Samaritan has become not ironic but superfluous in modern readings. To its original audience, the *Good Samaritan* was a radical, even scandalous idea. Garber wonders if Jesus

¹⁶ Robert Wuthnow, *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p.159ff

¹⁷ Jeremy Waldron, “Who Is My Neighbor?: Humanity and Proximity,” *The Monist* 86, no. 3 (July 1, 2003): 333. Emphasis added.

¹⁸ Richard Owen Griffiths, “The Politics of the Good Samaritan,” *Political Theology* 1 (November 1999), p.89

¹⁹ Marjorie Garber, “Compassion,” in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), 15–28.

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 20; see also Griffiths, “The Politics of the Good Samaritan.” p. 91

might be teaching them that, as a member of a despised sect and not classified by Jews as a neighbour, it was the Samaritan himself who deserved their compassion – their fellow-feeling. But instead of “the surprising fact that generosity in this case came from an outsider” Garber notes that the “usual modern emphasis on the second term rather than the first (good *Samaritan* [sometimes leaving off the 'good' altogether]) forgets this history of anomaly and turns an oxymoron into something like a redundancy.” Modern interpretations are more likely to focus on the Samaritan's personal wealth and kindness than they are on the very real social and structural boundaries that are being perhaps deliberately defied in the story.

Scholars of various kinds generally agree that the parable ought to be read as a redefinition of 'neighbour' – either as opening up the *status* of neighbour beyond the usual suspects (for Jews it had previously meant their fellow Jews, their “co-religionists”²¹), or as the expansion of what counts as *neighbourliness* (to include mercy and the willingness to be beset along your way by your obligation to help whoever you find there in need).²²

If the emphasis is on the *status* of the neighbour, for our purposes here it's especially interesting for the ways in which scholars argue that Jesus is narratively stripping away conventional differences and boundaries that tend to keep people on the other side of the road, failing to get involved and to help someone in need. Gregory reads the parable as “relativizing ethnic, racial, national, familial, age, gender and socio-economic differences in a general call to willing service,” both in this parable and the larger gospel of Luke in which we find it. Such a reading seems to assume that both the helper and the helped achieve a kind of blankness – the Samaritan and the man on the road (much in the same way as Garber showed above) are divested of their particularity in such an interpretation, they become figuratively naked; narrative “any-mans.” It's as if any helper/helpee will do; not unlike the charitable one-offs I observed in and around the Gateway. It didn't much matter who was being helped as long as it was someone vaguely in need. And from the perspective of the recipients too, volunteers were a dime a dozen.

But, in the context of its initial telling and hearing, it mattered that one of those men was physically naked, too. When the Levite and the priest pass by the man on the side of the road, they do so apparently because they see him as “half dead.” While this might certainly be a physiological state – so swarmed by social bandits as the text itself suggests, it's not hard to believe that the man was the worse for the wear. But being naked, the man is “socially unintelligible” too.²³ According to scholars of ancient

²¹ See Timothy Patrick Jackson, *Love Disconsoled: Meditations on Christian Charity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). 3-4

²² Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Gregory, “Agape and Special Relations in a Global Economy: Theological Sources”; Griffiths, “The Politics of the Good Samaritan”; Jackson, *Love Disconsoled*; Waldron, “Who Is My Neighbor?”

²³ Cited in Erin Kathleen Vearncombe, “What Would Jesus Wear? Dress in the Synoptic Gospels” (Thesis, University of Toronto, 2014), <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/68331>.

Mediterranean dress, “clothing was indicative of social 'life' and status,” and so the fact of the man's nakedness not only obscures his identity, making it difficult for the passers-by to know who he is – friend or foe – the (forcibly) stripped body also signifies a ‘total loss of status and ”social death.”²⁴ To neglect this detail is to lose some of the parable's internal logic: Jesus' audience would have understood what it meant to find a naked man on the side of the road. And, since Jesus began the story with “A [certain] man was going down from Jericho to Jerusalem,” it's at least possible that the audience is meant to place themselves in that role within the story; it could be they are meant to understand themselves as naked, socially outcast, bruised, beaten and a lost cause, on the side of the road; that they themselves are in need of extraordinary mercy and practical help.

Such a reading would find affirmation in patristic interpretations of this parable; parables in general were understood by the Church Fathers primarily as *spiritual allegories*. In this case, a despised Jesus comes to the aid of *any* and *every* wretched one who needs help.²⁵ But, if in the time of Augustine, Jesus was the Saviour, by the time Wuthnow interviews American volunteers in the late 1990s, human beings who do-good are now squarely in the Samaritan's shoes.

That it's tricky to know where one belongs in the story is precisely the parable's power – it can be invoked to support a number of ideological commitments. As Griffiths argues, there's a politics tied up in our quest to interpret passages like these as finally conclusive. This idea that the Good Samaritan is a model for compassion is by now fairly stable, acceptable, normalized; and so it bears looking closely at what, precisely, the Samaritan is said to be setting an example *of*. As I read the parable, albeit through the fraught lens of what happens at the Gateway, the story of the Samaritan's compassion is fairly quick and uncomplicated – the Samaritan is not waylaid for long on his journey, at most just overnight, and by the next day he resumes his agenda. He'll pay the innkeeper for whatever cost the poor man has incurred, but it seems he'll pay it back the next time he happens to pass by that way, not sooner. Whatever help the Samaritan offers doesn't seem to hinder or cost him too much. Garber notes how “Samaritan” has come to stand in for “disinterested do-gooder,” a phrase that makes particular sense in the economic model of charity we've come to rely on. It's a phrase meant to denote a helper who has no stake in helping the needy, who does what's “good” even though there's nothing in it for him/herself. And while Garber's overarching point is that there is no such thing as a disinterested do-gooder – that the kind of charitable condescension in play today is anything but neutral and unselfish – there's something in the language of *disinterest* I'm inclined to take quite literally: the Samaritan actually lacks concern, curiosity, awareness, attentiveness. The Samaritan doesn't seem to ask any questions of the man along the road or intend to follow up with him. And for his part, the beaten, naked man never speaks. If his nakedness meant that we couldn't properly *see* him, it turns out we don't hear much from

²⁴ibid, p. 96

²⁵ Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love*, p. 295 n.101

him either.²⁶ As far as we can tell, the two remain basically unknown to each other. For the most part, the innkeeper has been their intermediary. And the story ends rather abruptly, without much in the way of entanglement. It seems then that the charitable acts modeled on the story's superficial moral have license to do the same.

In order for the story to be re-enacted in the lives of present-day do-gooders, the two parties need to stay strangers, and there always needs to be someone found languishing in a ditch. What's more, in order for a Samaritan to keep being *surprised* to find a stranger in need and to spontaneously feel the need to help them, any moral *obligation* to help the other has to be kept low – it can't be expected, it has to keep happening by chance. The Samaritan is always but a passerby and the extent of his or her involvement is mainly (and limitedly) material: a few coins here and there, never mind the troubling social situation that rendered that man robbed and beaten to begin with.

²⁶Michele Lancione has examined social media and newspaper sources in order to write compellingly about “the spectacle of the poor”—how we seem to want to beggar on the street not to say anything in order to keep neatly placing them in a narrative of charity and generosity. Lancione, “The Spectacle of the Poor.”

“five guys with nothing”
(passivity)

Late in 2011, an article ran in the *National Post*²⁷ about some people I knew, at least two of whom I had come to tentatively, wishfully call my friends. For many years now, a part-time worker at the Gateway, with various connections to somewhat high profile Canadian businessmen was in the habit of organizing early-morning meetings in fancy hotels which serve breakfast buffets. This worker mainly worked at the Gateway on Saturdays, and on the Saturday before the scheduled breakfast (maybe 3 or 4 times a year) he would spend the day in the Drop-In, sort of rounding up his invitees. On the Thursday night, he would leave notes at the front desk to remind the chosen guys he expected to see them the next morning. And on the day of the breakfast, usually around 6:45 on a Friday, he would come by to collect his group – to make sure they were out of bed on time; to make sure they knew how to get where they were going. This had become fairly commonplace – everyone knew it was a day for “Jay’s breakfast.” Among the workers, there were various opinions floating around about these; many, I came to imagine, were held just on the tip of a tongue, and bitten back.

The day after this particular breakfast, it managed to show up in the *Post* under the headline “Guess who’s coming to breakfast!” I quote it substantially:

Jim McKenny has been sitting at the breakfast table in the private dining room of the fancy hotel listening, mostly, while studying the faces of the other guests, some of them clean-shaven and others not so much...

Jim McKenny listens. He is 64 and retired and not by choice. He used to be a sports broadcaster and before that he used to be a Toronto Maple Leaf, a hockey hero who made fans stand and cheer and, after the applause faded, a hero who drank and snorted cocaine and disappeared into an abyss.

“I met a lot of famous people when I was drinking and drugging,” the old hockey player says, addressing the table, telling his story in a dressing-room voice that has told a lot of stories, good and bad, over the years.

“I just can’t remember who they are. You got to understand, as an addict, you are f---d. I haven’t had a drink and I haven’t done drugs for 25 years and I am crazier than a loon.

“I know the insanity of Jim McKenny. And I got to pray, every day. If you get cancer, people will feel bad for you. If you are an addict, people will hate you. They give you 400 chances and you keep stealing from them because you are f---d up....

“I have a son out there on the streets today, and he is 42 and he is stealing from me and I haven’t seen him since June. He is just a kid.

“Why I am here? To see what you need. I am here to help.”

Wayne stands up, reaches across the table and bumps fists with a

²⁷ A fairly conservative Canadian daily, distributed nationally.

guy who was supposed to be as good as Bobby Orr until booze and drugs wrecked him. Wayne has a ponytail. Wayne is 42, just like Mr. McKenny's son, and Wayne lives in a cardboard box out back of the Hudson's Bay Centre, not far from one of the busiest intersections in the city.

Daniel Merritt, a redhead, an ex-con, a boozier, a dope smoker and a young man with problems, and Mathew Catalfano, another young man with holes in his smile where teeth should be, and Cory Kellar, a rail-thin ghost with long hair and a haunted past, and Marty Miller, a 61-year-old with a gin blossom nose, a bad knee and a whisper of booze on his breath, are all here, like Mr. McKenny, to talk, if they choose to.

They are here to break bread and maybe break down barriers between a homeless community Torontonians see every day and yet don't see at all, and a collection of corporate bigwigs and local celebrities...

And I know what you are thinking, because I was thinking it when I sat down: What is to be gained? Five guys with nothing meet five guys with everything and, well, so what?

What changes?

The answer is nothing, or everything. It is impossible to say. What is undeniable is that we all have stories to tell and the trick, it seems, is actually listening.

Cory is speaking now. The table is silent. Close your eyes and hear his words, his use of language: It could be a lawyer or a doctor talking. Cory is smart. Cory is messed up...²⁸

I practically flew to the Gateway that Saturday morning – a day I had not originally planned to be there – just to hear someone's reaction to the piece.

“That was low,” Cory complained to me. “If this was street justice, he'd have no Chiclets left. But it's not.” Cory knows full well that when you live in a shelter, things are hardly fair.

“He's hurt you with his words,” I tried to reason with him; “I'll use my words to try show him how.”

“You go get him,” he fired back.

I went home that day with two index cards cluttered with snippets of reaction from workers and residents alike. With the help of those notes, a letter in response to the article came flooding from me (far easier than any other single page of this dissertation). Joe O'Connor was perhaps the first person to make me finally *say* something, after months and months of listening.

²⁸ Joe O'Connor, “Breakfast for Homeless Gives Celebrities, Corporate Leaders a Chance to Listen,” National Post, November 20, 2011, <http://news.nationalpost.com/posted-toronto/breakfast-for-homeless-gives-celebrities-corporate-leaders-a-chance-to-listen>.

Dear Mr. O'Connor,

I'm writing in response to your recent article, "Guess who is coming to breakfast!" (Nov.19) This reference is not lost on me: Guess Who's Coming to Dinner was a film meant to knock a brick or two out of the wall separating racial groups, the wall prohibiting interracial marriage. But while your article is ostensibly about dismantling barriers between, in your estimation, "five guys with nothing" and "five guys with everything," it's woefully ironic that the way in which you tell this story deepens and solidifies that divide.

You suggest that Torontonians do not actually see "the homeless," this invisible other. But the problem seems to be that you, Mr. O'Connor, only see them, in passing or for a few minutes over breakfast, and by virtue of seeing them presume to know them.

In preparation for my dissertation on shelter workers, over the past two years I've been spending time at a particular shelter in downtown Toronto with which a number of the men you mention are associated, including Mr. Barton. Some of them, quite literally, call it home.

Wayne, Daniel, Cory and Marty are gentlemen I have the privilege of knowing, and permission to write to you about; I propose to use that privilege and permission to draw your attention to the way in which your narrative simplifies and caricatures some already misused people in pursuit of a sensationalized story.

As a writer, I appreciate the need for a good hook, often garnered from the stark collision of opposites, whatever jarring or uncanny comparison you might draw: something as simple as "the clean shaven" and "others not so much" who break bread together, the easy categories of "homeless" and "bigwigs" positioned around the same table.

To be fair, your article falls into a long tradition of literature that depicts "the homeless" in contradistinction to the health, wealth and purity of higher culture. It's an easy slip and many would not fault you for it. At best, the perpetuation of categories like the rich and the poor, the haves and have-nots, the beautiful and the damned lacks creativity; but at worst it turns complex human beings into characters painted in broad strokes and simple lines. At best, this is romantic slush that gives pause to maybe one reader or two – maybe someone actually closed their eyes when you asked them to and pretended to hear Cory Kellar speak, although it's hard to imagine they could do that and read at the same time. But at worst, you've further compounded a dangerous tendency of the popular imagination: to see those who live a rawer, barer existence on the streets of our city simply as moral failures, figures in cautionary tales, a form of humanity somehow separate from the rest.

On the National Post website, you describe yourself as a “hiker, biker, sports junkie, dog lover, new father, yarn-spinner...” And so maybe I shouldn't be surprised when you also reduce Daniel Merritt to a list of short, simple descriptors: “a redhead, an ex-con, a boozier, a dope-smoker, a young man with problems.” But while your own list essentializes in decidedly positive terms someone you know quite well, the latter describes a stranger and amounts almost to a cluster of slurs. While the addictions and sins of other men around that table are mentioned in passing and in the context of their wider, public accomplishments, Daniel's are not afforded the distance of the past tense nor any sense that he is overcoming them. You allow them to define him completely.

When I asked Daniel what he thought about this, he admitted quietly, “yeah, there were a couple of bad things.” But his great concern was for his friend: “I really didn't like what he said about Marty.”

Daniel and Cory agree that Marty took the hardest hit, a low blow: “a gin blossom nose, a bad knee, a whisper of booze on his breath.” As Marty remembers the breakfast, he wasn't sitting anywhere near you. And if you didn't get close enough to Marty to see the twinkle in his kind, blue eyes, to take note of his southern drawl, to hear tell of a dream to play pro-baseball for the St. Louis Cardinals thwarted by a draft ticket to Vietnam and a blown shoulder, one wonders how you were close enough to smell his breath.

The bigwigs and celebrities in your story do not find themselves so carelessly maligned. In fact, you tell us very little about them, save Jim McKenny. If your article has a conversational point, I suppose it is to explain (or remind) McKenny's fans what happened to him all those years ago, why he disappeared from hockey. But Wayne – who is neither 42 years old nor lives in box – is not merely a narrative device, a stand-in for what Mr. McKenny has lost. He is a whole person. His story, like Cory's and Daniel's and Marty's, has colour and dimension, ups and downs. Granted, a daily newspaper may not have time or space to reflect upon these complexities, but the way you do choose to describe people has considerable moral weight.

Cory Kellar is gregarious and funny and very much of this world, engaged in this city. But calling him a “rail-thin ghost with long hair and a haunted past” assigns him to some sort of mysterious underworld, and, while it may sound melodramatic; an allegorical image like this negates some of his essential humanity.

Words like 'boozier' and 'dope-smoker' and 'homeless' mean something. And they imply certain ideas about human personhood and agency that we, collectively, too often take for granted. In telling your readers about a meeting between “five guys with nothing” and “five guys with everything” you have taken something else away from the so-called have-nots: the dignity of being understood in complex terms, by more than their appearances, by more than their failures. 'Homelessness' itself may well be

a temporary experience, but describing these men as you have done assigns it the significance of a lasting identity, and a moral career.²⁹

The full extent of your article's social implications is not only that your readers are further lulled into believing themselves separate and disconnected from the other. These four men are carrying your words around with them now. "It was just a little bit of bad press," Marty lamented to me, "just a little piece that ruined the whole article, but it hurt."

Wayne remembers the breakfast as disorienting: "All day, the whole day after, I didn't know why we were there. It was mind-boggling," he told me. And of the scene you describe, he remembers it differently: "I bumped fists with that guy because he was saying to me 'I've got problems too.'" But Wayne didn't know it would make the paper. And he didn't know you would out him to whoever owns the spot where he sleeps. On Twitter you called this breakfast a "social experiment." And maybe it was. But if the breakfast was about sharing stories and uncovering the common humanity among ten very different men, perhaps the presence of a reporter who does not seem to have fully shared his own story nor honoured what he found there has undermined the whole thing.

Mr. O'Connor's reply to me seemed quick and inconsequential, as if swatting away a pesky fly. It began bluntly with "Amy-thanks for your note..." The informality of addressing a perfect stranger as such seemed designed to put me in my place, indicating again that he did not care to take matters quite so seriously while also reinforcing the primary issue that concerned me: that *language matters* – how you speak to or about a person is very often a political act. He maintained that the situation was just as he had written it up, and claimed he was only sorry if someone had come away offended, despite his best efforts to be fair.

O'Connor's editor held firm to the paper's rule that readers' comments could only comprise 200 words and so I picked out a few I hoped might make my point well enough and sent them back. They were posted online. If I had imagined some triumph in the daily newspaper, I was not to be satisfied. When I turned up to the shelter the following Tuesday with a copy of this exchange to show Cory and Marty

²⁹ My response to Mr. O'Connor drew *heavily* and *thievingly* on Robert Desjarlais's compelling literary analysis of "the homeless type" in *Shelter Blues*. To be fairer to Desjarlais here than I was in the letter (for the sake of economy) I quote him here at length: "A common problematic vision is apparent in many accounts: the homeless live in an underworld; they are a ghostly, animal-like brood who threaten the peaceful, artful air of cafés, libraries, and public squares...The homeless themselves serve as counter images of health, wealth, purity, and high culture. The imagery passes swiftly, unquestionably, as if it was in the nature of sentences, of putting words onto paper, to set pain against beauty and wretchedness against form...The homeless can also be defined by how they look. To describe someone as 'homeless; announces as lasting identity. When used, the adjective is lasting and all-encompassing; journalists and others often speak of a "homeless" woman or man with the same certitude that they identify someone as a doctor, a politician, or a white an. Homelessness denotes temporary lack of housing, but connotes a lasting moral career. Because this 'identity' is deemed sufficient and interchangeable, the 'homeless' usually go unnamed. The identification is typically achieved through spectral means: one knows the homeless not by talking with them but by seeing them...The homeless are usually characters writ large, serving as figureheads of despondency, vagrancy, insobriety, madness, or moral failure..." Joe O'Connor, "Breakfast for Homeless Gives Celebrities, Corporate Leaders a Chance to Listen," *National Post*, November 20, 2011, <http://news.nationalpost.com/posted-toronto/breakfast-for-homeless-gives-celebrities-corporate-leaders-a-chance-to-listen>. p.2-4

and Wayne, they seemed pleased at least that someone had stuck up for them. Marty disappeared quickly to the quiet of his cot on an afternoon pass for bed rest, in order to read it. He emerged later to grab me round the neck and kiss me on the cheek. Cory, rather a loud talker, made sure some of the staff had a copy and a chance to read it. Both letters found their way upstairs, to the second floor, and met with somewhat less applause: it was suggested by Neil that perhaps I had made too big a deal out of nothing, had read into something that Neil himself would not have noticed if I hadn't pointed it out. He thought perhaps I had not been as *loving* to Joe O'Connor as I should have been, had not extended enough "grace;" had not been quite "Christ-like." I told Neil that, for better or worse, this is the sort of thing academics do – they pick things apart, think about things (maybe too) hard, and try to probe the deeper meanings and implications of whatever passes for common discourse.

Neil's comment felt like an attempt to put me in my place, much as Mr. O'Connor's curt reply: Jesus is kind of a trump card. Love too, for that matter. They got tossed around a fair bit at the Gateway and became conflated in my mind with the problem of the stuckedness of poverty and homelessness more generally. What was it about 'love' that seemed to preclude getting angry and working to fix things that are clearly unfair?

It's a set of questions thoughtfully engaged by Jeffrey Stout in his grassroots-level work on progressive democratic organizing.³⁰ Stout tackles the trouble democratic citizens' organizations report having when they try to enlist the support (let alone participation) of church leaders and pastors in their work for a more robust democracy, a more accountable government, a fairer set of social structures. According to Stout, pastors shy away from such action on the avowed premise that theirs is primarily a "spiritual" and therefore "apolitical" role. But Stout shows how even the seemingly *spiritual* or *otherworldly* invocations of pastors have – consciously/intentionally or otherwise – very real political implications. Just because pastors are not (supposed to be) running for office doesn't excuse or preclude them from the realm of the political. Take the megachurch pastor T.D. Jakes as an example, Stout says. In his speech to a stadium full of Katrina victims in New Orleans, Jakes told them: "God will provide." On the surface arguably a message to comfort the gathered in their grief, Stout argues that such a statement is not adjacent to the political, it does not side-step the political, it *is* in fact a political choice, it gives voice to a particular kind of politics. In telling those devastated by the effects of a hurricane that God would take care of them, Stout argues that Jakes was in effect telling them that agency to recover what was lost was not theirs but God's – it was not their responsibility to organize, to demand accountability and attention from the government, to "claim their rights as citizens." Instead all they needed to do was sit tight, trust, and wait for God to sort things out. According to Stout, in this and other such sermons, Jakes "implicitly reinforces the dominant position of economic and political

³⁰ Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p.159ff.

elites.³¹“ Jakes makes a particular political choice that lets the powerful stay powerful and keeps the weak low. Purposefully or not, Stout argues, pastors are political; they exercise influence over people who, beyond the church, belong to other “social units” and participate in other “economic arrangements.” They are citizens. For a pastor to deny their responsibility in this way is at best neglect, and at worst abdication.

I'm tempted to say the same about 'love' and 'grace' in my conversation with Neil above. While not precisely a pastor, Neil's leadership at the Gateway is important. And 'love' was one of his favourite things to talk about at staff gatherings.³² Not only in this instance but in others, *love* had a way of letting people off the hook for risky things, things that threatened funding but called for social change.

In the case of loving the reporter Joe O'Connor, as I understand it, it wasn't just an invitation to be kinder to the particular person but a choice between the two: to be kinder to the person who already had power and a voice or kinder to the person who had neither and had been hurt. In effect, love wasn't a choice that dodged the political (defined broadly as the struggle for power) nor did it somehow rise above mundane concerns – a kind of moral high ground, *outdoing* the one who had shown himself to be neither loving nor kind. Love in this case undermined and rendered unnecessary my small bout of activism and arguably left the status quo in place. If, as we saw in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the man in need of help was (as compared with the helper) relatively silent and inactive, Neil's rebuke might be read as an (admittedly inadvertent) attempt to keep that mute object in place.

Summing up his own “politics of the Good Samaritan,” Griffiths makes a pertinent point about how the parable leans in a similar direction – upholding “normality” instead of upsetting it. While much attention is paid to Jesus' radical remaking of the categories of 'neighbour' and 'Samaritan,' Griffiths notes how the roles of robber and innkeeper are left intact; they perform their jobs and presumably go on doing so. “There is a world within the parable that Luke makes no attempt to reverse,” Griffiths observes.

It is a world where Jewish brigands feel compelled to strip the clothes from a fellow countryman in order to stay alive, while a Samaritan has large amounts of money to give away at any moment, just to indulge his 'compassion', where there is apparently no question of re-course to justice or even to 'law and order' and where inns and innkeepers make a living picking up the pieces. It is governed by an economic system in which brigands and innkeepers gain and both the victims and the compassionate lose out. It is a world of injustice which Luke describes as the frame for his story and which we the readers are in perennial danger of sanctifying by our silence or our

³¹ *ibid*, p.198

³² See also later discussion of this in Part V: “a suckling pig.”

collusion.³³

For Griffiths, the story itself tempts its audience to avoid the hard work of organizing, protesting, pushing for lasting, structural change, while it posits instead a sense of personal obligation to care and to 'love.' Such an interpretive choice, Griffiths reminds us, is itself a *political* choice. In opting always for small acts of care or *love* over attempts to upend the socio-economic status quo (including the language we use to describe and discuss it) we have not skirted the question of power but re-inscribed a particular kind of power.³⁴

Returning, finally, to the article itself, I think it's possible to understand its existence in a national newspaper as a kind of advertising – the Gateway is never mentioned, but Jay Barton is. As I've said, this was not the first of these breakfasts, nor the last – O'Connor cites nine previous.³⁵ But before this Friday in November of 2011, only one other breakfast had been covered by a member of the media, the previous July. These two breakfasts and articles seem to have coincided with Mr. Barton's new position as a fundraiser for a downtown “street ministry.” One is tempted to speculate (uncharitably perhaps) as to why all of a sudden these breakfasts warranted such coverage.

The July article in the *Toronto Star*, by Brendan Kennedy, took the same sort of material and offered it up in a very different way.³⁶ Kennedy's article allows the Gateway residents to speak for themselves. One in particular is afforded a round and thoughtful subjectivity. His dis-ease at coming to the breakfast, his voluntarily offered narrative, his pride, his courage, his family, his sensitivity to his loss, his frustration, his resilience, and his sense of catharsis at having shared his story all get told in much more even-handed tones. The article wraps up with a moment of (what seems like it might have been genuine) connection between another Gateway community member and Michael Landsberg – a Toronto personality, well known both for his successful sports talk show and his ongoing struggle with (and advocacy for) mental health. As far as a short newspaper article allows, these three have been portrayed in more human terms than the ten told of by Joe O'Connor. And in Kennedy's article Mr. Barton's voice as convener – and rather more neutral figure – is more prominent than any other.

Regardless of the motive or rationale in inviting the press (of which I cannot be at all sure), the language of the article plays to its audience. It makes sense to readers to talk about the homeless in these stripped down terms. The simplicity with which we recognize and index poverty (in terms of dirt

³³ Griffiths, “The Politics of the Good Samaritan,” p.100-104.

³⁴ Gregory invokes the powerful language of Martin Luther King on this point: “One of the greatest problems of history is that the concept of love and power have usually been contrasted as opposites – polar opposites – so that love is identified with a resignation of power, and power with the denial of love.... What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.” King in turn is drawing on Tillich: “nothing is more false than to say to somebody: since I love you and you love me, I don't need to get justice from you or you from me, for love eliminates the need for justice...[such a thing] is said by tyrannical rulers to their subjects and by tyrannical parents to their children.” Cited in Gregory, *Politics & the Order of Love*, p. 195

³⁵ The Kennedy article cites ten breakfasts before that one, and that breakfast itself was one breakfast before O'Connor's.

³⁶ Brendan Kennedy, “Breakfast breaks up barriers,” *Toronto Star*, July 15, 2011, p. GT2.

and deviance and disheveled appearance) might seem efficient and rather innocuous but in reality such terms are meaning-full, value-laden, and problematic. The same could easily be said of the bronze Jesus installed on the park bench – in that case a visual image and in this case certain repeated word-pictures – the *usual* markers of “need” serve to reinforce and reify, in the words of Robert Desjarlais, “a homeless type.” These colloquial indicators of poverty ever serve to entrench distinctions between increasingly immutable categories of personhood – they come to stand alone, in place of anything else we might say about a person. Words like *hobo* and *vagrant*, *addict*, and *homeless*, Desjarlais avers, are all “metaphors to kill by.” They make certain human beings into “disposables,” merely to be thrown away.³⁷ To *love the homeless* is not necessarily to question or repudiate their dispensability.

³⁷ Desjarlais, *Shelter Blues*, p. 5

“the streets”
(secluded/sequestered)

Let us take an example of descriptive language which at first glance seems maybe less harmful than most, and indeed, gets employed with a certain uncritical regularity. It turned up from time to time in the everyday conversation of a few workers at the Gateway, but more consistently it appears at a discursive echelon just beyond the Gateway – especially in writing and public speaking by the director's colleagues and friends. Neil, and others who make up what we might call the socially-engaged evangelical leadership – a particular group of other founders/directors/administrators of faith-based social services in Canada (and especially in Toronto) – commonly invoke the phrase “our friends on/from the streets” to talk about the object of their charitable concern and outreach efforts.³⁸ Take for example the published work of Greg Paul, pastor at Sanctuary, a church/charity in downtown Toronto which claims to strive for “holistic, inclusive and healthy community” with “people on the street”: opening its doors everyday to whoever want to “share life” with them.³⁹ Paul's writings are fairly emblematic of the type; and as a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's Roundtable on Poverty & Homelessness, incidentally called “Street Level,” the ideas included there are explicitly shared among other members of Street Level's directorate and advisory board, on which Neil sits too. Paul's work is laced with easy reference to *the street* – both in concrete, unavoidable usages to do with particular addresses, directions and physical movements to and from certain places, as well as the scene set for his stories; but also in the more semantically interesting ways I aim to probe here.

Two of Paul's books (*God in the Alley: Being and Seeing Jesus in a Broken World*, and *The Twenty-Piece Shuffle: Why the Poor and the Rich Need Each Other*) were encouraged-reading and provided for free to each Gateway worker upon publication. In both, there are myriad references to “my friends from the street,” or more succinctly, “street friends,” “street pals,” “street folks,” and “street connections,” as well as “a hungry hoard of street-involved people” lining up outside Paul's church. He refers frequently to “street culture,” “street life,” “street community,” “street nonsense,” and “street exile.” And that is to yet say almost nothing about the things Paul says happen there: “a street culture of violence, poverty, drugs, and prostitution,” “hustling,” “fists and wits,” “sordid...codependent street relationships,” and “the usual street survival routines.” Finally, there's the stuff Paul conceives of himself and his colleagues as doing: “street work.”⁴⁰ When his prose takes an abrupt turn and describes “a passionate

³⁸ “Street Level” is, as of the time of writing, in the process of dis-establishing itself, speculatively for a lack of funding/commitment from the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. But for its duration, it consisted primarily of the following people: Rick Tobias, Gordon Russell, Laurence East, Carol Reist, Ron Melanson, Dorothy Patterson, Ken MacLaren, Tim Dickau, Marcia Shelton. Plus, there are four others who have traded leadership roles within the group, and are fairly vocal on behalf of the group and on behalf of socially-engaged evangelicals more generally: Greg Paul, Tim Huff, “Neil,” Pat Nixon. They make frequent appearances on 100 Huntley Street, a Christian television program. They write books. They rotate on a circuit of speaking engagements at churches and church conferences in an around the city. See EFC website. Accessed April 26, 2015. <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/page.aspx?pid=1271>.

³⁹ Sanctuary website. Accessed April 26 2015. <http://www.sanctuarytoronto.ca/about.php>.

⁴⁰ Greg Paul, *God in the Alley: Being and Seeing Jesus in a Broken World* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2009); Greg Paul, *The Twenty-Piece Shuffle: Why the Poor and Rich Need Each Other* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010).

couple dancing to a Cuban band at a street party on a hot summer night,” I’m reminded that “street” doesn’t have to have the rather negative association with which it’s become so bogged down. It could just as easily mean any coming together outside the home, as the neighbourhood community implied in this anecdote are people simply outside on the shared street, having a good time.

Socially-engaged evangelicals like Paul are certainly not alone in assigning the homeless to a rhetorical and geographical place called “the streets.” In fact, the ubiquity of that phrase in popular and academic discussions of poverty and scarce housing is matched only by the apparent dearth of critical reflection on such a term in any sphere. The layers of meaning which “the streets” seems to evince, and the ways it might act upon both its speakers and its hearers has not yet borne adequate consideration.

What does it mean to relegate the homeless, in our speaking and in our collective imagination, specifically to a place called “the street?” Whether scholar, social worker, or passerby, liberal or conservative in leaning, this language of the street seems so easily to roll off the tongue. While the language of *street people* began as a kind of “folk notion,” a colloquial term of categorization, it is now squarely set in popular and scholarly literature.⁴¹ “The street” has become as much an analytical category as a judgment passed while walking around the city.

There is a particularly compelling critique of such things in Loïc Wacquant’s intricate review essay “Scrutinizing the Street.” He shows how three urban ethnographers, in their rush to turn the poor into “*paragons of morality*” still “remain locked within the *prefabricated problematic* of public stereotypes and policy punditry.” Even though they aim to show the so-called upside of “life on the street,”— a place inhabited by an industrious, enterprising cast of characters – their narratives serve instead to “sanitize,” “dichotomize” and “glamorize” their subjects; a process Wacquant neatly calls “Byronic heroization.” In Wacquant’s view, this amounts not only to an over-correction (“a moral munificence”) but also to woeful neglect of the social scientific project. The three projects under consideration, he charges, naively take “ordinary categories of perception” not only at face value but also re-employ them “as categories of analysis.” In doing so, Wacquant argues, the scholars demonstrate their “utter subservience to policy prescriptions and propaganda” and engage in a “dangerous suspension of analytical and political judgment.”⁴²

Wacquant’s review of one ethnography in particular, Elijah Anderson’s, *Code of the Street*, is worth looking at closely for its keen attention to detail and its unequivocal tone. By his own admission, Anderson’s narrative relies on “two poles of value orientation, two contrasting conceptual categories of ‘street and decent’ which organize the community,” and while Wacquant notes how at the outset

⁴¹ Loïc Wacquant, “Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography,” *American Journal of Sociology* 107, no. 6 (May 1, 2002), p. 1488. Mary Madden notes something similar in her critique of Rae Bridgeman and Irene Glasser’s work *Braving the Street: The Anthropology of Homelessness*. Madden, “Braving Homelessness on the Ethnographic Street with Irene Glasser and Rae Bridgman.”

⁴² *ibid.*, p.1470

Anderson “wisely warns against reifying” those divisions, it's not long before Wacquant finds evidence of exactly that and must lay out the problematic implications:

First, transmuting folk notions that residents use to make sense of their everyday world into mutually exclusive populations prevents Anderson from analyzing the dynamic contest of categorization out of which the distinction between “street” and “decent” arises and how this contest affects individual conduct and group formation. For it leaves unexamined the social mechanisms and paths whereby different persons drift toward this or that end of the spectrum, and what facilitates or hinders their sliding alongside it...

Note that Anderson's characterization of the “street family” is wholly negative, defined by deficiency, deficit, and lack; the street family's orientation and actions are grasped from the standpoint of “decent” families who strive to distance themselves from “uncouth” neighbors. By thus adopting the folk concepts of the residents as his analytic tools, Anderson runs into a third problem: like the “decent folks,” he attributes all the ills of the “community” to the street people, in effect *taking sides* in the battle that these two factions (or class fractions) of the ghetto population wage against one another, instead of analyzing how their opposition operates practically to frame, curtail, or amplify objective differences in social position and strategies in the neighborhood.⁴³

Analyzing Anderson in this careful, incisive way, Wacquant is calling on social scientists more generally to not so easily subscribe to the language they hear in the field – not to take for granted their interlocutors' own terms and labels and classifications. It's an argument not unlike one made by Pamela Klassen in her scrutiny of words like “Indian” and “Christian” in the mapping of the Americas – both are equally “polemical” she argues.⁴⁴ While “Indian” may seem more readily problematic, Klassen shows how “Christian” does similar kinds of work: it marks off difference and “inculcates unity.” So too, I'm suggesting does a concept like “the streets.” It cuts into the story Paul or Anderson tells and makes a profound difference to the telling. “Our task as scholars,” Klassen advises, “is to show how such concepts are made of human interactions within historical and cultural parameters, while being wary, and humble, about our own fabrication of polemical concepts as we write.”⁴⁵ Taken together, Klassen and Wacquant set the agenda for what follows here: a close reading of the metaphor of the streets, what it uncovers and what it obscures.⁴⁶

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⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 1488-9

⁴⁴ Klassen, “Christianity as a Polemical Concept.”

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 349

⁴⁶ See also Mieke Bal on metaphor and theory (discussed above in Part 1). Bal, “Scared to Death.”

The earliest and simplest usage of 'street' in English referred to "a paved way" in the style of a broad Roman road, but it has come a long and winding way from there.⁴⁷ Once used to depict a generic go-between way to any old place, the idiom has since been given over to a distinctly urban connotation: a street is now a man-made road in a man-made place, a go-between specific to the built environment of the city. Once it was squarely situated in the urban, 'the street' was just as likely to denote a public place where business was done, as it was to refer to an everyday, common sort of person, that is the "woman/man-on-the-street" to be found there, beyond his or her own private dwelling, buying and selling and meeting with others (think "man on the street" comments in the newspapers and imagine a regular kind of Joe).

As early as 1750, *street* got attached to the practice of prostitution, particularly in London. But rather than the dark and seedy undertones we came to associate with "the street" much later, the association between prostitution and the street was then more likely to highlight the public accessibility of a saleable good – sex's out-of-placeness, to be sure, but also its easy availability, there alongside other commodities and business arrangements.

For Charles Dickens, in his mid-19th century urban context, there were "street boys" who ran around free, and "street bands" who played in the open air.⁴⁸ The street still enjoyed then a somewhat value-neutral association with the contrast between the public and private. By the turn of the century, George Bernard Shaw would start to show in his plays a sharpened image of the poverty-ridden streets of London. In contrast to polite society, Shaw's "street people" were uneducated, neglected, and spent their ample free time in the out-of-doors instead of "at home" – the assumption being that they didn't have (an adequate) one in which to stay put in the first place. Even so, to this point in English literature, there was nothing like the morally loaded meaning which *the street* connotes today.

Originating primarily in media outputs from the United States, in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, etymologists have noted a peculiar shift in the lexicon: *the street* comes to bear with it, more often than not, the implication of illegal activities, dealings in drugs and danger. In the 1960s "street people" may have specifically referred to people who slept outside as a kind of protest against social conventions, but it didn't take long for a voluntary dissidence to also become conflated with full-blown criminal activity.⁴⁹ According to the common idiom today, "Street people, "don't just live out of doors, they belong to a "street culture," speak "street slang," have "street tags" or "street names," and do business according to the "street value" of this drug or that. But it bears restating that these are relatively new uses of an old

⁴⁷ R. W. Burchfield, ed., *A Supplement to The Oxford English Dictionary: Volume IV, Se-Z* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Walter William Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Clarendon Press, 1893); J. A. Simpson, E. S. C. Weiner, and Oxford University Press, *The Oxford English Dictionary*. (Oxford; Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1989); Ernest Weekley, *Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1967).

⁴⁸ Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (Chapman and Hall, 1839); Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (Bradbury & Evans, 1854).

⁴⁹ See especially Burchfield, *A Supplement to The Oxford English Dictionary*.

word, iterations that have come to be associated not only with the word *homeless* nowadays, but also taken as altogether *bad*.

The change is said to have coincided conspicuously with America's 1964 "War on Poverty." Waging war requires an enemy and the first step must certainly be to *name* one. The success of a war might depend just as much on its rhetoric as its action; one sure key is bad press. America's "War on Drugs," two decades later, was to prove no different: the language of identifying and obliterating a menacing enemy dehumanizes drug-users and makes criminals of some of the country's sickest citizens; such language helps legitimize the effort. Before 'addicts,' it was the poor *en masse*. Beginning with President Lyndon Johnson's 1964 announcement that America would embark on an "unconditional war on poverty" being poor represented not just a aberration of mainstream American prosperity, but a sinister threat to it, such that its government was not willing to allow; they would make every effort to bring the poor (willing or not) into the proverbial fold.⁵⁰ As an identifiable antagonist, something out there somewhere, opposing "us," rather than an inherent flaw in the way the country itself was run, poverty was a matter of personal deviance rather than a structural, systemic failing. How they talked about poverty in general and the poor in particular – in simplistic and throwaway terms, as something only to be gotten rid of – would help to galvanize public support for the project and get the job done.

Admittedly, designating people *of* or *on the streets* may not be the worst way we talk about people: vagrant, hobo, tramp, bum, derelict, skid-rower (which all have their own nuances and culturally specific histories) are arguably all more offending. But the discourse of *the street* still goes hand in hand with broader "geographies of exclusion" in cities like Toronto. Lois Takahashi's groundbreaking review of the literature on homelessness from a geographical point of view observed that characterizations and *representations* of homelessness – most often and especially negative ones – were "crucial to understanding the process of shaping a politics of rejection."⁵¹ Takahashi highlights how public understanding of homelessness (in the United States) hinges on stigma – not just in the abstract, but *spaces* of stigma and *sites* of representation. Work that followed Takahashi's zealously took up her project, showing the myriad ways in which cities were engaged in "processes of containment, constriction, compression." Neil Smith's "revanchist" theory of poverty took this idea even further. In the words of one of revanchism's critics, Smith cited "a few spectacularly punitive measures" taken in New York City in the late 1980s and early 1990s as evidence of a "vengeful reclaiming of prime city spaces by (white) upper classes from street criminals, minorities, the poor and especially homeless

⁵⁰Fantasia and Isserman, *Homelessness*, p.12; 187-190. With rhetoric more triumphalist (and more violent) than President Roosevelt's in his 1930s implementation of The New Deal, Johnson's *war* on poverty was a harsher attempt not only to ensure the America wouldn't fall victim to another depression, but that "The Great Society" would achieve an unparalleled affluence. In crude contrast to the Roosevelt's hallmark statement "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself," which seemed meant to rally and revive a "depressed" citizenry, Johnson's assertion that "the richest nation on Earth can afford to win the War on Poverty" is comparatively proud and unequivocal, there is little room for outliers – they are the enemies of prosperity, to be fought against and obliterated.

⁵¹ Geoffrey DeVerteuil, "Complexity Not Collapse: Recasting the Geographies of Homelessness in a 'punitive' Age," *Progress in Human Geography* 33, no. 5 (October 1, 2009), p. 646

people.” For all the drama and worth of such academic endeavours, there remain doubts about revanchism's sweeping and entirely negative hold. In recent years, geographers have not only sought to show how homeless policies are not only punitive, interventionist, and forcibly dislocating, but more “multifaceted” and “ambivalent” too.⁵² Sometimes pushing people around, sometimes letting them stay put, sometimes actively protecting their right to be wherever they want to be.⁵³

What I confess to be an almost obsessive attunement to the liminal, helps us to see that *the street* participates in the push and pull of the seemingly contaminated poor in North American cities too, albeit in a nuanced and incomplete way.⁵⁴ Instead of outright rejection or banishment, liminality involves sequestering, secluding that which does not fit. “It is a paradox, a scandal, to see *what ought not be there*,” wrote the Turners in *The Forest of Symbols*.⁵⁵ And in the case of the streets, to consistently draw attention both to the “what” (people) and its “ought-not-ness” (living *on the streets*) is to keep that thing perpetually out of place but not altogether gone. I'll show here how the language of *the street* keeps people living not only on the outside of things but more precisely (and quite literally) *in-between*.

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In probing this terminology, I'm struck first by the actual heterogeneity of “the street,” the lack of one clear and cohesive place one might be referring to when defining a person in relation to it.⁵⁶ People variously called “street-involved” or “street entrenched” or some derivative thereof, actually occupy lots of different kinds of spaces and places: parks, sidewalks, doorways, benches, courtyards, the underside of bridges and overpasses, intersections, university campuses, church steps, forest encampments, vacant lots, alleyways. Not to mention all of the indoor spaces where they pass their time too: shelters, drop-ins, community kitchens, Out-of-the-Cold and other church-based programs, public libraries, coffee shops, restaurants, bars, malls, waiting rooms, food courts in the basements of office towers, and the hallways of a city's underground path system. Some of these places are, undoubtedly, *near* or *adjacent* to the actual street, but not necessarily *streets* in and of themselves, where cars drive by and cyclists peddle past; they're not all dirty, nor busy, nor noisy, nor crime-infested. So, what holds all of these places together under the rubric of *the streets*? And what is it speakers accomplish by lumping them in?

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ See David Ley and Cory Dobson, “Are There Limits to Gentrification? The Contexts of Impeded Gentrification in Vancouver,” *Urban Studies* 45, no. 12 (November 1, 2008): 2471–98.

⁵⁴ See Randall Amster, “Patterns of Exclusion: Sanitizing Space, Criminalizing Homelessness,” *Social Justice* 30, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 195–221; DeVerteuil, “Complexity Not Collapse”; David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001); David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002); Lois Takahashi, “A Decade of Understanding Homelessness in the USA: From Characterization to Representation,” *Progress in Human Geography* 20, no. 3 (September 1, 1996): 291–310; Jeremy Waldron, “Homelessness and Community,” *University of Toronto Law Journal* 50, no. 4 (2000): 371

⁵⁵ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), p.98. Quoted also in Willett and Deegan, “Liminality and Disability.” Emphasis added.

⁵⁶ DeVerteuil, “Complexity Not Collapse.”

Not out of step with the linguistic development of the word, I think what is especially significant about the moniker is its publicness; that is, the basic out-of-placeness of what are 'supposed' to be otherwise private things – and this runs the gamut from passing idle time to relieving oneself – all of which defy a dearly held sense of comportment and respectability on the part of those who have access to such privacy in the first place.⁵⁷ According to these shared standards, such things – showering, sleeping, lovers' spats, and indeed anything intimate – ought to happen *at home* rather than out in the world, and certainly never in plain view. People “on the streets,” presumably, have nowhere else to go in order to do these things, and/or don't mind doing things that way. They live their lives out in the open, as it were, and ultimately on shunned display.⁵⁸

The private realm, by some estimations, is a kind of staging ground for the public. According to Hannah Arendt, the household in particular is a place of preparation for what happens outside of it; it's where the bare (animal) self is “mastered” and masked – cleaned up, covered up, trained up in order to present an acceptable self to the outside world.⁵⁹ To have no such place, Arendt reasoned, no place safe from “the glare of the public,” meant “to be no longer human.” The public street, on the other hand, is a place to go just for little while, knowing you can always come back to the comparative safety, seclusion, and intimacy of ‘home.’⁶⁰

When Martha Radice in her ethnography of everyday life on a particular Montreal street calls the street itself “a stage,” we find yet another important inflection of the street. For her, streets seem like perfect symbols for the city: microcosms of social relations, places where a diverse cast of urban actors meet to play out their various roles.⁶¹ The street, strictly speaking, is not exclusive to any one group or class – *everyone* lives in and around streets, and streets are places where city-dwellers meet, interact, and negotiate differences everyday. Streets are places of face-to-face encounter. What gets marked by the label “the streets” in discussions of poverty might then be understood as the attempt to *limit* the difference we encounter in our neighbourhood, again to designate something that does not belong (and what's more, has no place to belong at all). While “the street” used to be a way of talking about all kinds of trading and commerce, and still can be a way of talking about community engagement, it more often refers to a specific type of unacceptable, improper business or interaction. In the modern zoned city of

⁵⁷ On the nuances and potency of respectability in the Canadian middle class, historically (especially as it is sanctified and spread by religious movements), see Michael Gauvreau and Ollivier Hubert, *Churches and Social Order in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Canada* (McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP, 2006); Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario*, First Edition (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 1997); Marguerite Van Die, *Religion and Public Life in Canada: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (University of Toronto Press, 2001).

⁵⁸ Randall Amster, “Patterns of Exclusion: Sanitizing Space, Criminalizing Homelessness,” *Social Justice* 30, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 195–221. p. 214; Jeremy Waldron, “Homelessness and Community,” *University of Toronto Law Journal* 50, no. 4 (2000): 371. For an intricate discussion of display, see Sally M. Promey, “The Public Display of Religion,” in *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, ed. David Morgan and Sally M. Promey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 27–48.

⁵⁹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*. Quoted in Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter*, p.119-120; I critique such a notion of home in Part V.

⁶⁰ Riccardo Lucchini, “The Street and Its Image,” *Childhood* 3, no. 2 (May 1, 1996): 235–46.

⁶¹ Martha Radice, “Ethnography of the Street: When Is a Place Not a Place?” *Anthropology News* 52, no. 3 (March 1, 2011): 13.

“separate and single-purpose spaces,” there is little shared or uncontrolled space. It seems that no matter what “street people” are said to be doing “on the street” – from making a living to making friends – they're all up to no good.⁶²

A negative view of the streets makes sense mostly in contradistinction to the isolation and automobile-dependent suburbs, where sometimes there is scarcely a sidewalk to be found and one can go days without bumping into a neighbour.⁶³ Suburbs are “decidedly non-pluralistic” spaces, by design – they are strictly controlled and built to *match* (at least on the outside).⁶⁴ And they exist because the middle classes not only wanted to, but literally *could* escape to them – they had both the resources and freedom lacking among most of those left downtown.⁶⁵ By contrast with the powerful image of single-family dwellings, all non-normative dwellings threaten to be rendered illegitimate, and none more so than the no-fixed-dwelling of inner-city life. Even if you have a roof over your head, things like gentrification, rising rent rates, zoning by-laws, noise and other kinds of pollution, delicate landlord-tenant relations all conspire to make downtown living rather precarious; such accommodation is not likely to last for long.

Having linked the notion of “the streets” both to shared understandings of what it means to be *in public* and strictly *in private*, I also want to draw attention to the movement-oriented connotation hovering in the language of the street, the way that calling someone a “street person” seems to mean that you can pick them up and move them some place else. Because they are on “the street” – whether its purer purpose is business or a more polished social interaction, more generally – those who are not clean enough or rich enough to participate in such things are consequently available for dislocation. In fact, so the logic seems to go, they're already displaced so what's a little bit more – in this direction, or that, or preferably in-doors and out of sight. In drawing attention always to the out-of-placeness of whatever happens “on the streets” we further *dis-place* the actual people who live in non-normative situations. Because of their bare visibility in public spaces, we enact a kind of accessibility to them: they're not where they're supposed to be, so we have a built-in excuse to push, pull, pressure, or pick them up and move them somewhere else – up the street, or down a ways, since it tends to run both ways and is meant expressly for transit and conveyance, after all.

No sooner was there a “street problem” but also “street workers” deployed to fix it. Social workers (Christian and otherwise) in Toronto and elsewhere, have evidently adopted this same language for themselves. Shelters and churches alike deploy people to “street outreach” or lead youth groups and prayer teams on “street walks” reportedly to see a part of the city they might not otherwise experience.

⁶² Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter*, p.129

⁶³ Jason Wasserman, “Housing Patterns of Homeless People: The Ecology of the Street in the Era of Urban Renewal,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 40, no. 1 (February 1, 2011), p.76

⁶⁴ Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter*, p.22

⁶⁵ Amster, “Patterns of Exclusion,” p.210

As I've already mentioned, a group of evangelical shelter administrators and social workers in Canada got together in 2006 and called themselves "Street Level" as if coming down from somewhere in order to meet the people where they are. It's a performative speech act, but also adoption of (if not stamp of approval on) language that, as I've shown, has both a moral genealogy and real political implications.

But the Christians I'm interested in here, like Paul, often add an interesting qualification: they refer to their love and care for their *friends* on the street. So what does it mean for (socially-engaged evangelical) Christians to participate in this language? To discursively place their so-called friends in this out-of-place, public, and moveable field? I think it's what anthropologist Leonard Feldman would call an "inclusive exclusion," of which the poor and marginalized are *often* the chosen object.⁶⁶ A phrase like "our friends on the street" keeps the other in a particular place, such a place that simultaneously helps to constitute a sense of self: "We are the sort of people who make friends with the other;" or "we care about those no one else wants to make friends with." And in order to keep being this sort of people, they need to keep that *other sort* just where they are. Like the Good Samaritan, they need to keep finding someone in need – and maybe even precisely *where* the Samaritan found someone to help, there, on the side of the road. It's interesting to me that those who claim to *love* folks who are homeless share something strangely in common with those who tend to reject, demean, or outright ignore them (as we saw in our discussion of the homeless-type above): they all tend to keep the homeless others in their place – in much the same way as the volunteers who relegate (their attention to) the poor to the temporal domain of the Christmas season and the sculptor who stuck his sleeping "Homeless Jesus" to a park bench.

⁶⁶ Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter*. See also Steinbock, "Homelessness and the Homeless Movement."

“spent the night at the Sally Ann”
(lowliness and sacredness)

Before proceeding any further, something must be said in earnest about The Salvation Army – both as the Gateway's begetter and overseer, but also as a purveyor of the charitable modes and discursive constructions we've been exploring in this section. Any understanding of the Gateway's culture must be refracted through the prism of the broader Salvation Army: as we'll see in later chapters, the Gateway bears the marks of its ancestor in ways pronounced, implicit, and deliberately hidden. At the same time, any discussion of the stuckedness of homelessness, as I have been attempting here, must at least try to account for the Army's involvement in social service provision (both in Canada and internationally) for more than 130 years. I propose that the longevity of The Salvation Army – as much as the ironic existence of a shelter which “should not exist” but *does* – relies on the perpetual (and proximate) presence of an other in need and ultimately poses a conflict of interest: to end poverty would also be to lose certain integral identifiers of their organization.

Comb through just about any book on homelessness in Great Britain, North America or Australia and you're bound to find some passing reference to The Salvation Army.⁶⁷ While one might be rather hard pressed to find thorough treatment of the character and culture of an Army shelter in academic literature, you're more likely than not to trip over some mention of it anyway, to see it listed alongside other charities, Gospel Rescue Missions, Catholic Worker projects and the like – all major players in emergency housing and hostel services.⁶⁸ “I spent the night at the Sally Ann” is a phrase of particular historic and contemporary currency. Judging by its prevalence in books about homelessness, it seems safe to say that wherever in the world you go where there is homelessness, the phrase (or some derivative of it) is likely to make some sense. The Salvation Army has become, by no small measure of irony, a kind of “household name” in sheltering.

In their survey of American shelters in Austin, Texas sociologists David Snow and Leon Anderson attempt to situate The Salvation Army's stance on homelessness in a typology alongside the other major charitable organizations. They call the Army “accommodative:”

The accommodative response attends to the **basic subsistence**
needs of the homeless, particularly the need for food and shelter.

⁶⁷ See for example: Nels Anderson, *On Hobos and Homelessness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Howard M. Bahr, *Skid Row: An Introduction to Disaffiliation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); Gregg Barak, *Gimme Shelter: A Social History of Homelessness in Contemporary America* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1991); Bobby Burns, *Shelter: One Man's Journey from Homelessness to Hope* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998); Todd DePastino, *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Gowan, *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders*; Jessica Page Morrell, *Voices from the Street: Truths about Homelessness from Sisters of the Road* (Vancouver: Gray Sunshine, 2007); Scott Seider, *Shelter: Where Harvard Meets the Homeless* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010).

⁶⁸ As an example of an attempt to understand Army shelters, see Allahyari, “‘Ambassadors of God’ and ‘The Sinking Classes.’” On the whole, though, Allahyari's analysis suffers from poor understanding of the Salvation Army in general and admits that as a researcher in the Army shelter she was kept rather at bay. It's clear that she hasn't quite understood the Army when she writes about “the Core Office” – which in fact should be written “Corps,” as this is Salvation Army terminology for a church. That she hasn't been able to understand the Army on its own terms somewhat undermines her analysis.

As a mode of response that helps the homeless **manage street life**, it **facilitates their survival** as homeless persons but does little to help them off the streets.⁶⁹

While typologies are only ever heuristic devices and can only take us so far, the critique inherent in Snow and Anderson's categorical assignment of the Army rings true when one considers the host of “redundant” and “pauperizing” schemes the Army has long employed (meal programs, food banks, short-term accommodation, all manner of hand-outs, etc.)⁷⁰ And it echoes every time Neil, the director of the Gateway says, “This place should not exist” in a speech that first began with some declaration of authoritative seniority: “We've been here 10 years,” or “I've been doing this work for 25 years.” While perhaps not alone in its longevity nor its rather apolitical stance, in this section I want to think through the Army's knotty approach to social services and how it's tied up, too, with what makes the Army *last*.

I've used the word 'knot' here quite intentionally, following Valentina Napolitano's inducement to anthropologists to attend to the way multiple (his)stories – each rather partial, but altogether quite potent – become condensed by “compromise and convergence,” into an affective *knot*.⁷¹ Such is the case of The Salvation Army's sense of itself: it weaves together scraps of memory and traces of tradition into a powerful (if problematic) understanding of itself as “a permanent mission to the poor.”⁷²

* * * * *

The Salvation Army began with the evangelical work of William and Catherine Booth, a British, Wesleyan couple who had grown tired of the respectable constraints of Methodism – or, as I'll show, tired at least of that body's authority over them. While indelibly marked by the broader strains of Holiness Revivalism burgeoning around them, the Booths' project was not characterized for long as strictly a spiritual endeavour. The Army's pop-culture antics designed to draw the attention of working classes to the gospel (marching bands on parade, street performances, vaudeville shows, repurposed bar tunes and re-occupied gin halls – what Max Weber would later disdainfully call “soteriological orgies”⁷³) were soon joined by renegade acts of social welfare: shelters and soup kitchens for poorly treated dock workers, secret homes for unwed mothers, one of the earliest examples of occupational health reform (a factory that only made The Safety Match, with the kind of phosphorous that tended

⁶⁹ Snow and Anderson, *Down on Their Luck*, p.79. Emphasis in the original.

⁷⁰ Diane Winston, *Red-Hot and Righteous: The Urban Religion of The Salvation Army* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p.131

⁷¹ While much of Professor Napolitano's discussion is beyond my facility and I cannot employ the full extent of her brilliant argument, I found the knot a very useful device – as she suggested to me that it would be. Valentina Napolitano, “Anthropology and Traces,” *Anthropological Theory* 15, no. 1 (2015): 47–67.

⁷² And argument for this particular designation for the Army is made in James Edwin Pedlar, “A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army” (Thesis, University of Toronto, 2013), <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/43425>.

⁷³ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), p.101.

not to rot a worker's jaw) and soon an enterprising plan to send England's excess workforce to farm in the colonies.⁷⁴

William Booth, even more so than his wife Catherine, exists now as a mythic, almost Dickensian figure in the Salvationist memory.⁷⁵ On the dreary underside of Victorian London, lived a man with a crooked nose, a long beard, and a penchant for unequivocal preaching in the streets. The immortal memory of this man among his followers is grave and faithful but also simplistic and slightly askew – Salvationists tend to disagree about his intentions, for instance, and thus their own identity and have spent considerable time and ink over the years trying to sort out these things: is the Salvation Army a charity, a church, both or something else altogether?

Perhaps as recourse from the confusion of trying to line up precisely what Booth thought or said, Salvationists are instead fond of memorizing and canonizing certain of Booth's most compelling phrases. “While women weep as they do now, I'll fight. While children suffer as they do now, I'll fight...” is a particularly repetitious example in the cult of William Booth. His notion of The Cab Horse Charter – that every human being ought to be as well and decently cared for as a workhorse with food and shelter and occupation – is even still invoked when Salvationists unveil a new project, service, or scheme.⁷⁶ Booth's imagery of people “drowning in an ocean of sin” and Salvationists acting as members of a nautical rescue unit, plucking poor souls from the waves has been depicted in a painting that still reverently hangs on their walls. But Booth was also fond of such polemics that I'll argue ought not be re-employed uncritically today. In his mission to evangelize those we might diplomatically agree to call “the neglected” – that is, those so-called urban outcasts whom he believed the gospel had not yet reached⁷⁷ – Booth was also fond of calling the object of his efforts variously: “the fallen,” “the

⁷⁴ See various histories of The Salvation Army (both academic and amateur): Andrew Mark Eason, *Women in God's Army: Gender and Equality in the Early Salvation Army* (CCSR/Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009); Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*; Edward H. McKinley, *Marching to Glory: The History of the Salvation Army in the United States, 1880-1992* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995); Lillian Taiz, *Hallelujah Lads & Lasses: Remaking the Salvation Army in America, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Pamela J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Winston, *Red-Hot and Righteous*; Ann Marie Woodall, *What Price the Poor?: William Booth, Karl Marx and the London Residuum* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005). On the safety match in particular, see Shiela Lee, “Work and Health: An Historical Review of the Literature,” in *Contemporary Ergonomics 2002* (London/New York: CRC Press, 2002), 568–72.

⁷⁵ It seems Booth's followers are divided as to whether Booth cared for Dickens at all. Booth might have been more likely drawn up as one of Dickens' villains than his heroes, and had they met, I expect they would have disagreed about what needed to be done in the East End of late-Victorian London. (See Woodall, *What Price the Poor?*; Herbert C. Rader and Fran Rader, “Salvation Army Missionary Strategy and Ministry to the Poor,” paper given at The Salvation Army International Summit on Poverty, December 17, 2002, accessed October 7, 2013,

<https://www.salvationist.org/poverty.nsf/09a1dc2154b8115380256af000467ae0/BC3F3A88A45A0A6180256B370032FFD2>) I focus on William Booth in this chapter, more so than Catherine, because although Catherine was a fierce evangelical force in her day and pushed William to many great lengths, the bulk of his social concern and teaching was recorded and put into effect after her death in 1890. Catherine was known to worry that feeding programs and workhouses were a distraction from the pure and “aggressive” evangelism she was most concerned with. See Roger Joseph Green, *Catherine Booth: A Biography of the Co-Founder of the Salvation Army* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1996); Roger Joseph Green, *Life and Ministry of William Booth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005); Roger J. Green, *War on Two Fronts: The Redemptive Theology of William Booth* (Salvation Army Supplies, 1989).

⁷⁶ The Divisional Commander did this at the Grand Opening for the Gateway Linens program – situating the Gateway's new social purpose enterprise in the direct lineage of traditional Salvationism.

⁷⁷ A strong case for this distinction is made in Pedlar, “A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms.

downtrodden,” “the damned,” “the teeming masses,” “the submerged tenth,” “the worst, the last, the least.”⁷⁸ To put it yet another way, Booth considered the Army to be “moral scavengers, netting the very sewers.”⁷⁹ Both this entrenched sense of otherness and Booth's entitled sense of his particular mission to the other, is to be the subject of this section. I aim to show how it's possible to see William Booth not simply as pragmatist but opportunist, shoring up for himself a kind of market-edge in the evangelical (and later social work) game(s) by consistently positioning himself and his organization as uniquely equipped and unusually willing to act as go-between, “as a buffer or conduit between the classes.”⁸⁰ He – and his followers after him – situate The Salvation Army always in the middle of somewhat stagnant categories constantly in need of (re)sanctification: the saved and the lost. Such terms seem conspicuously to map onto two other poles: the clean, well-off, respectable and the destitute, the dirty, the “down-and-out.” In the Turners' terms, we might go so far as to recognize The Salvation Army and its members as offering themselves up as ritual keepers of the liminal – sustaining and attending to the enduring middle.

In the formative articulation of his social scheme, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, William Booth described a British Salvation Army shelter:

Suppose that you are a casual in the streets of London, homeless, friendless, weary with looking for work all day and finding none. Night comes on. Where are you to go? You have perhaps only a few coppers, or it may be, a few shillings, left of the rapidly dwindling store of your little capital. You shrink from sleeping in the open air; you equally shrink from going to the fourpenny Doss-house where, in the midst of strange and ribald company, you may be robbed of the remnant of the money still in your possession. While at a loss as to what to do, someone who sees you suggests you should go to our Shelter. You cannot, of course, go to the Casual Ward of the Workhouse as long as you have any money in your possession. You come along to one of our Shelters. On entering you pay fourpence, and are free of the establishment for the night. You can come in early or late. The company begins to assemble about five o'clock in the afternoon. In the women's Shelter you find that many come much earlier and sit sewing, reading or chatting in the sparely furnished but well warmed room from the early hours of the afternoon until bedtime.

⁷⁸ William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: International headquarters of the Salvation Army, 1890); Andrew M. Eason and Roger J. Green, *Boundless Salvation: The Shorter Writings of William Booth* (Peter Lang, 2014); Jenty Fairbank, *Booth's Boots: The Beginnings of Salvation Army Social Work* (London: Salvation Army, 1983); Green, *War on Two Fronts*; Pedlar, “A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army”; Shaw Clifton, “Modern Social Ethics: The Gospel and Society,” in *Creed and Deed: Toward a Christian Theology of Social Services in the Salvation Army: Excerpts from Selected Papers Presented at a Symposium on “The Theology of Social Services” at the Salvation Army Catherine Booth Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada*, ed. John D. Waldron (Toronto: Salvation Army, Canada and Bermuda, 1986); Woodall, *What Price the Poor?*

⁷⁹ Harold Begbie, *Life of William Booth: The Founder of the Salvation Army* (Macmillan and Company, limited, 1926).

⁸⁰ This particular wording comes from Woodall, *What Price the Poor?* Although, it should be noted that for Woodall (even though she is comparing Booth's response to the London Residuum with that of Karl Marx, who arrived in London about the same time as Booth) such a stance is not problematic; she seems to find no reason to be critical of it and is devotedly supportive of Booth throughout. Her monograph is based on her doctoral dissertation, and thereby an academic work, but she is also a Salvation Army officer and among Booth's faithful following.

You come in, and you get a large pot of coffee, or tea, or cocoa, and a hunk of bread. You can go into the wash-house, where you can have a wash with plenty of warm water, and soap and towels free. Then after having washed and eaten you can make yourself comfortable. You can write letters to your friends, if you have any friends to write to, or you can read, or you can sit quietly and do nothing. At eight o'clock the Shelter is tolerably full, and then begins what we consider to be the indispensable feature of the whole concern. Two or three hundred men in the men's Shelter, or as many women in the women's Shelter, are collected together, most of them strange to each other, in a large room. They are all wretchedly poor—what are you to do with them? This is what we do with them.

We hold a rousing Salvation meeting...⁸¹

In certain operative ways, the general connotation of “I spent the night at the Sally Ann” is not much changed from this. There remains among Salvationists this notion that the person seeking shelter with them may, on top of being homeless, be friendless, jobless and hopeless too, and that they should find at the shelter some place warm and dry, where one might eat a meal and pass some quiet hours at their chosen hobbies. As we'll see below, there remains this sense among Salvationists of their own superior uniqueness: 'there are other places you might go but they won't be as good as here, with us.' But the so-called “indispensable” prayer meeting, however, is nowadays more often in question.

Where this practice persists, the Army is sometimes accused of preying on human misery and need, of finding in a person brought low by circumstances the strategic opportunity to make a convert. George Bernard Shaw articulated this compellingly in *Major Barbara* in 1905, writing his heroine as finally foregoing the streets of East London for the relatively well-paid and well-fed but still spiritually-bereft souls at work in her father's munitions factory. For Shaw and his Major Barbara, there was something more honest about wooing a person to Christian conversion when they were already materially taken care of.

A hundred years later in Vancouver, a shelter volunteer would bemoan the same in his memoir of working at a Catholic hostel:

At that point, someone rushed into the drop-in centre and shouted: 'No prayer meeting at Harbour Light⁸² tonight!' And Brother Tim and I watched in astonishment as nearly everyone rushed off to get a free 'Sally Anne' [sic] meal, which was instantly more valuable because they wouldn't have to pay for it with the usual prayers and hymns...

[When] a pious volunteer asked Brother Tim why he refused to

⁸¹ Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, p.96-7

⁸² “The Harbour Light” refers specifically to the Army's addiction/rehabilitation programs

start up a bible study class, or form a prayer group, like many of the other Christian Charities [.] I overheard Brother Tim reply flatly: 'Because I'm not an asshole.'⁸³

Critics can take an easy swing at The Salvation Army in this way, accusing it of a kind of “bait-and-switch” approach to social services, of using food, shelter, clothing and warmth as a draw, a trick, to get people in the door, to create opportunities for evangelism. Depending on the context, this might take the form of requisite attendance at a prayer meeting or chapel service while staying in one of their institutions, the gift of a tract or small Bible volume, or just a quiet conversation with a Salvation Army soldier or officer over supper. It might all be harmless enough, but told in such blunt terms it also draws attention to the Army's arguably shallow approach to social justice. While the Salvation Army is well known (and oft respected) for services that meet people at their point of need (when they are decidedly without adequate food, clothing and shelter), the Army is less well known, and both practically and theologically less engaged, in up-stream initiatives that seek to end the cycles of poverty and oppression that land people in scarce circumstances in the first place.⁸⁴ For Salvationists traditionally, the onus has been on the indigent to convert because only the total transformation of a *spiritual* salvation can truly deal with all one's troubles and improve one's circumstances. As Booth once (c)rudely quoted Browning: “It takes a soul to move a body e'en to a cleaner sty.”⁸⁵ The exact relationships between personal and social salvation in Booth's theology has always been a bit impulsive and muddled, but Salvationists have habitually maintained that anything short of holiness merely patches up the problem for a little while.⁸⁶

In Booth's time, the London residuum presented a situation of startling urgency: what has been described as “an oppressive, grinding condition, an insoluble, intractable problem” had brought with it severe illiteracy, alcoholism, inadequate housing, overcrowding, filth, and disease.⁸⁷ Booth mainly responded to the most pressing need, the immediate problems of his day, arguably also with an eye to growing his mission and increasing his following. For Booth, the main concern was not poverty as such, but the fact that the poor had, in his view, been neglected by the churches and were in danger of not “getting saved.”⁸⁸ Booth's notion of salvation was always highly individualized – poverty itself was a reflection of individual iniquity, if not exactly personal failing. To his mind, the “slum-dweller” and the “drunkard” suffered from “irreligion” and the only acceptable solution, the only possible rescue from the “slavery to sin” which kept them wayward and poor was a dramatic, instantaneous personal

⁸³ Bart Campbell, *The Door Is Open: Memoir of a Soup Kitchen Volunteer* (Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2001), p.132-4.

⁸⁴ In the political realm for instance, this might amount to questioning authority or challenging the source of its funds and be therefore inadvisable.

⁸⁵ Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, p.53. This is how Booth quotes it, but in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 1856 “Aurora Leigh” it appears: “It takes a soul, /To move a body: it takes a high-souled man,/To move the masses, even to a cleaner sty: It takes the ideal, to blow a hair's-breadth off/The dust of the actual.”

⁸⁶ See Green, *War on Two Fronts*; Clifton, “Modern Social Ethics: The Gospel and Society.”

⁸⁷ Woodall, *What Price the Poor?*; Daniel Siegel, *Charity and Condescension: Victorian Literature and the Dilemmas of Philanthropy* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2012).

⁸⁸ Pedlar, “A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army,” p.193ff.

conversion.⁸⁹ Salvation, as he saw it, would have the added benefit of reforming sinners into “honest, industrious, self-sufficient people.”⁹⁰

* * * * *

William Booth founded the Salvation Army almost haphazardly. He had bounced around among “early Methodist splinter groups” in the mid-19th century, spent 6 months in training as a Congregationalist (the extent of his formal theological education), passed 18 months with the Wesleyan Reform Movement as a circuit minister, followed by another petulant stint in circuit ministry for the Methodist New Connexion.⁹¹ Booth was bound and determined to be an itinerant evangelist rather than be tied perpetually to a loop of local church ministries. Inspired by the Revivalism of his day, and influenced by the style and preaching of James Caughey, Charles Finney, and Phoebe Palmer, Booth was frustrated with subsequent appointments by the Methodist Conference responsible for his oversight and what seemed to him their ignorant denial of his own special calling as an evangelist. He regularly complained of the Conference “denying his repeated requests for freedom to travel and exclusively engage in revival campaigns.”⁹² And “unwilling to compromise,” he cut ties with them.⁹³

Booth's reluctance to be confined by ecclesial oversight was not only a matter of rebuffing authority, but also – in the style of Caughey and company – an intention to defy denominational boundaries. The paradox of history is, of course, that Booth would eventually establish his own denomination, set in place firm lines of division between his movement and the rest of the Church, as well as strict behavioural rules for his followers; contemporary critics and historians alike would unambiguously characterize him as an autocrat.⁹⁴ But it bears dwelling for a moment on his original wish to be unencumbered and unhemmed from denominational constraints – especially for the ways in which it shaped the Army's evangelical tactics.

Since its earliest days, the Salvation Army has prided itself on being “free as air to adjust [them]selves to the needs of the hour.”⁹⁵ Boastfully “tied to no method,” the Army flirted with both acceptance and rejection of the cultural forms of entertainment popular among the working classes of their day, and

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 196; See especially Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, for demonstration of this.

⁹¹ Green, *Life and Ministry of William Booth*; Pedlar, “A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army”; David W. Taylor, *Like a Mighty Army?: The Salvation Army, the Church, and the Churches* (James Clarke & Co, 2015).

⁹² Pedlar, “A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army,” p.157

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ Woodall, *What Price the Poor?*, p.190: “By its activities, the Salvation Army has disturbed, and still disturbs in some ways, social control. It has broken and still breaks individual habits and collective customs. It introduced new ways and new practices in worship and street life. But at the same time, Salvationism has been an extraordinary factor in leading people back to social control.” (Drawn from a Swedish source, translated privately for Woodall). See also Rader and Rader, “Salvation Army Missionary Strategy and Ministry to the Poor.”

⁹⁵ Catherine Mumford Booth, *Aggressive Christianity: Practical Sermons* (London: National Publishing Association for the Promotion of Holiness, 1883) p.59-61: “You are as free as air...Adapt your measures to the necessity of the people to whom you minister; you are to take the Gospel to them in such modes and habitudes of thought and expression and circumstances as will gain for them a HEARING.” (Emphasis in the original).

played it rather fast and loose with the lines of distinction other theological traditions of their time may have drawn between the sacred and the profane.⁹⁶ It seems Salvationists have always had a penchant for *the streets* – a stage-like setting for performing that which more stoic and reserved Christian groups tended to keep quiet and indoors. Salvationists sought to bend their manoeuvres whichever way seemed expedient at the time. Their commitment to creativity manifested itself in the express adaptation of secular attractions into opportunities for evangelism. Trying to convert the Victorian working classes, the Salvation Army catered its message to the delights preferred by those groups: “theatres, dancing halls, tap rooms and gin places...[made] attractive every night by flaring gas, music and other attractions” were imitated or even outright commandeered by Salvationists anxious to draw a crowd.⁹⁷ Parades, variety shows, early experiments with film technology, brass band concerts and even weddings were staged to create opportunities for proselytization.⁹⁸ Religious lyrics set to old bar-tunes (“Champagne Charlie is My Name” became “Bless His Name He Sets me Free”), “scandalous” Bible stories acted out on street corners (“The Ten Virgins”) colourful costumes, gymnastic antics (a man who would stand on his head until a crowd had gathered), melodrama, any gimmick that might attract curiosity and gossip and ultimately lead to “souls saved.” By that same logic, they fully adopted the military metaphor which had begun almost as a slip of Booth's tongue.

Indignant to a newspaper piece that named it his “Volunteer Army,” Booth is said to have spontaneously retorted: “We're not a Volunteer Army, we're a Salvation Army,” aiming to emphasize their fervent commitment to their task. The more that sounded like a good catchphrase, the more it grew in their imaginations. Inadvertent or not, it made considerable sense to brand themselves in such a way; by the end of the 19th century, Britain was still basking in the glow of its colonial and military conquests. The military metaphor was attractive for its association with the overwhelmingly positive image of the British soldier as a person of discipline and integrity, as well as the stature and dominance of Britain itself, now thriving as a superpower.⁹⁹ In the telling language of one Salvation Army scholar, noting the wider identification of Christians with soldiers at this time, “There can be little doubt that

⁹⁶ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*; Winston, *Red-Hot and Righteous*. In response to criticisms like these, Booth was indignant: “Take off that coat of fear and throw away that long pole of respectability that keeps the sinner at arm's length.” (*The War Cry*, 23 April 1887).

⁹⁷ Catherine Mumford Booth, *The Salvation Army in Relation to the Church and State: And Other Addresses Delivered at Cannon Street Hotel, City* (London: S.W. Partridge and Co., 1883), p.52.

⁹⁸ R. G. Moyles, *The Salvation Army and the Public: Historical and Descriptive Essays* (Toronto: AGM Publications, 2000); Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*; Winston, *Red-Hot and Righteous*; Taiz, *Hallelujah Lads & Lasses*.

⁹⁹ See Andrew M. Eason, “The Salvation Army in Late-Victorian Britain: The Convergence of Church & Sect,” *Word & Deed* 5, no. 2 (2003), p.8-9; John M. Mackenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military: 1850-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992). See also the Raders' admission: “How much he was influenced by the Bible, and how much by Britain's naval conquests and overseas expansion, we do not know. Undoubtedly, the image of the British Soldier also aided the Army's evangelical expansion into Britain's colonies, the Army a willing handmaiden of imperialism's spread, it exported British ways of life. “Rader and Rader, “Salvation Army Missionary Strategy and Ministry to the Poor.” An interesting counter-narrative to this is told by Susan Neylan and Melissa Meyer who suspect that the Tsimshian on Canada's Northwest coast actually took the Salvation Army's practice of brass banding for themselves—travelling south, as far as The Salvation Army had yet come, the Tsimshian saw Army Brass Bands and found ways of incorporating those instruments and that style of music into their own well-established musical traditions. Susan Neylan and Melissa Meyer, “Here Comes the Band!': Cultural Collaboration, Connective Traditions, and Aboriginal Brass Bands on British Columbia's North Coast, 1875-1964,” *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly*, no. 152 (2006).

William Booth *capitalized* on this militant form of Christianity more than any of his contemporaries.”¹⁰⁰ It didn't take long for militarism to become much more than a metaphor and for all of the Army's people and practices to be appointed martial terms: parishes were called “outposts” or “corps,” and the evangelists who “manned” them were “officers,” complete with ranks. New evangelical efforts in new towns were called “invasions” or “assaults.” Prayer meetings were called “knee drills” and envelopes sealed with donations to fund their work, “cartridges.” For Booth, the Army model had the added bonus of hierarchical structure, enshrining him as a General with absolute command over his troops.¹⁰¹

The tales Salvationists tell of the Army's first endeavours not only to evangelize people but to feed and clothe them are also told as though they were instantaneous flashes of genius on the part of their founder (and his God). The story of the Army's first attention to the plight of the poor offers two such examples. As the story goes, William Booth was walking with his grown son Bramwell along the River Thames on his way home from a preaching engagement when (not unlike the Good Samaritan caught by surprise along his journey) he happened upon a man sleeping in the open on the embankment. Having seen this man once before, he insisted suddenly that Bramwell “Do something!” That the Army “must do something!” And the idea of a Salvation Army men's shelter is said to have been born then and there.¹⁰² The story of the Army's first foray into social work more generally is no less immediate but perhaps even more familiar among his followers: upon meeting a reluctant congregation, William Booth is said to have improvised the phrase “you cannot preach to an empty stomach—he cannot hear the gospel over the sound of its growling.”¹⁰³ And from such quaint beginnings, the Salvation Army's dual-logic is said to have emerged: compassion and conversion, spiritual and material salvation, evangelical attention to both the body and the soul.

On the one hand, we might subscribe to the idea (as indeed many Salvationists do themselves) that Booth was pragmatically adapting himself to his context.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, *pragmatism* is a characterization

¹⁰⁰ Eason, “The Salvation Army in Late-Victorian Britain: The Convergence of Church & Sect,” p.8. (Emphasis added). Eason uses this idea over and over but without questioning it. See also Woodall who notes that not just any cultural appropriation would have worked as well; it was particularly opportune to mimic the militia: “Eric Hobsbawn has emphasised the battle at the time for the control of symbols and rites, of which he judges the two most powerful to have been music, both national anthems and military music, and the flag. The Salvation Army was to appropriate military-style music and a flag of symbols of its own.” Woodall, *What Price the Poor?* p.42.

¹⁰¹ “In 1875, even before its official transformation into The Salvation Army, Booth named himself ‘General Superintendent’ of the organization ‘for the term of his natural life,’ giving him authority to set aside ‘any and all of the decisions and resolutions’ made by those in The Christian Mission (the Army's predecessor). Pedlar, “A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army,” p.188-89, quoting the Salvation Army's Foundation Deed Poll.

¹⁰² Woodall, *What Price the Poor?*, p.158; Bramwell Booth, *Echoes and Memories* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925).

¹⁰³ See also Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, p.53: “But what is the use of preaching the Gospel to men whose whole attention is concentrated upon a mad, desperate struggle to keep themselves alive? You might as well give a tract to a shipwrecked sailor who is battling with the surf which has drowned his comrades and threatens to drown him. He will not listen to you. Nay, he cannot hear you any more than a man whose head is under water can listen to a sermon.”

¹⁰⁴ See for example, Eason, “The Salvation Army in Late-Victorian Britain: The Convergence of Church & Sect.” Eason outlines Booth's “pragmatic attempts to attract” – placing his emphasis on “pragmatic” rather than “attract” even though throughout the article he uses the word “capitalize” to describe Booths (re)appropriation of advertising and entertainment methods of his day. I find it interesting at least (but not determinative) that before preaching, Booth first trained as a Pawnbrokers Apprentice – a kind of capitalist bottom-feeder, a person arguably preying on other people's poverty, taking

that often gets attributed to Booth, especially with reference to the Army's early engagement in social work. The faithful see Booth as taking things as they came and making realistic decisions in their wake. Some of the harshest criticism of Booth is that he is only a reactionary leader, never visionary, merely keeping up – albeit with a knack for claiming originality and singularity for himself and his Army.¹⁰⁵ And certainly, as we've already seen, some of the stories about how the early Army took shape lend themselves well to such a critique: the adoption of the military analogy was almost an accident, and the birth of the Army's social work was similarly impromptu and unplanned. But I wonder if pragmatism isn't also a euphemism for opportunism. Whether or not Booth began the Army's social work from a position of strength or slipping influence, it's obvious he felt a voraciousness for souls. Growth of the Kingdom in general – and his movement in particular – is perennially the point. The 1878 Orders & Regulations for The Salvation Army cite Booth's purpose: “to seize the slaves of sin and not only set them free and turn them into children of God, but as far as possible in each case to make them soul-winners.”¹⁰⁶ I would argue that we could glean from this a sense of Booth's desire for *exponential growth*.

Taken together with what we saw of Booth at the outset of his life as a preacher, his unwillingness to be governed by an ecclesial body, to go where he was sent and participate in the Methodist conference, I wonder if his adoption of certain antics, gimmicks, and even social services weren't (at least simultaneously) about growing something he could call his own, and gaining for that entrepreneurial endeavour an economic edge over the competition. Ostensibly it might have been “for the sake of the Kingdom,” but undoubtedly it was also for the sake of keeping The Salvation Army in perpetuity. The idea that William Booth took up social concerns primarily in order to right a failing evangelical mission is not a new, nor particularly charitable reading of Booth. Critics have accused him of such before and others jumped to his defense: “that he suddenly bethought himself of social service as a gimmick wherewith to restore his ineffective evangelical enterprises is a travesty of his thought and action!” once-General Frederick Coutts retorted in 1978.¹⁰⁷ Historians are divided on whether Booth's numbers were swelling, dwindling, or holding firm around the time he is said to have begun in earnest The Salvation Army's work among the poor, but for the purposes of my argument, those figures are beside

valuables in exchange for money who needed capital more than treasures. I'm tempted to imagine 19th century pawnbrokers in the same critical light as the Pay Day Loan places of today.

¹⁰⁵ On uniqueness, see Roland Robertson, “The Salvation Army: The Persistence of Sectarianism,” in *Patterns of Sectarianism. Organisation and Ideology in Social and Religious Movements*. Edited by Bryan R. Wilson, ed. Bryan R. Wilson (London: Heinemann, 1967), 49–105. McKinley notes that Salvationists rarely say much about their influences – especially Booth – but certainly had many since they existed in a veritable heyday of charitable societies, holiness movements, temperance unions, and the like. E. H. McKinley, *Somebody's Brother: A History of the Salvation Army Men's Social Service Department, 1891-1985* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986). Barbara Robinson tracks the Army's Wesleyan roots and shows how holiness groups all over British-North American were engaged in work like this. Barbara Robinson, “The Wesleyan Foundation of Salvation Army Social Work and Action,” *Word & Deed* 7, no. 1 (2004): 33–42. And Woodall calls this tendency in Booth “cherry-picking” those parts of another person's thinking which suited his own purposes and which he could around his own beliefs. And describing his Darkest England scheme she says: “It did not hold many totally new features. Much that was included had already been suggested or was already being tried by others.” Woodall, *What Price the Poor?* p.70; 159. See also Siegel, *Charity and Condescension*.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Pedlar, “A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army,” p.193.

¹⁰⁷ Frederick Coutts, *Bread for My Neighbour: An Appreciation of the Social Action and Influence of William Booth* (London: Salvationist Pub. & Supplies Limited, 1982), p.18-19.

the point. No matter the exact size or spread of The Salvation Army then or now (to date it boasts of programs in 142 countries), I would argue that the Salvationist record shows an entrepreneurial Booth: a shrewd marketer, and a keen capitalist. Indeed, in a 1903 letter to his son Bramwell, Booth admitted his enduring ambivalence about social work, as such. Ever careful to avoid the inference that social salvation was an end in itself, Booth was always willing to eschew its importance to him. But the 1903 letter belies its true significance to him: social work had been useful to him anyway, he wrote; it has “lifted us up to a position in public esteem, the world over, which we should never have gained in all human probability for perhaps a century without it.”¹⁰⁸

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In *Darkest England*, Booth wrote:

There are many institutions, very excellent in their way, without which it is difficult to see how society could get on at all, but when they have done their best there still remains this great and appalling mass of human misery on our hands, *a perfect quagmire of Human Sludge* [emphasis added]. They may ladle out individuals here and there, but to drain the whole bog is an effort which seems to be beyond the imagination of most of those who spend their lives in philanthropic work. It is no doubt better than nothing to take the individual and feed him from day to day, to bandage up his wounds and heal his diseases; but you may go on doing that for ever, if you do not do more than that; and the worst of it is that all authorities agree that if you only do that you will probably increase the evil with which you are attempting to deal, and that you had much better let the whole thing alone.¹⁰⁹

No doubt persuaded by this kind of Salvationist rhetoric, in 1892, Friedrich Engels understood The Salvation Army as sympathetic to his socialist cause: they seemed to him to be fostering a clear class consciousness among the poor and damning the status quo.¹¹⁰ But by the time George Bernard Shaw wrote his play *Major Barbara* in 1905 it was obvious to him (himself a student of Engels),¹¹¹ that The Salvation Army had made a Faustian deal with its middle class donors: stopping short of a full-blown position on the current political economy, they had opted instead to maintain good relations with the sources of their funds and to keep themselves in business.¹¹² By the late 20th century, General Coutts,

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Taiz, *Hallelujah Lads & Lasses*, p.115-16.

¹⁰⁹ Booth, In *Darkest England and the Way Out*, p.81.

¹¹⁰ Friedrich Engels, Introduction to the English Edition, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (New York: Cosimo, Inc., [1892] 2008), p.xxxiim.

¹¹¹ David B. Harrison, “A New Source for Shaw’s *Major Barbara*,” *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 28, no. 1 (1985): 56–58.

¹¹² Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara* (London: Echo Library, 2006). See especially his preface “First Aid to Critics,” added to the print version in 1906.

again a staunch defender of the Army, wrote that he was downright offended to ever have been lumped in with Engels' Socialists in the first place.¹¹³

Salvationists are admittedly apolitical – in the ways discussed above but also with an eye to their own necessary longevity. Eventual-General Shaw Clifton unapologetically justifies it:

It seems to me that our track record in this area [the political] is pretty mixed. Our general attitude to secular government is ambivalent in that we frequently adopt a policy of quiet co-operation or at least non-opposition even when the nature or policies of that government fly in the face of Christ's teaching. This is done "to protect our work," so that we may be allowed to go on functioning in a particular place.¹¹⁴

And when answering hypothetical critics on why the Army is concerned with "treating the symptoms only" and not "the root causes" Clifton swings right past any kind of engagement in politics or altered social structures altogether and maligns the "wrong-headedness" of liberation theology which, he claims "tends to promote Marxist economics in place of saving faith in Jesus, Son of God." "Liberation theology has relegated grace," he concludes – grace being a dearly held evangelical belief that only something beyond the work of human beings has the power and agency for salvation.¹¹⁵ For Clifton there is no grey area – the Army can either "repeat the error" of liberation theology, submit to the "danger of interpreting the Gospel solely in political terms" or it can go about its (endless) business "saving one man at a time so that each man's standing with God is changed."¹¹⁶

The musical *Guys & Dolls*, based on short stories by Damon Runyon, parodies The Salvation Army, with the usual open-air parades replete with bass drum, tambourines and brass instruments, but also, more perceptively, the coffee and doughnuts they seem to have perennially on offer to the poor – a caffeine and sugar rush meant to steel a person against faintness and despair. Taken together, the open-air and the foodstuff handouts are meant to symbolize the Army's willingness to do whatever it takes to bring about their twin objectives: to save souls spiritually and materially. But the play astutely joins these two concerns to a lesser-known (but no less potent) third: the struggle to keep the Army going. The heroine of the story makes a deal with a career gambler: if she does as he asks, he will supply the mission with "one dozen genuine sinners" and save her outpost from closure.

Sociologist Roland Robertson shrewdly suspects The Salvation Army of an "egocentric attitude of indispensability," while theologian James Pedlar names this same phenomenon "an overgrown sense of

¹¹³ Coutts, *Bread for My Neighbour*.

¹¹⁴ Clifton, "Modern Social Ethics: The Gospel and Society," in Waldron, *Creed & Deed*, p. 221

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, p.218

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, p.217-18

self-importance.”¹¹⁷ Indeed, present-day Salvationists hold firmly to the notion that they are called by God; that their good works in the world are vitally important, that they are the only ones who can do/are doing what needs to be done. In the present day, The Salvation Army has been called/called itself “the most effective organization in the U.S.,” “the most successful Australian charity,” and “Britain's largest provider of charity welfare.”¹¹⁸ Here in Canada, their website avows that they are “the largest non-governmental direct provider of social services in the country.” Their own sense of exceptionalism has always legitimated great lengths of self-perpetuation: the work of the Salvation Army among the “down-and-out,” must always go on. This is an idea they've carried down from Booth himself.¹¹⁹

The Army's sense of special calling and uniqueness is particularly evident in its deliberations over its place within the wider Church and its dealings with the others who make up the 'Body of Christ.' Against Ernest Troeltsch's church-sect typology, a number of sociologically-inclined scholars have tried to plot The Salvation Army, arriving at conclusions variable but ultimately sharing a common theme: The Salvation Army just doesn't fit. Roland Robertson, the first to attempt such a thing, characterized the Army as an “*established* sect,” claiming that it had exceeded the contours of the 'sect' category (i.e. small, conversion-oriented, fundamentalist, imposing strict conformity) especially by becoming large, institutionally diverse, and indoctrinating subsequent generations into its number and not only the newly-converted. Still, he surmised, strictly speaking, it had not fully migrated to any other quadrant of the typology either; it was not fully church or denomination or any other recognizable thing.¹²⁰ For his part, Religious Studies scholar Andrew Eason called The Salvation Army “both sect-like and church-like” at the same time.¹²¹ He claimed that the Army tends both toward self-insulation from “a godless society” (as a sect), and to cultural accommodation – especially in its efforts to raise funds and run a charity (its willingness to engage with the outside world being a more church-like quality). John Hazzard, examining the American manifestation of the Army has called it a sect *in transition*: while it began in a rigidly sectarian way, setting itself apart as unique, it is now “marching”

¹¹⁷ Robertson, “The Salvation Army: The Persistence of Sectarianism,” p.55; Pedlar, “A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army,” p.199.

¹¹⁸ Keith Howson, “The Salvation Army,” *Managerial Auditing Journal* 20, no. 7 (January 1, 2005): 649–62; Stuart Middleton, “Reputation Management in the Salvation Army,” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (June 1, 2009): 145–57; Robert Watson and James Benjamin Brown, *The Most Effective Organization in the U.S.: Leadership Secrets of the Salvation Army* (Colorado Springs: Crown Publishing Group, 2001).

¹¹⁹ Among Protestants, The Salvation Army is certainly not alone in claiming its own exceptionalism; indeed, the Protestant Reformation seems expressly to have created the conditions for almost endless splitting among sects and denominations and the sanctification of individual callings and charisms. I would argue, however, that the Army's is a notably extreme version of the trend, evidenced especially (as I show) in their anti-sacramental stance and their reluctance to be called a “church.”

¹²⁰ Robertson, “The Salvation Army: The Persistence of Sectarianism.” See also response to Robertson from Moyles, “An Evangelical Church? in *The Salvation Army and the Public*, and William H. Swatos Jr., “Weber or Troeltsch?: Methodology, Syndrome, and the Development of Church-Sect Theory,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 15, no. 2 (1976): 129–44. Swatos uses the word “schizophrenic” to describe an established sect – the category into which the Army is said to fit. Certainly, we can't hang much on a 1970s definition of schizophrenia, but the analogy is still somewhat illuminating: disoriented, bewildered, torn between conflicting realities.

¹²¹ Eason, “The Salvation Army in Late-Victorian Britain: The Convergence of Church & Sect.”

along the continuum, on its way to becoming a settled down and respectable church.¹²² Bruce Power, himself both a Salvation Army officer and a scholar, is not out of step with the others but puts it even more boldly: he believes that the Army needs its own unique model within the church-sect typology; none of the existing models therein will ever adequately represent them.¹²³ While on the one hand, we might understand the Army as offering a case with which to critique the sterile categories of sociological analysis of this kind – just as much exceeds as is contained within them – on the other hand, it's interesting that Salvationists, from Booth's day until now, tend to thrill at this idea that they are special, exceptional, unclassifiable (and no less at the Gateway, it turns out, as we'll see in Part III).

Such an argument is made with particular nuance and care in the recent doctoral work of Wesleyan theologian, James Pedlar. In developing his theology of ecclesial charisms, Pedlar demonstrates how what began as a vocational mission to “the neglected” ultimately grew to a kind of “excessive self-estimation,” a church in and for itself. Again, the word “pragmatism” comes up in talk of the Army's first involvement in more “churchly” practices – beyond just weekday open-air and passionate evangelical endeavours, The Salvation Army ultimately offered Sunday services now too, complete with certain congregational and sacramental rituals. Pedlar notes that it wasn't long before the Army became one's primary religious affiliation or “church-home.” If The Salvation Army began behaving like a church because their poor converts were not welcome in the established, respectable churches, it didn't take long for their makeshift churchiness to become a clear marker of their incomparable identity.¹²⁴

For Pedlar this is a problem precisely because the Army's sense of exceptionalism and uniqueness hinders its ability to participate with other Christian bodies in the work of ecumenism, and fundamentally (if inadvertently) undermines the unity of the Church.¹²⁵ While such a theological argument is an important and worthwhile project in itself – and, as Pedlar is aware, might humble Salvationists of today – for our purposes here it is the way Pedlar lays out William Booth's sense of the Army as unprecedented and unequivocal that is of particular interest.

By Pedlar's deft hand, we see a vision of Booth as ambitious, rebellious, triumphalist, and ultimately misguided. According to Pedlar, when Booth was pressed to define himself in relation to other Christian groups he instead made frequent (and sometimes flippant) moves to build an organization of

¹²² John W. Hazzard, “Marching on the Margins: An Analysis of the Salvation Army in the United States,” *Review of Religious Research* 40, no. 2 (December 1, 1998): 121–41.

¹²³ Bruce Power, “Towards a Sociology of Salvationism,” *Word & Deed* 2, no. 1 (1999): 17–33.

¹²⁴ By the 1950s (and likely sooner) The Salvation Army was decidedly a church of the middle class, trading sensationalism in large part for respectability. Upward mobility had been a built in goal since the beginning – self-improvement, acquisition of higher ranks, expansion and later professionalization have all factored into their organizational development. See Moyles, *The Salvation Army and the Public*.

¹²⁵ David Taylor makes a similar argument except he uses Barth as a foil, and seems to argue that the Salvation Army's sense of itself runs counter to a cohesive, stable notion of what the “true” and “good” Christian community ought to be. Pedlar grounds his argument in the theology of charisms, instead of subscribing to this untenable idea that there is such a thing as “Christian ecclesiology” writ large against which individual theologies of the church can be measured. Taylor, *Like a Mighty Army?*; Pedlar, “A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army.”

his own. Booth's reluctance to be too much like or *get along* well with others was, as Pedlar tracks it, a problematical posture which has only become exacerbated over time. "We are not and will not be made a Church. There are plenty for anyone who wishes to join them, to vote and rest," Pedlar quotes Booth. And then he goes on to discern about such professions: "Booth was adamant in stressing that his Army was not a church. But even as he made this claim, he ensured that his movement would function as a church home for its members..."¹²⁶ What might at first have been an intention to be equal to or just as good as the other churches soon swelled exponentially in Booth's imagination: "It seems as if a voice from heaven had said and is still saying, that we are to be an Army, *separate from, going before, coming after, and all round about the various existing Churches...*"¹²⁷

In 1890, Booth opened his own bank, The Salvation Army Deposit Bank, later renamed The Reliance Bank in 1900, and still in existence in Britain today.¹²⁸ In 1894, he launched a Life Insurance Scheme for members of the Army to buy into, as well as the public.¹²⁹ In 1897, Bramwell Booth (William's son and arguably the real commercial force behind the Army) would unabashedly claim the Army's reliance on an economic model:

...to this end the Army applies to the propagation of the gospel the same principles of adaptation to the existing need, of hard work, of *business-like enterprise*, of military discipline, precision and devotion which characterize the world described in this review. By means of open air meetings and processions, bands of music, flags, uniforms, popular announcements, and every other lawful device it continually *advertises* the love of Christ to the lost and hopeless, and the duty of devotion even to death for the salvation of others.

Arguably, the Army's capitalist imitation/participation took more explicit shape in the United States than anywhere else.¹³⁰ William Booth's son-in-law Frederick Booth-Tucker upon taking up leadership of the Salvation Army in America, unabashedly compared the Army's brand of social work to the "commercial field."¹³¹ "Competition is better than monopoly," he is quoted as saying in a speech at a meeting of New York charities: "it introduces new machinery...[and] novel plans...[T]he multiplication of efforts [will] cultivate the spirit of energy, independence, and enterprise." He maintained that each organization had the right, even the duty, to develop their own unique

¹²⁶ Pedlar quoting Booth, *Orders & Regulations* 4, Pedlar, "A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army," p. 234.

¹²⁷ Pedlar quoting Booth, "The General's New Year Address to Officers, 1890 in *ibid*, p. 236

¹²⁸ Eason, "The Salvation Army in Late-Victorian Britain: The Convergence of Church & Sect," p.10. Aside: Ann Woodall, cited above for her work comparing Booth to Karl Marx was a Salvation Army officer and once the Chair of this bank.

¹²⁹ *ibid*, p.11. See also Rader and Rader, "Salvation Army Missionary Strategy and Ministry to the Poor."

¹³⁰ In reviewing the history of The Salvation Army in America, Diane Winston has been critical of the extremes in Army's avowed attempts to "redeem the city" and "the marketplace" especially with their red Christmas kettle campaigns and their street performance. Are these not also, she wonders, attempts "to profit from the spirit of acquisition." Winston claims there is fine line between turn-of-the-century social services and "helping victims of the new commercial society find their place as scavengers and bottom-feeders," taking their place in a larger system of exploitation. Winston, *Red-Hot and Righteous*, p.119.

¹³¹ Taiz, *Hallelujah Lads & Lasses*, p.114.

entrepreneurial approach to helping people and to solving their problems. He called his own scheme “The Pauper Policy.”

The reality of the Salvation Army's basic identity, then and now, is rather frenetic: ever-occupied, ever-necessary, ever-expansive. But as a business plan it appears to rely on the steady supply of its basic unit for transformation. More precisely, it rests on a particular narrative: The Salvation Army and its members are agents of help and hope, each of them borne of a willingness to be close to the other – this broad, if fuzzy class of people in need.

* * * * *

In the 21st century, an era of unprecedented charitable choices and shifting loyalties, The Salvation Army's self-conception along with their self-saving project is most clearly articulated in their attempts at branding. On behalf of the Army, phrases like “help us, help others” and “we deliver to no fixed address” grace bus shelters, billboards and TV spots, across Canada, and especially at Christmastime.

Beginning in 2006, the Salvation Army began running ads with the tagline “We see what most don't.” Each ad – all of them rather blue and made to appear cold – depicted the shadow of a ghost-like person sleeping on a park bench, panning on a street corner, leaning against an outside wall, hovering in a doorway. These ads were part of the Army's new, overarching brand: “Giving Hope Today.” Even while obscuring the active subject “we,” the tagline still implied that “they,” The Salvation Army, were in fact the ones “giving hope today,” and that if you were to respond to their also implicit plea for monetary support, they would act on your behalf, mediating hope from you to whomever supposedly had none.¹³²

In 2011, the Salvation Army launched something called “The Dignity Project,” accompanied by television ads that implored Canadians to “put them within reach this Christmas,” and by an array of bus shelter posters portraying a mother holding a swaddled baby, a shabbily dressed teenage girl, an elderly gentleman in a soiled trench coat, a sad mother and daughter holding hands, each of them reaching for something – sometimes reaching toward what seemed like another ad, one for tomato soup, another for fashionable clothes – while still others seemed to reach beyond the image to something that could not be adequately displayed in an image, anyway. Other ads associated with The

¹³² It's important to acknowledge that this advertising *works* because the wider audience subscribes to these easy categories too! The Army is not the author of these distinctions; they are merely using (they might even argue that they're “redeeming” them for some greater good) to do something that inevitably needs to be done. Both The Gateway and The Salvation Army more generally are working within a flawed class system. Their language of proximity only works because of all the language of distance at work simultaneously.

Dignity Project tempted viewers to “donate and make a difference.” They were explicitly after the difference between being “under fed” and “fed,” between being “homeless” and “home.”¹³³

In all of these ads, there is a persistent conceptual separation between “you the donor,” who seems to have money/home/hope/dignity, and those who do not. The Salvation Army seems always to be saying – from William Booth down to present-day PR reps: “There’s this gap, and we’ll be the go-between. There aren’t just two relative categories (us and them) but three: you and the poor and us in middle.” Throughout its history, there is a striking continuity in the Army’s resolve to get close to the other – seemingly whoever no one else will bother with. And they’ve made a name (what’s more, a brand) for themselves in precisely this way, situating themselves next to something that doesn’t quite fit.

In her widely cited work, *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas eventually incorporates William James’ notion of a “composting religion” into her analysis of ritual dirt.¹³⁴ She notes the creativity and potency of that which is rejected, ambiguous or otherwise unclean – an idea not out of sync with the theory of liminality which animates so much of this dissertation, where the in-between is also a place of experimentation, mocking, and upside-down order.¹³⁵ For her part, Douglas is curious about how risk and danger and boundary crossing and dirt become an important part of religious ritual, and the ways in which whatever is “unwanted” and “recognisably out of place” is not cast aside, as we might expect, but is instead used, “ploughed back for the renewal of life”—the same way vegetable peelings, food scraps, organic waste of all kinds, when mixed together with water and warmth, becomes fecund again, rich soil in which to grow something new.¹³⁶ It occurs to me that the version of Christianity we find in The Salvation Army – as much as among those “making friends on the streets” more generally – may indeed be something of a composting religion. In making a recurrent ritual of “netting the very sewers” or befriending the poor – of crossing a boundary toward the other – what Booth went so far as to call the “human sludge” – these Christians are not only allured by a provocative out-of-placeness, but are, as per Douglas, harnessing the power of that paradox, affirming it as something necessary and good. And if that is the case then they require its consistent supply. In order to define yourself always in relation to the barrier you breach, that limit or boundary or Otherness must always remain intact.

¹³³ On advertising and The Salvation Army, see also Beth Breeze and Jon Dean, “Pictures of Me: User Views on Their Representation in Homelessness Fundraising Appeals,” *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 17, no. 2 (2012): 132–43.

¹³⁴ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Psychology Press, 2002), p.200–204. See also William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (London: Longman, 1952), p.161.

¹³⁵ Victor Witter Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Penguin Books Limited, 1974).

¹³⁶ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p.207. In many ways, Douglas’ theory of dirt shares an intellectual genealogy with the Turners’ liminality: they both interested in the symbiotic relationship between structure and anti-structure, order and chaos, and rituals used to move between or sustain the two.

Part III
Subjunctivity

more than shelter

or,

“we give a shit”

(eluding classification)

My first worker interview takes place at the George Street Diner, across the street from the Gateway, at 8 in the morning. Lou is coming off a stretch of overnights – five in a row, instead of the usual three or four. He has been working sporadically lately: some really long weeks, other short weeks, in order to have time off with his wife to celebrate a significant anniversary, and in order to work on some of the irons he has in the fire for the future.

Lou is nervous about speaking to me, on the record; it has taken time for him to warm to the idea. When we first met, on the nightshift, many months before now, he had made no secret of disliking me; had told me straight off that he was skeptical of “reporters,” that people he knows have been written about in newspapers and it has rarely come off well and once quite poorly. The differences between an ethnographer and a reporter mattered little to Lou: I was there to watch and take notes and tell a story and he intended to give me as little as possible to go on. But a summer-long stint of his shift having to work short – just two workers instead of three – has changed our relationship considerably. Over three months, the Frontline Supervisor hasn't managed to hire a full-time worker on Lou's shift. Since the guy they hired quit just four days in, there has been a heavy rotation of relief workers, some of whom know well what they're doing, some who don't. There has also been a fistful of nights when no relief worker has been secured at all – overnights are hard to cover. Lou and his partner Evan have had to spread themselves thin. Having me hanging around on his shift has meant just a little extra help. It has not quite meant that they could take their proper breaks, catch a solid nap since I cannot do all of the jobs they are meant to do: checking beds and making rounds in the dorms, doing intakes and official paperwork, quelling fights and imposing restrictions. But I can clean the Drop In, answer the phone, field a few of the questions, fill in the blue meal cards and, when push comes to absolute shove, sit at the front desk alone while they're upstairs or outside solving some problem or other. All in all, Lou seems to have appreciated it. And when, in the middle of some endless night, he found he could talk to me about one of his favourite topics – the spectacle of American evangelicalism – we became, dare I say, friends. So now, near the end of this long summer, he agrees to talk to me for a few minutes over coffee (but not breakfast) before going home to sleep.

The interview itself is rather quick, under an hour – we're both nervous. This being my first interview, I fuss over the recording device from time to time, trying to make sure that it's always doing its job. To make matters worse, not long into our conversation, some of the Gateway's second-floor workers come into the diner to eat breakfast, too. After stopping to give Lou some interview tips (“If it's Multiple

Choice, always pick 'C' (one wryly advises) they sit at the opposite end of the long narrow restaurant. Even though there are a number of noisy people in between us and them, the space and our time together feels now a little more constricted. Lou is sitting with his back to his colleagues, so we resolve that I'll warn him if they finish before we do and come back this way: I'll knock on the table, but subtly somehow, he insists. I assure him I'll try.

“So, we're on the air?” he says, getting down to business. And I begin by asking him how he came to work at the Gateway.

“Well, good question, first of all.”

“Thanks” It bodes well for me that he approves.

“It *all* goes back to my childhood.” He begins, knowing instinctively the comic value in beginning this way, in leaning back in his seat, letting his gaze wander upward, as if remembering something fuzzy and so long ago and settling in to a good story. But in the midst of his feigning nostalgia he reconsiders it: it's not just a joke. “Well, in a way it kind of does!” he corrects himself.

The waitress breaks in to ask us again if we intend to order breakfast, but Lou sticks with coffee, and without skipping a beat, goes back to his story.

“I always just found the street community really interesting...and was always involved, in one way or another, with it. Well, since the first time with the Youth Group [at my church] we did a Christmas dinner service at a drop-in [in my hometown]. And then, from there, I started volunteering at the same drop-in on and off throughout high school and then after high school. And so I just sat in the drop-in, or did food, or did bagging up or whatever.

“When I moved to Toronto, the first few years, I didn't do anything [like that], but then when I moved to St. Jamestown, I hooked in with 614.”

614 is a smaller branch/brand within The Salvation Army of mainly inner city church plants. The number references the Old Testament verse Isaiah 61:4, which talks about the renewal and restoration of desecrated places. Salvationists belonging to the 614 subgroup/network conceive of themselves as returning to The Salvation Army's roots in the toughest, most neglected parts of a city. The 614 project was begun in Regent Park in 2000 – a neighbourhood which had one of the Army's first outposts in Toronto but was later abandoned as it became one of the city's dicier and more notorious social housing projects. The 614 brand heralds the return of the Army to places they see as overlooked and left out. St. Jamestown, just north of Regent Park in Toronto, is another one of those places. Lou goes on:

“Then through them, we started a thing called the West Park Project...we kind of unofficially adopted the park, it's called St. Jamestown West Park, which is the only official park in St. Jamestown. When I moved there, it was pretty overrun with, like, litter and drug use and crime. And so, every Saturday afternoon, we would go out and clean it all up and, you know, if there were users there, we would give them water and socks and sandwiches and stuff. Also once a week we would go out and just wander around the neighbourhood with bags of water and socks and food and like, go under the bridges and down into the valley and stuff like that and just try to...give out necessities, to try and create a connection with people. And I don't think we were *successful* [He says 'successful' as if in air quotes, as if it's the natural next question in response to his story] in doing that, because, when you're approaching people who are out on the street and they have crack pipes out, they don't want to talk! But, uh, that's actually how I met [Rob – now a long time Gateway resident], doing that. Yeah, I got to know him doing that.

“Oh yeah? You knew him when he was really messed up?” I ask. And we both laugh a little over our shared sense of how much worse off Rob used to be, before coming to live a somewhat calmer, cleaner, but still ultimately confused existence at the Gateway.

“Yeah. Yeah. I had a long conversation with him. There's a walking bridge running from St. Jamestown to Rosedale. And I had a long conversation with him on the steps of that bridge, years ago. About...I don't even remember what...

“Neither does he,” I figure. And Lou agrees:

“True. So anyway, we were doing that for two and half years. And also, at that point, was when I was living off [some money that I won] so I was basically doing nothing except that. That was a time of seriously heavy drinking, heavy pill usage, things like that. I wasn't doing anything much. But, my buddy [Carson] who I met up there [in St. Jamestown], he worked relief at the Gateway. And then he moved [away] and told me that he was leaving and that this spot would be open. So I dropped off my resume and then like 6 months later, I got a call for an interview. It couldn't have come at a better time.

“Would you say that the Gateway has changed you, at all?”

“Oh yeah. Oh yeah...”He says with an air of inevitability, nodding his head up and down slowly with each “Oh yeah.”

“And how so?”

“Well, uh, in a lot of ways. It's made me take things for granted a lot less...When you grow up in the suburbs, there's a tendency to not realize how much you have. Because everybody has everything, or more! Just the fact that I have an apartment, or a wife, or that I have a family: Those things that I didn't

really think of as anything, became really important. You know, not that I was treating my wife badly or anything like that, but you recognize things more. It's, um, it made me realize that the amount of pills and alcohol I was consuming was probably a *really* bad thing, and that I needed to stop. It, uh, I don't know...

"Does it make you angrier or anything?" I asked him, maybe fishing for a particular answer I can now no longer recall.

"No, no," he answered thoughtfully. "It's calmed me down. It's good. You know, I've never had a full time job that I've actually gone to everyday. I worked at a factory, a couple factories in [my hometown] but I was like, you know, if I didn't feel like it, I just wouldn't go. But this place has given me a sense of purpose... I *have* to be there. There are people there who I know depend on me to be there, you know? And it's like the first thing that I've actually given a shit about enough to show up and actually try and put an effort in, and try to improve. You know, if I'm weak in a certain area, I try to improve. Yeah, you know, it's been a really good experience.

I fumble a bit over this next question, never sure throughout my interviews exactly how to pose it, but especially here in the first one. But I hope that the essence of the question, as it's understood by Lou, has something to do with "friendship." "Would you say that you've made friends with residents, with particular guys? And how did that come about?"

"I would say that I have made friends." He says, reassuring me that I'm onto to something. "And as to how, I would say that it's mostly up to them, how open they want to be. Because, for the most part – you know, I can't say *everybody* because it wouldn't be honest – but I try to treat everybody the same, at first, just open, talking, trying to...making conversation and small talk. And, um, then somebody like [J.R or Peter], you know, like it's just talking and in a way, it's like a friendship out of necessity, for them, I think and probably for us, too, because it's the guys who stay up after bed check and talk. Those are the ones you become friends with.... It's just shooting the shit and talking and then trying to have some laughs and telling stories...and in a way it's like any other friend. The way it's different though is that I still have to, at times, if it's necessary, be an authority figure. So that's kind of the hard line about it, is that like, I could never...one of my friends outside of Gateway, I'm never gonna say Hey, you need to stop doing this! Well, it's not like I'm *never* gonna say that to them, but I can't kick my friends out of something..."

Agreeing with him. And trying to help him out of the corner he's talked himself into, I try to sum it up: "there are no rules to enforce with your friends."

"No, no!" He says, glad that his point stands. "So I think in that way, because of that, until someone moves out, it's impossible to be as comfortable and as casual as I would be with my friends. Because...I

can't...if I was to get that close with somebody, it would be impossible to enforce rules, because I would feel too bad. There are some people, [like so-and-so] I've let it slide *so* many times, him being late off the floors. Just because I couldn't bring myself to restrict him, and give him three BNU's (Bed Not Used) for being late off the floors. Which isn't good, but you know, it's just the reality of it. But yeah, you have to try and make things a certain distance, emotionally, anyway..."

Switching gears, I ask another question, just for the record: "Do you call yourself a Christian?"

And Lou shakes his head, laughs, and simultaneously tells me "no." I laugh too, because I already know the answer: we've talked about this before.

"But was there a time when you did?" I ask, again fairly certain of the answer, but wanting to make sure this time that I've captured it, in his own words.

"Yeah, for most of my life, I did. But I should clarify that...It's not that I'm...well...it's complicated. If there were a Facebook status for it, it would be "It's complicated."

And we both laugh at this: how Facebook has given us both an outlet and a language for letting ourselves off the hook when big things get tricky.

"I was asked about this in another interview one time, I don't know if I told you about it, but it was for The Herald, which is a Mennonite Brethren newsletter, and they were asking me about the work we were doing in St. Jamestown and they asked me 'Do you call yourself a Christian?' and I said 'no.' And they said, 'why?' and I said, 'Because I don't want my name to be associated with Christianity, because to me that's not a positive word. It's not a word that has positive connotations to me. At least it hasn't in my life, and so, I don't...If you were to ask me if I am a follower of Christ? Then yes. Christian? No. To me they've become...they've split. You know?' So, that basically killed that interview after that..."

In case he's still looking to get out of here, I tell him that this interview, on the other hand, is going to continue, just the same; I'm unfazed.

He goes on: "But that's, you know...if being a Christian is defined by, as some people have put it to me, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" ...I don't know...I should have faith, I suppose, but I guess...In my heart, I do; in my mind, I don't. But, all of his teachings and the things that he said, and the way that he lived his life, yeah, I'm a follower of that. You know? Why wouldn't I be? It makes perfect sense to me...it seems like a good way to live. But to me, Christianity has become Joel-Osteen-fucking-megachurches down in the US, and greed, and spreading negativity, and spreading judgment of others, and yeah, I could go on and on, you know?"

I do indeed know that he could go on and on. And I have never minded. But this time I opt instead to ask him about his “ideal church.” This is by no means a standard question of mine, but I've heard Lou wax hypothetical on this subject before and I want to be sure I'm getting it right.

“My ideal church would be a small group of people that sit around, chairs in a circle or a semicircle, with a 24 of beer in the middle, and you know, No Worship!” He says this with an emphasis that seems to warrant capitalization here. When I laugh a little in agreement, he repeats it, slicing the air with his hand to draw a firm line under this idea.

"No worship, right off the top. And you have a topic, or a passage, you know, and you read it, or do whatever. You open it by saying 'This is the topic' and then you just talk about it, and you keep going until the beer is gone. That's the idea. And the idea is that people there can accept that nobody has the answers but we all want to find them together. There's no pastor, there's no great authority. There's just people who are searching for the answers behind it all, what it all means. And being comfortable – not to get drunk while they're doing it! And the only offering needed would be enough to buy beer for next week. That would be my ideal church. You know? How great would that be? I'm thinking about starting a Facebook group..."

I'm in, I tell him. Why not?

But the Gateway is, by virtue of its association with the Salvation Army, ostensibly anyway, a Christian kind of place, I counter back, trying to return us to our earlier question about whether or not he is a Christian: I want to know how Lou feels about getting lumped in with Christians by working there.

“I think the Gateway is good. I've always been comfortable there. Because, you know, there's never been an expectation to push anything on anybody. We're there to provide a service. For me, first and foremost: bed, food. And to me, the Christian aspect? There's no Bible thumping, there's no quoting bible verses at people when, you know, they're looking for help. It's just like...to me, what the *real* Christian ideals are is forming relationships, being there for people, just trying to be a buddy when somebody needs one. I mean, that's what the Gateway is to me, and that's why people come back. Neil's vision...his vision for having no-glass, and having people be in the Drop-In, I think that's really good, you know... It *does* have a community feel, you do get to know people really well, and that to me, that's the point of it all. Isn't there this legendary story of William Booth sending out a telegram to everyone in the world and the only word was 'Others'?

I confirm this; that this is a story that floats around in the Army's collective memory. I ask him what else he knows about The Salvation Army, if he feels the presence of The Salvation Army at the Gateway.

“I don't have any sense of The Salvation Army,” Lou says flatly; then laughingly: “aside for their stupid brass bands and their geeky uniforms! I've only been to a couple Salvation Army services...I don't know.”

“The Gateway doesn't feel like the Salvation Army, does it?” I ask him, and he seems to boil it down to just one thing:

“Well, the Salvation Army seems too formal. The Gateway is completely informal...I like that...I wouldn't want it to be different.”

I ask Lou if he shares this idea I hear a lot about, this sense that the Gateway is special or different from other shelters. And he's quick with his reply.

“Well, if I'm going just from what the guys tell me, then yeah. They might be blowing smoke up my ass just to try and get a free bagel or something like that, but well, you know, a lot of people say that. I've never been to any other shelters in the city, but just from what I've heard...at least around this area. I hear Good Shepherd's pretty good, but they kick you out during the day.¹ And obviously Seaton and Maxwell have their reputations.² But people seem to enjoy it [here], they come back and you know, they always...if it's a new guy, some guy will tell him: 'You know, this is the best one in the city.' So, that's what I hear.”

“And what do you think makes it better?”

“I think, well...I think that we...” he pauses to think. “Part of it is the dialogue that residents can have with us. They can feel comfortable around us. They feel like we give a shit. That's a big one. A big complaint about Seaton is that they just sit behind the glass, even if there's a fight, and they don't come out. They'll just call the cops. But we're out from behind the desk at all times. So, you know, they feel like we care. And I think also, a big part of it is that we take more of an active effort in trying to keep the place free of drugs and alcohol and violence, that we're a bit harder on that type of offence. You know, so when people are wanting to get out of that life for a while, they...they like coming to us. Obviously, we're not perfect, there's always going to be that kind of a thing. But I think there's less because we do rounds, we're in the Drop-In, we're in the smoking pit, we're out front, and if we see anybody doing that, they're gone. I think people feel like they can be a bit safer here.

¹An award winning, innovative, and multifaceted shelter program run by a Catholic Brotherhood on Queen St. East in Toronto (among other locations in Canada and the U.S.). They hand out lunches in the middle of the day, but do not host an all-day drop-in. Their curfew is at 5:30 – an attempt to keep people clean and safe and inside, but also a tall order for adherence.

² Seaton House and the Maxwell Meighen Centre are, by comparison with the Gateway, big and more loosely run. They are known for being dangerous, to differing degrees. Since the time of this interview, Seaton House is in the process of being dismantled, broken up into smaller housing projects and services. Meanwhile, the Gateway is in the process of being amalgamated with Maxwell Meighen and the other 3 Salvation Army shelters in Toronto (2 of them for women). They are not closing or moving sites, but being brought under one shared administrative structure.

“What do you think the Gateway does not so well?”

Lou's first answer is quick and deadpan: “Firing people who are incompetent.” I've found that's a common complaint among the better workers – that there's little recourse or evaluation of the people who don't seem to be holding up their end. But then, almost back-peddling he adds: “I don't know, it's uh, it's.... he pauses a while. “That's a tough one. Because, the Gateway is still relatively young; it's only been around, what, twelve years? And it seems like it's a work in progress at all times.”

Lou and I keep talking for a while about some of his frustrations – some of which are unique to him, shaped in part by his relationships with certain residents and their particular problems while others are shared by some of his co-workers too. We wave down the waitress for more coffee and talk for a while about a particularly sad situation: a sweet-tempered, long-time resident who had recently been beaten up so badly that he would later die of his injuries. We go on to talk about how Lou copes with hard stuff like this before coming finally to my final scripted question: do you think there's a solution to homelessness?

“No. Never. It will always exist. It's like...you would have to just start locking people up. Well, it's like....I think there are solutions to, you know...for different reasons why people end up on the streets, there are ways to eliminate certain things. Like, I think that, the mentally ill people who are in the Gateway could very easily not have to live there. Guys like _____.” He names more names here, but suffice it to say that these are men diagnosed with severe mental illnesses, one with an aggressive dementia, the signs of which initially took a while to become recognizable in the shelter context (he didn't so often bathe or change his clothes, but he was always well-fed and generally going with the flow) but now that we've noticed, his symptoms seem only to advance in a hurry.

“It's just a fucking joke!” he summarizes the steady presence of men like these at the Gateway. “It really makes me lower my opinion of this city, and this province, that so much money was cut from health programs and in-patient programs and halfway houses that guys like [those] have to live on the fucking street! And then what happens? [This one resident in particular] gets his money from his trustee; people started taking advantage of him; people start getting him hooked on drugs; and now we haven't seen him for weeks. Nobody knows where he is. He could be dead for all we know. And it's happened before! That could be eliminated. That just takes people getting their heads out of their fucking ass. Putting money where it should be spent. But as far as things like addiction? Never. Never. Nope. Because, like, what could you do? People are always gonna want to get fucked up. Always. As long as there's something to fuck them up, they're gonna wanna do it, right? That's just the way people are. You know, you'd have to like kill everybody who even, you know, has pot in their pockets!”

He laughs a little at the extremity of his own point, but he's also getting visibly more animated for a guy who's been up all night. All of the (im)possibilities seem to be swirling around in his head:

“And you'd have to be able to put an end to all childhood abuse; all sexual abuse. To everything! Everything these guys have ever gone through, there's no way you could ever stop it; all the stuff that damages people, and makes them end up where they are. You know? It'll always exist. Even back in Jesus' time, right? He was hanging out with the invalids and lepers, they were the homeless of that time, I suppose. Prostitutes and whatever...”

So are you like Jesus? I ask him, just checking.

“Ha! No.” He laughs some more. “No, far from it...,” humility returning to take the place of what was, only a moment ago, Lou's expletive-laced indignation.

I thank him so much for agreeing to talk to me and I assure him, in spite of his worries, that it has been very helpful. I turn off the recorder but we sit and talk a bit more about the latest thing that has enraged him on CNN's Belief Blog. When his rant is over, I pay the meager bill. We wave goodbye to the second-floor staffers, still finishing up their food at the other end of the diner and we go for the door. Outside, Lou lights up a cheap cigarette and heads for home.

* * * * *

For three days each September, the Gateway's full-time workers “retreat” from the shelter and the city to a lodge an hour north where they ritually re-articulate their felt sense of uniqueness.³ One year, a moderator (and friend of the director's) was invited from another downtown Toronto Christian ministry to facilitate a conversation among them, expressly to talk about what makes the Gateway special.

“If I had a guy at [my church] who needed a bed,” he began, to get things going, “I'd send him to the Gateway before anywhere else. Why do you think I'd do that?”

“Because we've got heart,” came the first swift response from the kindly George.

“They all come to see you,” Shawn quipped back, “because you've got the best beard!” But after laughing at his own joke while tugging lightly on George's beard, he sobered: “It's because of Neil's 5 rules: Relationships, Relationships, Relationships, Relationships, Relationships.”

Various versions of that idea then began to pop up around the room:

“We actually engage with people.”

³ I want to be clear here that “ritually rearticulate” infers a *necessary repetition* rather than a redundancy in the construction and maintenance of a collective identity. To call it a ‘ritual’ is not to diminish it; neither when I call it a “*felt sense of uniqueness*” (emphasis added). To say that they not only sense it, but feel it, is not to hint at a delusion (something that is ‘felt’ but not ‘real’) but instead to add emphasis. This idea that the Gateway is special exists in various registers: the discursive, the emotional, the ritual, etc.

“There's give and take.”

“We don't give ultimatums.”

“We have a willingness to get burned.”

“We have fun together.”

“We don't kick guys out in the morning. We let them stay all day.”

“Two words:” Erin said matter-of-factly, “Dignity and Respect.” We treat people the way we expect to be treated. We're not afraid of the residents. We're building trust.”

Speaking very much from his own experience, Eddy added: “Guys who aren't ready to be drug-free still know there's a place they can go where they can get help when they're ready. They know we'll still be there for them.”

Then Trevor: “Guys know that the Gateway actually helps you. We don't just send you back on the street.”

This triggered another idea from George: “Guys tell me they like it at the Gateway because 'you call me by name. I'm not just a bed number. You know who I am.'” He added sheepishly, with a little laugh: “well, sometimes I do use a bed number, but only if I can't pronounce a guy's name!”

Someone else: “Other places just don't feel as welcoming. We're different because guys know they're always welcome. Even with restrictions, they know that they never *can't* come back.”

Shawn chimed in again, his claims (not unlike the rest) growing ever more grand as momentum picked up around the room: “Guys know that the Gateway is the place to go when you're ready to change, when you want to get your shit together. Not just a place to stay. It's not that we have the best case managers, but all the other staff too. It's not just Case Management, you're going to deal with everyone. We're all in this together. We're your family and we're going to help you!”

Then, Cameron: “I don't do this for the paycheque. No one's in it for the paycheque. Everyone loves. There's a lot of love in this room. I know that each one of these people really cares. We work 12-hour shifts. So we're there when guys go to bed and when they wake up. Other shelters just do 8 hours. Or they're there for the paycheque.” A little tentatively, he went on: “I don't want to sound like a kiss-ass, but the difference about the Gateway is Neil. If Neil left and went somewhere else, that would become a good place too. It's Neil's vision – that's why we're different. He's the spark that ignited this wild fire and keeps it burning.”

But Wes, ever a voice of reason, wanted to temper that a little, or at least to spread it around: “I agree that Neil is what makes us different, but by now that's instilled in all of us. If Neil dropped dead or left the Gateway it would still be same place because we've all been brought into this vision. It's a culture. People who have worked here have gone other places and changed those places too!”

Words came faster now than I could write them down in full sentences or assign them to a speaker:

“There's union between staff and the gentlemen.”⁴

“A coming together.”

“A feeling of home.”

“Cohesion.”

“Genuine compassion”

“We take the time to care. And that's radically different than anything I've seen before.”

I sat there thinking: would that *all* of this could be true. I found myself wishing it, too.

The next September, they came back and repeated a number of the same things, again. This time, Neil started the conversation himself, reading an excerpt from the New Testament text, 2 Timothy 4. The Pauline letter itself is full of pastoral instructions to Timothy, leader of the church in Ephesus, but scholars also suspect that it is something of a last will and testament from “Paul” who awaits trial in prison and does not expect things to go well.⁵ Neil jumps right to the climax of the letter where Paul most explicitly anticipates his death and looks back on his life: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”⁶

“It's not about winning, it's about racing” Neil told them responding to the fragment. “It's not about goals, achievements, successes; it's about living well. It's not about statistics and numbers; it's about being obedient.”

The rest of the Timothy passage – which talks a fair bit about energetic evangelism, sound indoctrination and careful instruction – was largely irrelevant to the Gateway's regular retreat ritual of reviewing their strengths. By removing the focus on ends and the pressure to meet goals, it seemed

⁴ This comment is slightly ironic in that the Gateway (quite adamantly) does not have an actual organized workers' union. For more about this see Part V.

⁵ Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings: A Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 253.

⁶ 2 Timothy 4:7. In the Salvation Army, traditionally, the NIV is read. In a setting like this, *The Message*, a popular paraphrase might also be employed for its everyday accessibility. In the case of this verse, the translation is the same as the (more scholastically trusted) NRSV.

Neil wanted the group to live in the suspended supposition of “running,” “obedience” and “living well” – regardless of the outcomes.

“What is the race we’re running?” Neil asked the group, a variation on the question from last year’s retreat and another way of rehearsing what the Gateway does well. But he also added a second: “And what are we dreaming about?” he wondered aloud.

I was appointed note-taker and came home with the following list on two large pieces of chart paper and the task of typing them up and returning them to Neil:

What is the race?

- be a light in a dark city. To draw people to light
- be a safe community
- friendship offered – giving them hope
- to come alongside
- provide the basics: food, shelter
- be a listening ear
- give opportunities
- be servants
- to encourage and empower
- help people jump through hoops; be a conduit through the system
- be a bridge
- advocacy: a voice for the unheard; a voice to other services (especially in the Salvation Army about the Gateway's model, how it's different
- offering an alternative to other services in the city (i.e. No glass, staff in the drop-in, engaged)
- to be accessible and approachable: sharing space, spending time
- to earn the respect of residents.
- provide a safe place, “our place”
- to be lovers; Christ in us, wooing others to Christ.
- to be who we are; with honesty and integrity
- this is where we live out our personal vision and calling
- this is where we share in the love of Christ: giving and receiving love
- they don't have their shit together; we don't have our shit together, we don't have answers, we're just journeying together.
- restoring dignity, protecting dignity, preserving dignity – because people deserve a job well done.
- empathic listening – we listen to understand, not to judge.
- to be concerned with the good of the whole
- to love the most difficult to love, everyone from pimps to CEOs. We're willing to walk alongside those everyone else has turned their back on. This is a good thing for society in general and for future generations.
- to show another side to living
- to say 'yes' when people most often hear 'no' – to be different
- explaining why things are the way they are – clear communication, treating people as adults.

- to see a person achieve goals, be successful, contribute.
- to present possibilities, options
- focus on homes, jobs, friendship
- helping people get their lives back

On two other pieces of chart paper were listed the group's dreams for the shelter – the things they wished they could do for residents. There were twenty-six items on the list, among them: a medical dispensary, healthier meals, better organization of men into casual labour services, recognizing residents' birthdays; more staff training, stronger alliances with other social service organizations; the list went on and on. In the months and years that followed, little, if anything, seemed to come of those hopes. Perhaps the list was seen as amounting to the shelter's shortcomings and management seemed to have little interest in such things. “Better communication” between upstairs workers and down is a perennial dream/complaint. As is the Gateway staff's desire to feel like they follow-up and support people after they move out of the Gateway. Both of those were listed that day; over the course of my time there, they kept coming up in meetings and kept being under-resolved. This is not to say that nothing ever changed, only that the loop of self-congratulation was sometimes stronger than the will to improvement. To refer always to one's excellence can become a trap, precluding other kinds of self-assessment.

The next year, I didn't go on the retreat; I had finished up my fieldwork in the meantime. But I was told later how similar lists had been crafted once again, that year: what the Gateway was doing well; what they weren't doing so well. I heard that upon returning to Toronto, Neil told that year's keeper of the chart paper to throw away the latter list. Dwelling ever on the good in a precarious situation is maybe one of the best ways to survive it.

friendship: acting-as if

(hypothesis, supposition)

At the Gateway, and in the liminal more generally, there is a hovering subjunctive mood – itself a kind of being *in-between*, a living into the not yet. The subjunctive mood (sometimes 'mode') is not as pronounced or obvious in English as it is in other languages. Native English speakers are more likely to encounter the subjunctive for the first time only when learning to acquire a second language, like French, where subjunctive sentence structure has certain recognizable cues (the conjunction *que*, for example. *Il faut que...; J'espère que...*) In English, the subjunctive can look deceptively the same as the indicative or be cast aside in favour of a more casual expression. “It is essential that everybody should have a home” for instance, easily slips into “Everybody needs a home” in everyday usage. The subjunctive tone of this statement, however, holds its place – especially in a statement like this one where the prospect of everyone having a home is somewhat difficult or uncertain. The subjunctive is necessary wherever we need some wiggle room – for uncertainty, possibility, anticipation, for the hypothetical, the doubtful, the contingent, the desired, the otherwise, the incomplete.⁷ The subjunctive communicates hope, or intention, or even the way things ought to be – just as often as it is also used to express the impossible, the unlikely, the lost or otherwise undone. Even in these latter cases, the subjunctive *provokes* by referring not exactly to a readily obvious present state of affairs but to a kind of *should* or *would* or *wouldn't it be nice*. There's a rhetorical gap in the subjunctive: it lacks some solid referent in the real. And while it needs the indicative in order to make sense, it distances itself from the indicative – since identity is never so certain or stable – and instead tries to speak into being another reality, another imaginary, by the very act of its enunciation. It makes fuzzy the line between cause and

⁷ This reflection on the subjunctive draws heavily from Patrick Sheil, *Kierkegaard and Lévinas: The Subjunctive Mood* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2010); Susan Talburt, “After-Queer: Subjunctive Pedagogies,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 23, no. 1 (2010). Patrick Sheil has written a thought-provoking (if convoluted and haphazard) book about the subjunctive mood in the work of Søren Kierkegaard and Emmanuel Lévinas. He surveys a number of their interests and ideas, showing the similarities and differences between them, with specific reference to their mutual concern with the radical, what could be but isn't quite yet. The book is provocative more than anything else – in dwelling so long on a mostly overlooked aspect of English language, it presses the reader into thinking/looking through lenses they might otherwise have missed. But, as reviewers attest, this is by no means the most complete or careful work on the Kierkegaard-Lévinas conversation/comparison. I found Sheil's thoughts on Lévinas particularly engaging simply because I was already thinking with Lévinas about no-glass and was already trying to grapple with the subjunctive mood/mode at the Gateway. Sheil has obsessed over the subjunctive even more than I have and has helped me stretch my understanding of it, even some more. Sheil's analysis, while flawed in many ways (disorganized and very poorly edited), is fruitful. I follow him in turning a linguistic mood into a lived/livable one. Susan Talburt's essay on the possibilities for a “subjunctive methodology” was similarly provocative, albeit somewhat more narrow in its approach to subjunctivity than Sheil's: it seems to amount primarily to an openness – a posture I am especially interested in the next section as it relates to immaturity but relative to subjunctivity, I find fairly empty and toothless. While Talburt operationalizes the subjunctive, turning it into a way of academic seeing/knowing that “gestures toward possibility and an otherwise” instead of locking itself into things it can know singularly or for certain, her use of the subjunctive lacks the edginess and depth of Sheil's treatment. Talburt's primary concern is with something she calls “after-queering,” that which dislocates binaries and “sidesteps identity” and creates alternatives. I find this particularly interesting in light of what I treat later (in Part IV) in the work of Foucault. In the 1980s, Foucault was similarly interested in eschewing the process of “coming out” and locking things down, in the interest of instead opening things up to new and yet-untried possibilities. As such, subjunctivity and immaturity, as I see them, are intricately intertwined. The subjunctivity I set up here has its further fruition in the experimentation and friendship-practices of the next section. See Michel Foucault, “Friendship as a Way of Life,” in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert J. Hurley (New York: New Press, 1998).

effect, the line between what *is* and what *isn't*, and it forgoes strictly declarative forms of language and posits instead a host of alternatives and detours and complications. It speaks, acts, pretends *as if*.

This last sentence gives me away: I've certainly made a lot out of something I've already said is rather minor in modern English and then finally turned it into something else altogether, well beyond grammar. Indeed, I want to wrest the subjunctive from the linguistic domain it usually occupies and understand it more theoretically, as well. I want to understand the subjunctive as a *mood* or *mode* more broadly (these two terms are used interchangeably in linguistics but the comparative excess between the two is useful for us here – it pushes the subjunctive beyond simply the way people put together words and sentences and ideas, their utterances, and nudges us toward the subjunctive as *a way of being* too). I'm interested here in the way the subjunctive mood with “its cloudiness and its suggestions of psychosomatic contingency” has come to be a kind of livable space for the workers at the Gateway.⁸ They are living in this world of hopes, hypotheses and impossibilities; a world slightly askew but very much worth talking about.

Lou, who we met at the outset of this section, is a *particular* Gateway worker. While I was at the Gateway, he worked relief and then nights, he worked frontline, and by now doesn't work there anymore. He has his own story, his own gripes, his own idiosyncratic ways of occupying his job. He cannot be folded generically in with everyone else – none of them can. But, by recounting my interview with Lou, almost word for word, I do mean for him to stand in for Gateway workers more generally, in a few specific ways: our exchange was the closest I can come to typical. It lasted about the average length of time and consisted mostly of my basic, pre-scripted questions. It drew on some of our now shared knowledge and experiences at the Gateway, in such a way that may have avoided some common concerns about performance and disingenuousness in ethnographic contexts: by the time I interviewed the workers I had already spent considerable time around them, watching and working alongside them; lying to me was harder but by no means impossible or unheard of. By situating himself as not-Christian, and especially not-evangelical, as *a kind of friend* to the homeless men he knows, as well as by positioning the Gateway not only as better than other shelters in the city but also kind of nascent and messy, Lou toes a number of the Gateway's party lines. At the same time, he also seems to have made those repertoires his own. Everything from his swearing to his humility, his uncertainty to his frustration at the way-things-ought-to-be-but-aren't, Lou is fairly representative of the Gateway ethos more generally. He, like his coworkers, seems sure that the Gateway is *more* than merely shelter, and as such occupies a paradoxically hopeful and hopeless subjunctive space.

For men experiencing homelessness – by the workers' own casual inventory while on staff retreats – the Gateway is a place to be seen, known, understood, cared for, helped, welcomed, forgiven, loved,

⁸ Sheil, *Kierkegaard and Lévinas*, p.101.

listened to, encouraged, empowered, served, advocated for, treated with dignity, with potential, a place to be safe, to be taught, to be loved and befriended (among many other ways of putting it).

When Lou says, “We give a shit,” it seems to sum up the place rather succinctly. It's simultaneously a self-assessment and a critique of other shelters and social services that don't *give* much in the way of care and genuine attention to those without homes; those which offer barer services – *just* shelter. The use of the expletive tends to emphasize their frustration with others – as if *caring* is the better bottom-line, a basic affective stance, and that they, at the Gateway, shouldn't be the only ones offering it up. But the sentiment is also rather vague: what does it mean to “give a shit?” For all the dramatic ways in which Lou and other Gateway workers critique and rhetorically move away from other social-service-types whom they perceive as distant, withholding, or otherwise closed-off, the thing that they are doing instead – “giving a shit” – is more *subjunctive* than anything else: they are attempting to speak and act something into being, even though it's often unclear precisely *what*. The logic of the Gateway rests on a number of hopes and suppositions, especially those that (re)assert the Gateway's peculiar social-entanglements with the poor, regardless of whether those desires and intentions ever fully resolve themselves, become decisive or measurable in some tangible way. The measurement doesn't matter. The Gateway workers live somewhere in between what is and what could be, leaning more heavily on the possibilities than the so-called certainties. What happens at the Gateway (and the way the Gateway workers talk about what happens there) is more prospect than sure promise. It rests more confidently on the overarching intentions than the ordinaries, the everyday. It's an imaginative and ultimately productive leap.

Since the beginning of my fieldwork, the catchall term I've been using for the Gateway's ethos is *friendship*. And I admit that as a label, it exists somewhere in between what was already there and what I brought with me when I came to look at it. I remember Seth telling me mere weeks into my time there, that guys get what they need by way of certain workers they're closer to than others, that workers will defer to each other about what to do or say to particular residents, depending on who knows the guy best, depending on who has a relationship with him – especially if he's been around a while. I also remember Seth telling me that he was best man at a residents' wedding, and that on the night he got engaged himself, Seth came down to the Gateway and told some guys hanging out there that he was getting married even before he told members of his own family. The only word I had for things like this was *friendship* – and it seemed to be the best word they had for such things themselves. It had a way of popping up, if only in the absence of any more precise way of talking about the stuff which in many ways exceeds the basic provision of shelter.

As a way of characterizing what happens at the Gateway, “friendship” ranges from explicit reference to a Christian ethic of 'loving one's neighbour' to the equally vague (if cruder) “giving a shit,” and takes in all kinds of proximities and enmeshments between people who work at the Gateway and people who

live there. The term 'friendship' sits (un)easily with Gateway workers and with me: it's an accessible, almost innocuous way of talking about what happens there; it's equal parts loose and elastic while it simultaneously refrains from digging too deep or declaring itself too strongly. In begging comparison to a person's other relationships, the mantle of friendship comes with a ready (if subjective) index of postures and behaviours that both shape the workers' interaction with residents and helps to delineate its limits. Friendship has a way of being seductive and slippery, at the same time.

Take this exchange with Jordan as an example: he was telling me how, when he first started working at the Gateway he would grow so concerned about certain guys, get involved in their lives to such an extent that he would feel the urge to call in to the Gateway on his days off in order to check up on those guys and see how they were doing. But, he admitted, this didn't last long. He soon found that on his days off he had to take care of himself instead –

I realized that a lot of these people say that they want something but they're not willing to do it for themselves, just yet. I can't be the one to take that on for them. I'm not their brother, I'm not their father, I'm a guy that works at the Gateway.

Me: Are you their friend?

Yeah, I would consider I am. I would consider I am on a different level than being friends with [other] people. Because you know, I mean, I call my friends to say hey what's going on, you know, to see how they're doing. I don't mind taking that time. But when it comes to being friends with guys here, I don't invite them over; I don't ask to be invited over to their place [with an uncomfortable laugh at the irony of that idea]. It just seems like a bit of a conflict of interest...you know? But I do consider myself their friend at the same time. I think it's like being at that border between acquaintance and a friend. Because, you know, I care about these guys. And there are certain guys I do care about. Like, [Jim]. I do care about him. I probably consider him more a *friend* friend than an acquaintance friend, like the other guys here. Like, he's helped me out. He helped me move...we got pizza and shit like that. He's called me and I've called him. Just to shoot the shit. Not 'I need this and I need that.'

I imagine that Jordan wouldn't necessarily reduce the category of friendship to talking on the phone and inviting someone over to his house, nor would he necessarily discount any friendship where one person was *getting* something from someone else. But he flags those concerns here because these are some of the “friendly” things that aren't neat or tidy or easy in the context of the Gateway, or in any other shelter or social service centre, for that matter (much as the term “social” service seems to belie this). But calling their interactions with the homeless “friendship” is still one of the better ways to talk about what happens at the Gateway, both from the inside and at a critical distance – even if we (like the

workers themselves) have to stretch the notion of friendship or build extra corners, or “levels” into its definition; even if it’s just another kind of being in-between. I’ll argue here that friendship is all the more appropriate for talking about social relatedness at the Gateway when we consider the range of scholarly attention to friendship which suggests that it is a fairly *subjunctive* phenomenon to begin with: friendship often presents itself as a kind of a hopeful fiction – not false necessarily but still fancied.

* * * * *

In the introduction to their collected volume *The Anthropology of Friendship*, Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman take for themselves the task of dismantling what they call “the romantic ideal of western friendship.”⁹ Friendship, they argue, has been ubiquitously and uncritically characterized as voluntary, private, self-governing, and equally beneficial to at least two supposedly sovereign selves; friendship is tacitly assumed to be free from the structures, inequalities, obligations, and duties which hold in place other kinds of relationality like kinship and more formal commitments. Friendship in this vein is believed to be ruined by calculation. And so long as friendship is said to be the product of a kind of “spontaneous sentiment” or a unique affection between two people, it also tends to be most explicitly recognized and referenced among people of the same gender, age and class.¹⁰ The articles which Bell and Coleman have marshaled in order to undo these narrow, purist, culturally specific (Western and modern) ideas gesture instead at a much broader, more heterogeneous, more malleable, and ultimately more useful category. Building on the important oeuvre in the Bell and Coleman collection, Amit Desai and Evan Killick in a further volume, *The Ways of Friendship*, seek to pry open the definition of friendship even some more.¹¹ In order to apply the category of friendship cross-culturally, Desai and Killick argue, its scope must be wide and rather fluid, taking in various kinds of social relatedness – not just the ostensibly equal, informal, spontaneous, and individual relationships traditionally classed as friendship.

The subjunctivity of friendship (and academic analysis of friendship itself) haunts a number of the seventeen case studies that comprise these two volumes. Whether the ethnographer found him/herself in Iceland, Chile, China, or somewhere in between, both what they found and their way of understanding or describing it was often tentative, experimental, wishful, or fraught.¹²

⁹ Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman, eds., *The Anthropology of Friendship* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999).

¹⁰ James Carrier, “People Who Can Be Friends: Selves and Social Relationships,” in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, ed. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999), p.11.

¹¹ Amit Desai and Evan Killick, eds., *The Ways Of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013).

¹² On Iceland, see E. Paul Durrenberger and Gisli Palson, “The Importance of Friendship in the Absence of States, According to the Icelandic Sagas,” in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, ed. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999). On Chile, see Magnus Course, “Making Friends, Making Oneself: Friendship and the Mapiche Person,” in *The Ways Of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Amit Desai and Evan Killick (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), 154–73. On China, see Alan Smart, “Expressions of Interest: Friendship and Guanxi in Chinese Societies,” in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, ed. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999), 119–36.

By these scholars, friendship is variously described as “a way of thinking;” a “way of talking;” a “symbolic construction,” “a moral force,” and as “a learning phenomena” – one “that is never accomplished,” but instead “an on-going process.”¹³ Friendship is deemed “as much about potentiality as it is about being, as oriented to the future as it is to the past;” as having “inchoate, irregular and sometimes even secret dimensions;” and as “less often achieved than some might hope.”¹⁴ Friendship is shown to be “idolized,” “ritualized,” or “intentional...sometimes clearly opportunistic...initiated” rather than purely unconstrained and spontaneous.¹⁵ While some understood friendship as trying “to realize the values, aims and desires that individuals in a given society are striving for,” still others saw it as “ambiguous;” and “indeterminate, to say the least.”¹⁶ All of these fragments betray the underlying desire of/for friendship, the ways in which friendship is perpetually projected out into the world as this real and important thing while both its realness and its importance are simultaneously reinforced and troubled. On a very basic level, friendship (and, to some extent the study of friendship too) is an acting *as if*, in spite of friendship's difficulties and maybe even because of them. We tend to *want* friends (often more or better friends that we already have).

An article by Claudia Barcellos-Rezende in the Bell & Coleman edition puts this point especially well. Drawing on her fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro, she resolves that in a context perceived as “extremely hierarchical,” made up of strictly delimited segments and classes, “friendship” amounts almost to a euphemism – a way of masking, or smoothing over difference, a way of making things sound more equal and congenial than they are. She sees friendship in this context as a “rhetorical frame,” a strategic way of thinking about and *bringing about* a new social reality. The wish, the desire, and the language of friendship come first, she argues. What she calls “idioms of affinity and togetherness” tend to personalize, and ultimately to bridge and make up for the yawning gap between the rich and the poor. The language of friendship creates trust and mutual recognition in the face of inequality, asymmetry,

¹³ In order of appearance, see Carrier, “People Who Can Be Friends: Selves and Social Relationships,” p.34; Smart, “Expressions of Interest: Friendship and Guanxi in Chinese Societies,” p.120; Mario L. Aguilar, “Localized Kin and Globalized Friends: Religious Modernity and the ‘Educated Self’ in East Africa,” in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, ed. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999), p.179; Amit Desai and Evan Killick, “Introduction: Valuing Friendship,” in *The Ways Of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Amit Desai and Evan Killick (Oxford/New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), p.2; Gillian Evans, “The Value of Friendship: Subject/Object Transformations in the Economy of Becoming a Person (Bermondsey, Southeast London),” in *The Ways Of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Amit Desai and Evan Killick (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), p.182.

¹⁴ Desai and Killick, “Introduction: Valuing Friendship,” p. 11; Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman, “The Anthropology of Friendship: Enduring Theme and Future Possibilities,” in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, ed. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999), p.2; Ray Abrahams, “Friendships and Networks as Survival Strategies in North-East Europe,” in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, ed. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999), p.155.

¹⁵ Michelle Obeid, “Friendship, Kinship and Sociality in a Lebanese Town,” in *The Ways Of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Amit Desai and Evan Killick (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), p.94; Amit Desai, “A Matter of Affection: Ritual Friendship in Central India,” in *The Ways Of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Amit Desai and Evan Killick (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), 114–32; Durrenberger and Palson, “The Importance of Friendship in the Absence of States, According to the Icelandic Sagas,” p.67.

¹⁶ Deborah Reed-Danahay, “Friendship, Kinship and the Life Course in Rural Auvergne,” in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, ed. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999), p.141; Graeme Rodgers, “Friendship, Distance and Kinship-Talk Amongst Mozambican Refugees in South Africa,” in *The Ways Of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Amit Desai and Evan Killick (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), p.89; Nigel Rapport, “The ‘Bones’ of Friendship: Playing Dominoes with Arthur of an Evening in the Eagle Pub,” in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, ed. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999), p.115.

disparity. As such, it is not a descriptive or indicative idea but a subjunctive one. While Barcellos-Rezende's study draws points of contrast between the way her Brazilian interlocutors spoke about friendship and the way people talk about friendship in Britain where she lives now (friendship for her British interlocutors was most importantly a forum for "being themselves"), I would argue that her broader point about the potential of rhetorical forms of friendship are not so unique to Brazil. In Canada, in our houses of parliament and our courts of law, professional arguers also employ the language of friendship as a way of being polite, of pretending, as a way of hiding or avoiding hostility. Friendship is a euphemism in these settings too: a way of making something sound kinder, more intimate than it might otherwise be, or conversely, articulating that which is rather impossible and untrue. Friendship is, more often than the romantic ideology of friendship usually allows, a kind of wishful thinking or pretending; even a way of speaking into being something that is not so easily/obviously/necessarily there.

Ashley Lebner, also writing ethnographically about Brazil, and adding to the above conversation in the anthropology of friendship, has also examined the language of friendship as it's employed in the political sphere.¹⁷ She notes how friendship in her "settler frontier in Brazilian Amazonia," gets understood in simplistic terms: a friend is someone who helps. Conceived in this way, friendship can contain within it similarities and differences and hierarchies and problems, since *anyone* can help. "All friendships are messy," she notes, "and all friendships are disappointing." But none of friendship's frustrations have led her interlocutors to dispense with the term. However shallow the notion they are left with, they retain the language of friendship because it helps to blur the lines between the powerful and weak, between intimate and enemy, between haves and have-nots.

It seems we cannot close this section without referring, if only in passing, to Jacques Derrida's popular polemic on *The Politics of Friendship*. "There are no more friends," goes his vociferous argument. His thesis hinges on what others after him have called "that dark thought of anti-friendship at the very heart" of friendship itself, what Derrida himself calls the "irremediable" and "irreducible" desire for solitude, for "anti-community," in every human individual. There's a woeful cynicism in Derrida's assessment that I'm reluctant to fully entertain. But when Lebner re-employs his theory as it helps to background the paradox she finds in Brazil, she wrenches it open a little with a tiny word: her interlocutors are confronted with "a need and desire to seek support beyond the family and its *nigh* impossibility"(emphasis added).¹⁸ If friendship is impossible but as persistent as we've seen, then it's all the more subjunctive, performative and hypothetical: What if? Why not? Let's pretend.

In the latter two sections of Part III, I reflect on two of the more popular and potent of the Gateway's suppositional mantras, two of their more repetitive and animating subjunctive refrains.

¹⁷ Ashley B. Lebner, "A Christian Politics of Friendship on a Brazilian Frontier," *Ethnos* 77, no. 4 (2012): 496–517.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.497.

“no-glass”

(what might be/what might have been)

When, one-on-one, I asked each worker if they shared this sense that the Gateway is unique or special among other Toronto shelters, they almost invariably told me that they did. And when pressed to list some of the ways or reasons this is true, without exception they described a single architectural detail: there is “no glass” separating workers from the homeless when you walk in the front door.

Jeremy: We hear it all day, every day: 'this is the best place; I only go here. If I'm out of prison, I'm here. This is the best.' They'll say it to us, not just to get on the waiting list, but they'll say it to other people trying to get on the waiting list: like 'Yes, good job, you're here. It's a safe haven. It's nuts out there.' And I think the biggest thing is because they're so used to everywhere else being seen as second-class citizens where there's no trust; they're not people, they're a number and they're behind glass and they're behind bars, and in a separate room, caged, or, you know, even if it's not caged, there's a wall there that—there are you guys and then there's normal society. And again, I guess, just [Neil's] vision of this place takes out that wall, and I think that's why people are willing to...that takes a lot out of it, because it puts a little love and care into people and it gives a sense of community to people. And it gives a sense of, you know, I can talk to Jeff, not Lieutenant So-And-So,¹⁹ and not you know, the Worker Guy, but I can talk to Jeff, because I know Jeff, and Jeff likes the Yankees, and...Jeff knows me. There's that whole piece: I think it calms people down, it reduces the fighting and the craziness and the chaos and it gets people to even vent, or gets people even to have some acceptance, all based on relationship, all based on, there's no glass wall there. I think that's really the biggest thing Gateway has going for it. 'Cause, it's not really that Gateway does it because they're smaller, or Gateway does it because they're huger either, because they're in the middle, they're just a regular old shelter, but I think that's the bottom line. I think that's rooted in the idea that these people are people...

Ryan: And I walk up to Maxwell Meighen and I have to be buzzed in, and I have to go through this gate, and I go to the front where there's these guys covered with glass.²⁰ [*He's telling his story with this slowness, like this is the same old story, you've heard before; like you know where this is going; like of course this is how it is.*] And that's the environment I saw when I went in. A lot of people tell you, and I know it becomes sort of cliché, but when you walk in here, we don't have glass separating our guys from us, making

¹⁹ This is a critical reference to other Salvation Army shelters, which, according to common (although unquestioned) understanding among Gateway staff, are more likely to be staffed by Salvation Army officers rather than “regular people” whom they think residents can relate to more easily. Leadership at the Gateway is proud of the fact that there are no officers on staff. Although at the time of this study, officers were directors of certain shelters, the everyday shelter staff was not.

²⁰ Again, this is a reference to a Salvation Army shelter, right around the corner from the Gateway. A significantly larger shelter (318 beds), it is frequently invoked as a point of comparison in the construction of the Gateway's uniqueness.

it much more personable, and saying, you know, 'we don't see you as a threat. We see it as you're people we can be in relationship with, right?

Zack: I think, ah, we're more relationship-minded than other shelters that are more, whatever, not necessarily caring about the betterment of the person, you know. Other shelters might just be focused on putting food and shelter over the person's head, or whatever. We're more focused on food and shelter plus developing the person... The Gateway is involved in the relationship parts. You go to other shelters and they've got a 3-inch piece of Plexiglas between them and a client. Which just goes to show what kind of shelter we are, as opposed to some of the other ones, right? You're always welcome at the Gateway.

Adam: We always talk about how we don't put up glass and separate ourselves from other people. That's one glaring difference. I've been to a lot of different places; there is a difference there. Every other place I've been to, there is a separation between staff and residents. But I don't see the day-ins and the day-outs of other places. I only see the counters. But just the attitude around the Gateway is different. The Good Shepherd is another good place,²¹ but again, there is some separation. But other than the Good Shepherd, I would say the Gateway is way above and beyond other shelters I've ever stepped foot in. [*I ask him how so?*] Just the feel of the place. It just feels safer. It feels more comfortable. The Gateway, you walk in, and you feel comfortable. I mean, I work there, but I've never felt uncomfortable walking in there. I can't walk into Seaton House without feeling uncomfortable. Even the Maxwell Meighen doesn't feel comfortable. I'm not saying people don't care, but they really don't! I don't think they put a stop to certain things that make it uncomfortable.

“Thankfully, I was able to be there when we created our shelter,” said the Gateway's founding director in a CBC radio interview,²² “and I insisted that we not have bars or glass that separates our staff from our residents. Because we wanted to send a strong message to anybody who walked in through our doors, that...we're not afraid of you, we don't think we're better than you, we're one of you.” Neil's consistent reference to this idea of unobstructed proximity at the front desk trickles to the workers in a sort of boiled-down verbal cue: “no-glass.” A phrase that almost wills into existence something that is not there.

In worker narratives, no-glass operates as a kind of mythic glue, holding them together. They share a sense of being “out in the open” and exposed. But their vulnerability is not read as weakness so much as

²¹ An award-winning, innovative, and multifaceted shelter program run by a Catholic Brotherhood on Queen St. East in Toronto (among other locations in Canada and the U.S.)

²² CBC's Metro Morning, interviewed by Jill Dempsey on CBC's Metro Morning, August 11, 2010.

a willingness to befriend someone who might not be quite safe to be around. This idea that “nothing comes between us and the poor” is a blatant critique of other shelters that do have glass in their front entranceways, and as an extension of this, workers imagine all kinds of terrible things happening in shelters like those: violence, rampant substance abuse, and worker apathy are all tacitly implied.²³ But no-glass also seems to beg comparison to the great swaths of physical and affective distance between many other social service-workers – and indeed other Christians who are by comparison barricaded or otherwise remote from this scene. To their minds, nearness is incumbent in welcomeness, in hospitality. And it passes here for friendship, especially in the absence of anyone else willing to be close.²⁴

Put simply, Protestants (a broad subsection of the Christian tradition of which the Gateway workers are largely descendent) have long disdained the structural and material as an impediment to that which is true and good. Since their break with what they saw as the highly corruptible trappings of early modern Catholicism, Protestants have claimed that nothing ought to come between them and God – no object, no ritual, no other person – and that “faith” is primarily the pursuit of the immaterial – of ephemeral things like the “fruits of the spirit” (love, peace, joy and the like), the soul's communion with God, the hope of heaven. Webb Keane, however, has pushed past such professions and argued that “even in its most abstract and transcendent, the human subject cannot free itself from objectification. It retains a body and it continues to work on, transact, and possess objects. And it cannot even be sincere without the publicly known material forms of speech.”²⁵ What's more, as human agents, Christians “cannot free themselves from the practices by which they are embedded in the world of other people.”²⁶ To continuously reassert such a desire for the immaterial is to reenact what Keane calls an “irresolvable tension between abstraction and the inescapability of material and social mediations,” and makes those beholden to such ideological commitments only more “anxious” and “troubled” with its sheer impossibility.²⁷ If, as Keane's work has made clear (along with that of various others who have eagerly followed in his wake), the Protestant ideology of the immaterial is at worst hypocrisy and at best

²³ See Engelke's analysis of Christians who insist that there be nothing between themselves and God: Engelke, *A Problem of Presence*.

²⁴ In a September 14, 2008 post on his blog, Neil used the idea of no-glass to rebuke the pope for not being close enough to the poor: “As a Christian, the best model of leadership that I've been exposed to is that of Jesus himself. He was a leader that never once used the term leader about himself. He was a leader who spoke, and more importantly lived truth no matter what the consequences (even if it meant losing the popularity contest.) He was a leader who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and not a chariot with bulletproof glass and security guards and an army. He was a leader who hung out with the despised of society; the lepers, prostitutes, beggars, tax collectors, the blind and lame... He was a leader who got on his knees and washed his disciples' feet. He was a leader that those in power murdered because he didn't toe the party line.” See also Bielo, “Purity, Danger, and Redemption”; James Bielo, “City of Man, City of God: The Re-Urbanization of American Evangelicals,” *City & Society* 23 (September 1, 2011): 2–23; James S. Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals: Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); James S. Bielo, “Sacred Subdivisions: The Postsuburban Transformation of American Evangelicalism by Justin G. Wilford (review),” *Anthropological Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (2013): 1159–63.

²⁵ Webb Keane, “Postscript: Anxious Transcendence,” in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Fenella Cannell (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p.321.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ *ibid.* See also Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). According to Keane, in their mutual promise of transcendence “Christianity and modernity both seek to abstract the subject from its material entanglements in the name of freedom and authenticity.”

incomplete, then we need especially to think about the specific things that Christians claim are not there; to look closely at whatever they are so adamant is absent.²⁸

I understand “no-glass,” then, as a kind of crossed-out thing: something simultaneously not there and quite *there*, indeed.²⁹ In helping to develop an “anthropology of absence,” Severin Fowles has entreated scholars of materiality not to overlook the very real presence of what he calls “crossed-out things.”³⁰ Thing theory's “major blind spot,” he claims:

is, quite literally, that which is unseen – or, rather, that which is absent but nevertheless experienced as a presence precisely because its absence is marked or emphatic...Packed between the multitudes of self-evident things, are crowds of non-things, negative spaces, lost or forsaken objects, voids or gaps – absences, in other words, that also stand before us as entity-like presences with which we must contend.³¹

Theorists of materiality like Bill Brown and Daniel Miller have likewise called for attention to the flickering tension between absence and presence, between the material and the immaterial. But for Fowles, it is the veritable carnality of the immaterial that matters. In the same way that objects “sensuously intrude” upon us and have their own agenda, we might also consider how people *encounter* that which is not there as having its own presence, power and potentiality.³² It strikes me that homelessness itself is an instructive example of a crossed-out object: in the very terminology 'home' is consistently re-inscribed as missing and thereby also made manifest.

In this case, no-glass is said to be absent from the shelter's entryway but it still actively participates in the construction (to use a deliberately structural term) of what I follow Yael Navaro-Yashin in calling a “make-believe space.”³³ Drawing on her ethnographic work in what she calls the postwar, abject state of Northern Cyprus, Navaro-Yashin emphasizes both the “work of imagination” and the actual “materiality of crafting” which are embedded in the notion of the *make-believe*: it is “a process of making-and-believing, or believing-and-making at one and the same time.”³⁴ Like the necessary government institutions that Navaro-Yashin's Northern Cypriots are trying to will (and build) into existence institutions that are “believed through the making or materialized in the imagining,” the Gateway's no-

²⁸ See Birgit Meyer, “Mediating Absence-Effecting Spiritual Presence: Pictures and the Christian Imagination,” *Social Research* 78, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 1029–57.

²⁹ Severin Fowles, “People Without Things,” in *Anthropology of Absence*, ed. Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup, and Tim Flohr Sørensen (New York: Springer, 2010), 23–43. See also Dick Houtman and Birgit Meyer, *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012). Keane, *Christian Moderns*.

³⁰ Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup, and Tim Flohr Sørensen, eds., *Anthropology of Absence* (New York: Springer, 2010).

³¹ Fowles, “People Without Things,” p.25.

³² *ibid* p. 26.

³³ Yael Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

³⁴ *ibid*, p.5.

glass attempts to fashion a particular kind of physical and ambient space out of an imaginary non-partition.

The “affective geography” of the Gateway is imagined to originate at the front door and then to extend down the hallway or up the stairs, into the rest of the shelter. Objects can be rather modest things and become (over)burdened with human meaning.³⁵ In the representational economy of the Gateway, no-glass is doing arguably more work than any other symbol, sign, or object; a patina of meaning ever-thickening, the more it is invoked. It stands in for the shelter's uniqueness, the friendliness of its staff, and their collective critique of other shelters (and other Christians) that are not like them, all at once. The workers picture no-glass doing all kinds of work on a homeless person coming through the door and regularly give voice to things they imagine no-glass to be doing/saying on their behalf, as we saw above from Jeremy, Ryan, Zack, and Adam.³⁶ While in ironically structural terms no-glass solidifies the uniqueness of the Gateway, and (at least) a spatial intimacy between workers and residents, it also has the potential to act as a kind of fiction. It's possible for the workers to *imagine* themselves as proximate to the other at the point of encounter, at the front desk, regardless of what happens next, somewhere else in the shelter. As I see it, fiction and imagination here do not necessarily denote something feigning and false, but more precisely a construction, an act of make-and-believe.

In her collaborative search for “a properly political concept of love,” Lauren Berlant pushes us to measure love as ambition or intention, by “the revolutionary kernel of the impulse” to love the other (or change the world), even if we can't say much about what happens after that, about reciprocity for instance, or deep intimacy (or actually interrupting social relations as they are).³⁷ Berlant begs us to consider love as structure and as force – occurring even in ambivalence, in irrationality, even in the absence of sentiment or strong feelings; she asks us to call it *attachment* instead. There's something very suppositional in Berlant's understanding of love – it accounts for contingency and incoherence and optimism and courage, as well as the “desire to have patience for what isn't working.” She admits that love as intention is a ‘low bar’ but is “still hard and awkward enough.”³⁸ And it seems to me that no-glass is such a love – is something like the things Berlant calls “infrastructure[s] of proximity” or “architectures of trust,” something which attempts or supposes relationality, regardless of emotions or fully-formed decisions sustaining it. No-glass was once built into this place according to a hope, an

³⁵ Daniel Miller, *Materiality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), p.163.

³⁶ Desjarlais explores this notion of a shelter's architecture actually “working on” the homeless. In his case, it is especially the brutalist style, cold, rough, and inhospitable that shapes subjectivities in particular kinds of ways. While interesting, this sort of angle is beyond the scope of my ethnography – I do not have the data to support analysis of the residents' interpretation of no-glass, how they understand and experience it. Desjarlais, *Shelter Blues*.

³⁷ Berlant offers this especially in response to Michael Hardt who, (in his solo work and in his previous work with Antonio Negri) has argued for an operationalized love that eschews the too easy love of the same (what he/they call “corrupt love”) in favour of something more virtuous – a love of the other. See their exchange/debate on love: Michael Hardt, “For Love or Money,” *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 4 (November 1, 2011): 676–82; Lauren Berlant, “A Properly Political Concept of Love: Three Approaches in Ten Pages,” *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 4 (2011): 683–91; Lawrence Cohen, “Love and the Little Line,” *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 4 (November 2, 2012): 692–96.

³⁸ *ibid*, p.683.

ambition, to love those whom, supposedly, other people would not be as willing to love. No-glass was originally meant to situate workers in intimate relation to an other, to act on behalf of the workers in offering an invitation, an openness and willingness to engage – one way or another.³⁹ Regardless of its durability, no-glass facilitates encounter, by design.

But when we consider the actual materiality of no-glass, the object begins to exceed the meaning intentionally given to it and it starts to stand on its own.⁴⁰ No-glass might also be read as *not even glass* – not even something transparent comes between us. As an object, glass is hard to pin down: it's ubiquitous and sort of mundane; if it's clean, you might not always be able to see that it's there. But rather than a kind of exponential nothingness, no-glass becomes almost ironically opaque in this scenario. Listening closely to the way workers tell it, no-glass wasn't actually glass in the first place. It was (and is) a piece of bulletproof plastic, relatively indestructible, perhaps with a hole cut out of it for talking through. The no-glass they refer to is always conceptually linked to the kind of institutional barrier you'd find in a prison, police station, or psychiatric hospital; implicit here is safety in the presence of supposedly dangerous people. Residents then are still vaguely considered unsafe and the workers' commitment to be near them doesn't erase danger so much as defy it. So, a kind of distance persists: no-glass remains the shadow of a border between workers and residents and the workers' relationship to residents is consistently mediated via the crossed-out object which exists between them.

Spend any amount of time in the-place-with-no-glass, and it opens up into a myriad of spatial practices too.⁴¹ Attention always to no-glass as a marker tends to overlook what else is going on there.⁴² No-glass not only mediates the Gateway's differentiation from other shelters, it also tends to mediate the interaction between workers and residents. True, there is no glass when you walk in the front door of the Gateway, but there *is* a half-wall and counter separating workers from residents and whoever else comes in off the street. Workers don't talk to the homeless through a little round hole in a sheet of clear, bullet-proof material, but they still spend a good portion of their time in a small, 8 by 12 foot space where residents are never permitted. They often recline in cushioned office chairs while residents stand, leaning on the counter in order to talk to them, a stance which often made me think of a theatre performance: the counter almost the divisional equivalent of a stage. At night, whoever is there might play an awkward game of cards while straddling this counter – workers sitting on one side of the counter, residents standing on the other, euchre partners trying to position themselves as if this playing space were round, but it's not.

³⁹ See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For Latour, "it is no longer possible to inspect the precise ingredients that are entering into the composition of the social domain – the social is made up of assemblages, of people and things. (p.1)

⁴⁰ See Tim Ingold, "Materials against Materiality," *Archaeological Dialogues* 14, no. 1 (2009): 1–16. Ingold implores us to engage directly with the *stuff* of materiality; to think about "what makes things thingly;" to focus on the production of objects from baser materials.

⁴¹ See "Spatial Stories" in Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

⁴² Meyer, "Mediating Absence-Effecting Spiritual Presence." Of objects (and especially images) Meyer wants us to ask: What does it "depict and conceal?" Both are equally important. (p.1038)

The funny thing about that counter is that part of it used to open up, on a hinge, letting workers move between the open and closed parts of the room. But that space has long since been piled with things so that there's literally no way through that counter, out of the office space into the entryway. Instead, workers have to exit through a side door into a hallway and then come through another locked glass door in order to be at the shelter's front entrance.

It is at this quite immovable front desk that one might argue the worker is most worker-like and the resident less resident than “client.” This is where permission is pleaded and access is granted: to beds, to towels, to meals, to lists for doing laundry and to see the nurse, to caseworker appointments, and the like. Questions and answers are lobbed, swatted at, volleyed back and forth, all day long, between one hundred possible residents and (at most) four rotating workers. Authority lives decidedly on one side of that desk and not on the other – the same side of the desk where the buttons are, buttons that open doors, change channels and gain electronically stored information. The worker I call George hated it there, never wanted to spend very long as the mandatory “someone-has-to-cover-the-front-desk” worker. He felt easily overwhelmed, even trapped, if left there too long alone, bearing up under the barrage.

Andrea hated it there too, but for different reasons. As a second-floor worker, she didn't have to spend much time in that part of the shelter; she seemed to have the luxury of avoiding it. I suppose that meant she could see things the rest of us couldn't anymore, having grown accustomed to the overall filminess of the place. “It's awkward, it's crowded, and it's gross” she lamented to me one afternoon while we were standing there, waiting for a group of workers to converge in order to attend a funeral altogether. While the front desk is not measurably more or less dirty than the rest of the shelter, I rarely saw anyone take a damp cloth or potent cleaning product to that counter, a surface so constantly touched and leaned on. Was the front entranceway altogether welcoming, after all?

* * * * *

On a very basic level there is a simultaneous inclusion and exclusion going on – no-glass seems, all at once, to welcome and to hold the (vaguely dangerous) other at arm's length. I want to say, then, that the no-glass space makes possible at least two kinds of intersubjectivity. On the one hand, no-glass fosters a closeness that lends itself to friendship: it sets up whoever is on either side of no-glass in such a way that they might relate to one another face-to-face.⁴³ But on the other hand, as a structural proximity which becomes almost over-determined in its constant re-articulation, it risks being a kind of nearness that helps workers to define themselves as special and unique while effacing the other, collapsing their otherness into a mere version of the self. No-glass exists as invitation to be close, to

⁴³ “Face-to-face” is a particularly important concept in Lévinasian thought. It denotes the primacy of human relationships. I'll return to this idea below.

negotiate difference, to co-habit a space, and some workers very intentionally live this out. But it's also something of a trap, giving other workers a proud mantle to carry around with them (“we're close to the poor”) that almost seems to free them up from actually having to relate to the (homeless) other(s) as subjects on an equal footing.⁴⁴ In the day-ins and day-outs at the shelter, it can go either way.

Of the workers I quoted at the outset of this chapter only some of them seem to behave as if what they're saying is true. The worker I call Jeremy was especially standoffish when sitting behind the front desk: his lack of eye contact with whoever was speaking to him betrayed his interest in the more important things he was doing on the phone or on the internet. He seemed to live for his breaks when he could carry on with those extra-curricular tasks upstairs in the staff room. His jokes often came at the expense of residents: a little mean-spirited, often drawing attention to difference, to whatever might have landed a guy here in the first place, almost preying on that difference for a laugh. “I'm just in the mood for saying 'no!' He laughed when someone asked to be let up to the dorm floors quickly to get something from his locker. “Should we be nice and let them go upstairs early? I heard him say loudly, rhetorically to a co-worker one day at 5:55, five minutes before schedule, while they were all milling around the locked door in front of him, waiting. “Nah!” he said with a laugh, in answer to his own question. Jeremy's name consistently turned up on the lists residents scribbled for me on little scraps of paper, lists declaring the “worst workers.” There were always corresponding lists of “best workers” and some names seemed to float from one to the other, depending on who you asked, but Jeremy's never did. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that he didn't really want to be there; had his sights set somewhere else, was busy making those dreams happen during his shift, instead. They were ambitions for which the antinomian, love-drenched rhetoric of no-glass would definitely come in handy. If Jeremy had made any friends among the residents, it seemed his interest in those things had long ago faded. Still there was an eagerness, an evangelical fervour even, in the way he talked about no-glass and the way in which it set the Gateway apart – from the rest of the Salvation Army in particular.

The words I attribute to 'Zack' seemed almost like they were being pulled out of him, like teeth. He was nervous throughout our interview, which came only after he had exhausted all excuses for putting it off. It seemed like he knew what he was supposed to say and said it. He gave all the 'right' answers – a lot about God telling him what to do and what he learned in Bible College about how to treat other people. Zack is not entirely disingenuous, but things are not as uncomplicated as he let on when we talked that night in the empty Drop-In. Zack seems to have a very honest, basic connection to guys in the shelter, has no trouble relating residents' problems to his own (gambling, addiction, immigration woes, loss); he understands himself as not that different, knows that but for a few circumstances, he could easily be on the other side of the counter. Zack was often reprimanded or criticized by other

⁴⁴ By this I mean intersubjectivity: the encounter of two human beings, the same in their humanness, their subjectivity, their political equality. At the end of the day they're different, and separate, they cannot be collapsed on into the other (I can't feel what you're feeling, you can't feel what I'm feeling/thinking etc.) But they are one the level, the same plane, and they both count.

workers for taking a kind of simple approach to his friendships with residents: it often doesn't occur to him to be guarded or aloof. When they're not maligning him, other workers will also admit that Zack has a good heart.

Ryan and Adam exist somewhere along the fault line – with either of them, it could go either way. Sometimes they're humble friends to residents, other times they sound proud of themselves more than anything else.

There is a possibility for friendship that proceeds from the front entrance and is acted out in the rest of the shelter. Sometimes no-glass lives up to the hype and friendships of a kind are indeed formed. But no-glass also sets up a snare. Hypothetically, it allows the workers to claim a closeness that is only physically built into their environment, and little more. In this (admittedly cynical) reading of no-glass, the workers' proximity to the homeless is a kind of antinomian moniker, not out of step with their Salvation Army heritage: “we're close to someone no one else wants to be close to. You can see for yourself that we have no-glass, unlike every other shelter we know.” To be sure, no-glass helps the workers to understand themselves and what they're doing at the shelter, 12 hours a day, three or four days a week, through trying times and despite the endless parade of residents in and out. But the homeless are also in danger of being objectified in this formulation, or, in the dramatic words of Emmanuel Lévinas: killed.⁴⁵ In their face-to-face encounter with the other at the front desk, *both* the worker and the resident are vulnerable, injurable, precarious.⁴⁶ We've already noted how the no-glass rhetoric bears with it this idea that the homeless are dangerous, making the workers physically vulnerable in their willingness to denounce or defy said danger. But according to Lévinas, the precarity of encounter always goes both ways, there's always a chance that two people will meet one another and each neglect their obligation to *not* kill, to respect and care for the other instead. In the case of no-glass, we might even say that the homeless are at greater risk: the violence of being appropriated (domesticated even, to use a fittingly *homey* metaphor) into something that merely serves the Gateway's own self-conception. In this way, those most adamant that no-glass makes all the difference hazard an understanding of the other not as a fully formed subject in their own right, but as someone whose otherness is merely instrumental to the workers own subjectivity. Summarizing Lévinas' work on intersubjectivity, my colleague Christina Reimer puts the crux of the issue like this: what must be preserved in the ethical encounter is “the irreducible alterity of the other,” “the part of every self that can never be grasped, possessed or co-opted by another.” This “irreducible alterity” is precisely what's

⁴⁵ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Philippe Nemo (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985). See also Bob Simpson, “Ethical Moments: Future Directions for Ethical Review and Ethnography” 17, no. 2 (2011): 377–93. And the helpful primer on Lévinas in Christina Margaret Reimer, “A Fountain Sealed: Virginité and the American Evangelical Family” (Thesis, University of Toronto, 2012).

⁴⁶ Judith Butler, “Precarious Life and the Obligations of Cohabitation,” Speech given at the Nobel Museum, Stockholm Sweden, May 2011. http://www.nobelmuseum.se/sites/nobelmuseet.se/files/page_file/Judith_Butler_NWW2011.pdf. Retrieved May 20, 2014. See also Zoë H. Wool, “Emergent Ordinaries at Walter Reed Army Medical Center: An Ethnography of Extra/ordinary Encounter” (Thesis, University of Toronto, 2011).

in danger of being negated by the rhetoric of no-glass if it falls short of caring for the other *in their otherness*.

No-glass attempts to fashion an arguably more intimate space in what is ostensibly an institution. Rather than an impersonal interaction which might be mediated via a bullet-proof partition, the partition is discursively crossed out, and a face-to-face encounter is occasioned instead. For Lévinas, this is the most basic form of human interaction, necessarily presenting each person with their “infinite obligation” and responsibility for the other; an opportunity for ethical action. The upside is that no-glass sort of reorganizes people who might otherwise be mutually estranged from one another by the discourses and geographies of exclusion reiterated and built into our time and place, and it invites them to look each other in the eye.⁴⁷ However imperfect or incomplete the openness inherent in the Gateway workers' posture, we might say, at least, that it's an acknowledgement that an other person exists in their own right, and *at most* that the (homeless) other is their primordial responsibility.⁴⁸ At best, this face-to-face encounter at the Gateway's front desk is the beginning of co-habitation – of living together, even *homemaking* together.⁴⁹ That the Gateway might actually be *home* is probably the most subjunctive idea at play in that place, and is one I'll return to in the conclusion.

⁴⁷ David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002). See also discussion above in Part II, “the streets.” Marcel Mauss long ago noted how objects, things (and not just the giving and receiving of things) have the power to knit people together. Here too, do “crossed-out things” have a similar potency. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Cohen and West, 1966).

⁴⁸ For Lévinas, the perfect combination is intimacy and alterity, a “modest caress” between people, rather than any hope/expectation of “fusion.”

⁴⁹ I use “co-habitation” here the way Judith Butler employs it, with special reference the understanding of co-habitation she employs from Arendt (forged in her writing/response to Eichmann: “you don't get to choose who you cohabit the earth with, plurality preceded us.”

“if Jesus were alive today, he would be here, hanging out with the poor”

(stripping away, humility, poverty)

“Mainly, I had been doing a lot of thinking about my own life, doing a lot of thinking about what I thought my faith convictions, ah, meant for my own life. So, I was trying to understand a whole lot of things at once. But, the process of me understanding... beginning to understand what it meant to be a Christian very much involved this shift from believing things to being a part of things and doing things. And, so when I started to see that, and I started to see that Jesus wasn't just saying a whole bunch of stuff like, you know, 'Stay within these lines,' but he was saying “this is...Abundant life is this. It's not about you. It's about caring for others, about loving others, caring for the poor, sick, etc.” So I started to think: OK, I want to do this; I can't be a Christian any other way than this...

[About the Gateway:] “I guess I was kind of comfortable with the brand of Christianity that was, you know, it's sort of there/not there, it sort of depends on who you're talking to... And so I was comfortable with that because it wasn't a preachy sort of thing, it wasn't a converting-desperate-souls kind of thing. It was pretty much what I had come to realize on my own was that life is not about believing certain things and going on and doing whatever you want. The Christian calling is something more than that. Like, it's supposed to be something that is all-encompassing, pervading every aspect of life...”

—Holden

Of the Gateway Christians, there are Orthodox members, both mainline and evangelical Baptists, Free Methodists, Mennonite Brethren, lapsed Catholics, and at least two varieties of Pentecostals; some belong to the Missionary Alliance, the Salvation Army, or places vaguely “non-denominational.” Among their “church homes” you'll find old money cathedrals and new suburban plants. There are Christians gung ho, lukewarm, and descendent of denominations that wouldn't bother gauging one's passions at all. There are those anointed by infant baptism, teenage baptism, or no baptism but still demonstrably “Christian.” Various strands of the holiness tradition are represented here, alongside a rather vocal disdain for it: “Holiness people are so judgmental.” A handful studied at Bible colleges and seminary: it seems just many as graduated as 'dropped-out.' They come from suburban and downtown congregations, just a couple come from rural contexts. There are recent converts, cradle Christians, and many at various stages of what, if pressed, we might call deconversion.⁵⁰ Some don't go to church

⁵⁰ On “deconversion,” see John D. Barbour, *Versions of Deconversion: Autobiography and the Loss of Faith* (University of Virginia Press, 1994); James S. Bielo, “Belief, Deconversion, and Authenticity among U.S. Emerging Evangelicals,” *Ethnos* 40, no. 3 (September 1, 2012): 258. See also Rebekka King, “The New Heretics: Popular Theology, Progressive Christianity and Protestant Language Ideologies” (Thesis, University of Toronto, 2012), <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/34082>.

because of the job schedule; others don't go to church full stop. Some call hanging out at the shelter a better form of worship. Some claim they no longer believe in God but still follow Jesus; they can still talk the talk when they need to *sound* "Christian" in order to get a job at the Gateway, keep a job at the Gateway, or keep up with the general Christian tenor of staff devotions and spiritual retreats – even if it doesn't matter much to them anymore if there's any meaning to match it. Some aspire to other ministries within the church; some used to aspire to other ministries in the church but seem to have gotten caught up doing this instead – working at the Gateway – and now that dream is more misplaced than dead. Many wiggle when I ask if they call themselves 'Christians,' and search for another way of putting it.

Their answers were more likely than not to have something to do with Jesus. More precisely, their presence at the Gateway was justified by various versions of a common refrain: *if Jesus were alive today, he'd be here hanging out with the poor*. If not emulating Jesus' lifestyle exactly, then at least thinking they're doing something Jesus would want them to do, in his absence. In *going downtown* – whether this missional migration happened just once when they moved to the city or happens over and over again with each day's commute from the city's outer suburbs – the workers understand themselves as (physically, geographically) *following* Jesus who himself had no home, was always a stranger and outcast, and is said to have spent time with whichever less-than-desirable population he found along his wandering way. In what follows, I intend to parse and probe this "if Jesus..." idea, picking apart the big ideas which seem so casually to make it up and unpacking the context in which it makes sense.

* * * * *

At 1pm on Tuesdays, the 2nd floor workers converge for Staff Devotions, an hour long ritual that on the whole seems as likely to involve reading the Bible as not. Sometimes they read a commentary on the Bible instead, or a set of short devotional essays or prayers. But too, at least once a month (if not oftener) Devotions would dissolve into a collective outing to a neighbouring coffee shop because no one was prepared to lead discussion on the chosen passage, or because too few had had time (bothered?) to pre-read the assigned passage for that week. Apart from the Wednesday night chapel service which is mainly for residents, Staff Devotions is the clearest, most deliberate articulation of *religion* at the Gateway, so for all of the twenty-one months I was at the Gateway, I made a point of being there whether it followed its regular weekly formula or not.

There were many occasions when it was clear no one was in charge or prepared and so someone would make the executive decision to go for coffee instead, under the auspices of "fellowship."

When Staff Devotions didn't come off, and even when it did, I was often left wondering about a collection of essays I'd read some time before by scholars in the anthropology of Christianity, a book

intriguingly called *The Limits of Meaning*.⁵¹ A series of case studies, the volume explored the way sites of Christian meaning-making are just as likely to be empty as full; the way things so laden with potential and intentional significance are apt instead to find that significance hollowed out, to find their meaningfulness in some way vacated, annulled, or otherwise rendered moot. Those scholars told stories of people falling asleep during prayer meetings, of collectivities more confused than cohesive, of goals unreached and rituals unfulfilled, of meaning *performed* more than anything else, of Christians (and anthropologists alike) who felt sure the search for meaning was vitally important but who simultaneously seemed to miss the (decisive and unified) mark. When a handful of long-time, upstairs Gateway workers sat around a string of small tables, either in their own chapel or in the coffee shop across the street, I wondered what they were doing. I wondered how to read the expressions of those participants who were staring rather blankly down at their bibles, or just off in the middle distance in front of them, others who would look nervously around to see who else might start talking first and save us all from the silence, still others avoiding eye contact altogether without participating in the discussion. Best of all was the worker who, each week, would pull noisily at whatever plastic bottle he'd been drinking from, picking it to pieces or wringing it into a mangled mess while no one but me seemed particularly to mind: were they all just tuning out? And, to be sure, I was also wondering about the people (including myself) who delighted much more in the coffee outing than the devotions and the many possible (non)meanings we might tease out of that “fellowship” hour.

In their introduction to the *Limits* collection, editors Tomlinson and Engelke cite Talal Asad who noted how anthropologists derived their own interest in (and *will to see*) meaning from Christianity in the first place. This was part of Asad's pivotal critique of classic anthropological work (especially Clifford Geertz') who spent so much time decoding the significance of symbols without paying much attention to “the processes by which those meanings are constructed” and/or contested.⁵² While scholars have, like Christians themselves, tended to ignore, obscure, or gloss over instances of meaning's lack or utter loss, Tomlinson and Engelke urge their readers not to succumb to the melodramatic idea that meaninglessness will necessarily result in a threatening chaos. Meaning's “absence, negation, and irrelevance” can also be possible and productive to think with.⁵³

The leader of the Gateway's staff devotions would often lob an open-ended question into the middle of the group and let the quiet void grow until someone became too uncomfortable to endure it any longer and mustered up some sort of response. If that didn't happen, they would move on to the next question, the next verse, making their way toward the prayer which signaled Devotions' end. The questionable meaning in those meetings, the frustration of getting the group all together, all equally prepared and

⁵¹ Matthew Engelke and Matt Tomlinson, *The Limits of Meaning: Case Studies in the Anthropology of Christianity* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007). See also Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*.

⁵² Engelke and Tomlinson, *The Limits of Meaning*. See also Marshall, “Christianity, Anthropology, Politics.”

⁵³ Engelke and Tomlinson, *The Limits of Meaning*, p.23.

engaged, the conversation about what they thought the scriptural passages meant which often came only in fits and starts: these were my overall impressions of Gateway's Staff Devotions.

About half way through their study of Luke-Acts, Neil started to complain that “this is taking forever...” and even though at first not everyone had seemed to agree, over the next few weeks the realization only seemed to grow more true: once it had been said out loud, it couldn't go any other way; things were bound to drag and stall. At the beginning there had been some discussion I would have optimistically called mildly enthusiastic, but the group tended to follow the leader and the leader tended to have little follow-through when it came to Devotions. As his interest dwindled, so did theirs. Others began to complain that the books were repetitive: that the Apostle Paul was just saying and doing the same things over and over again – what else is new? As soon as the leader stopped making it a priority, the rest began to agree with him that they might just as well close that book and find another.

Then came the book of James – not just to be read, but memorized, Neil insisted. This turned out to be mainly another fumbled attempt at piety. In the first place, it hadn't been so much a consensus as an assignment: “this will be good for us,” Neil assured them. And some workers readily agreed it was a nice idea (in theory). But once a few weeks went by and even the leader turned up not having committed fully to memory that week's designated passage, those who had done the work felt almost tricked and those who hadn't done the work, absolved. Either way, they knew they could let it slide. So they did.

The search for their next project took weeks: the leader would ask every Tuesday for suggestions, as if in search of a collective decision this time. And a couple of ideas were indeed tossed into the air each Tuesday, but they were also promptly forgotten by the next week. When one or two staff members would suggest instead that they take a closer look at a less-understood, less-well-travelled Old Testament book, they appeared to be politely ignored.

It was a new calendar year before the leader finally said one Tuesday that he was close to finding a book they'd read for the next twelve months: “I think I've settled on John. Did we decide on John?” He said those two slightly contradictory things right in a row – was it “he” or “we” who had decided? One or two others were quick to say 'yes.'

For months they went in circles like these – choosing and beginning something hopefully, slowly growing lethargic and disinterested, shaking it off, starting again. Not unlike the kinds of friendship

discussed above, Devotion(s) seemed most readily an *acting-as-if*: if they kept pretending maybe eventually insight would break through or good habits would stick.⁵⁴

With regular loops of boredom, indifference, and a lesser form of truancy, interspersed, to be sure, with good intentions and an admirable earnestness on the part of some participants, the image of Jesus (and the overall religiosity) that emerged from Staff Devotions was truncated and fitful. This held true in the devotional portions at the beginning of all-staff meetings too; they often fell victim to some of the same inherent pitfalls or mixed moods and seemed to fall flat.

Descendent as they are mainly of evangelical traditions that somewhat randomly pick and choose focal passages instead of adhering to a lectionary (as more mainline Christians do – a practice which tends to stretch adherents' attention over a fuller version of the Christian scriptures), the Gateway workers' regularly helicoptered in on the same chosen few. It was hard to break out of the New Testament. And even within the latter Testament, if they weren't pulling themselves through a particular letter or book they were usually resorting to a repertoire of favourites. It seemed understood that the “red letters” of the Gospels – words attributed to Jesus in the certain printed editions of the New Testament, and most crucially certain passages in the Gospel of Matthew – were among the most important.

I lost count of how many times 'The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats' was referenced during my time at the Gateway – not in an everyday, sort of way, if I'm honest. But the sheep and goats came up a fair bit too in workers' response to my interview questions about their presence at the Gateway: why they were there, what they were accomplishing. The story, as motivation, was also reinforced (or planted?) fairly often when the staff met together – at devotions, staff meetings, on retreat.

Matthew 25:31-46: “The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats”

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

The righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you

⁵⁴ As Simon Coleman reminds me: “this subjunctive quality is after all something that underlies much ritual engagement, and much of what is described as belief.” (Personal communication).

hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?

The king will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. [NRSV]

Among other things we might say about this passage, it seems important to note that from it Gateway workers get the notion that Jesus is both *with* the poor and *in place* of the poor, even poor himself; that they, as his followers, are not only meant to enact his closeness to the poor (read as “brotherhood” in the passage, but they extend it to sisters when they need to) but also that they are meant to act as if every poor/thirsty/hungry/naked/sick/imprisoned person they meet could possibly *be* Jesus, in disguise. The hiddenness of Jesus, the mysterious trickery of him, is also worth noting here: Jesus is not always obvious, he is not merely what he appears to be but also deeply obscured, he is found in places you least expect him to be. “We’ve got just as good a chance of seeing Jesus in the face of the crack addict sitting across from us at lunch as we do in church,” I’ve heard one or two of them wager. Not least do they invoke the division between the sheep and the goats as justification for their critique of other Christians who are not as fully engaged in the up-close care of the poor, as they are.

The Matthean passage labeled “The Beatitudes” from Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” was another well-tread favourite:

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

One day in particular, Neil elected to read it at the outset of an all-staff meeting and when he was finished reading, he justified his choice and gave his interpretation of the passage with reference to a letter he had recently received from a condo-owner in the building newly built next door. The neighbour was complaining about men hanging about in front of and between the two buildings, smoking and being a general nuisance, he claimed, but worse doing drugs and harassing women. "Does the Gateway take no responsibility for crimes committed on their property?" he wanted to know. But Neil told the group he was taking particular comfort in the last verse of the passage he had just read and they should too: the part about being persecuted. "This is Jesus in the city" he summed it up, "unwanted, persecuted, looked down upon." So why not us too? he implied.

Some of the workers' devotional aloofness might indeed be attributed to the fact that they've heard all of this before, some since Sunday School, as children. The way they resorted always to the usual passages hints at an inherent trap in eschewing the lectionary and insisting on unguided and unmediated access to the scriptures – it can be more a burden than a freedom. Without a schedule of readings set from above and drawn from across the entire canon, it's unnecessary (even tiresome) to find and explore new passages. Instead of exercising your ability to read from anywhere in the Bible and use whatever you want, it seems you can also become eddied in the things you've heard before and know well. But by the end of this chapter, I'll have suggested that it wasn't just their (over)familiarity with some passages and stories about Jesus that seemingly tripped them up. I'll wonder if their malaise might also have been a manifestation of the insufficiency or inadequacy of some of these stock-snippets to help them navigate their present-day situation as workers in a homeless shelter.

* * * * *

Christianity is, by many scholarly accounts, a hopelessly fractured (set of) tradition(s). It might better be called *Christianities* than by any singular, monolithic name.⁵⁵ Still, if something unites its various strands, anthropologists have tentatively suggested that it might be their collective anxiety over the simultaneous presence and absence of God and the ways in which Christians seek to mediate or resolve

⁵⁵ Mary Farrell Bednarowski, "Multiplicity and Ambiguity: Introduction," in *Twentieth-Century Global Christianity*, ed. Mary Farrell Bednarowski (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 1–35.

that tension.⁵⁶ Belief in the Incarnation and Resurrection of Jesus poses a perennial problem for Christians: is Jesus in heaven or somehow here among them? Attempts to resolve this question and handle its contradiction are highly varied across time and space. Historically and regionally, countless orthodoxies and heterodoxies are negotiated with this mystery at their root. Scholars of “Biblicism” have shown how ritual gatherings like the Gateway's Staff devotions are one such site of mediation (especially among evangelicals): spending time with other Christians while studying the Bible is one way of making God's presence felt in the real, or at least of re-enacting the scenario in which Jesus taught his disciples in person.⁵⁷

According to the literature, and my experience at Gateway Devotions, Bible Study meetings are just as likely to be vexed as they are fruitful, and the connection with God and with each other supposedly found there is just as often forced or foregone as it is freely or fully experienced. In a broad sense, what happens at the Gateway is not out of the ordinary – in fact, it's quite ordinary indeed. What happens at the Gateway every Tuesday and filters out from there over the rest of the week is a specific, culturally contingent way of resolving the question of Jesus, or what Matthew Engelke called, “the problem of presence.”⁵⁸ I would argue that the workers come by their rather aloof devotional stance rather honestly. It comes part and parcel with their (subjunctive) stripping away of other things (the regular trappings of Christianity, for instance, or more specifically the thrust and fervour of Evangelicalism) in order to get to the “real” or “authentic” Jesus. And it also comes from their (equally subjunctive) desire to be like him.

Authenticity is a problem for lots of different kinds of Christians. Indeed, the fragmentation of Christianity into many different types is exacerbated, if not more directly the *result* of Christianity's authenticity problems: Christians seem always to be negotiating the questions of the tradition's ultimately unknowable sources and origins in different ways, some even believing/acting as if they have removed themselves to the unadulterated essence of the earliest ‘Jesus movement.’ If, as I have already mentioned, the multifarious Christian tradition is most harmoniously defined as a mediation of presence and absence, a struggle to make sense of that which is both seen and unseen, then the question of what is “true” and truest, what is “real” and realest is perpetually a problem both for the tradition as a whole (if there can indeed be called such a thing) and within it, among its many members and groups. The most “authentic” way of being “Christian” is always being worked out, while Christian identities and their incumbent dissonances are always being plotted along authenticity's fault lines: historicity, authority, sincerity, and the like.⁵⁹ Ethnographic work on Christians (both within and preceding the

⁵⁶ See Fanella Cannel, *The Anthropology of Christianity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁵⁷ James Bielo, ed., *The Social Life of Scriptures: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Biblicism* (Rutgers University Press, 2009). See also James S. Bielo, *Words upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); King, “The New Heretics.”

⁵⁸ Engelke, *A Problem of Presence*.

⁵⁹ See Pamela E. Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism: Medicine, Healing, and Liberal Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p.174-75: “As anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has shown, assertions of religious authenticity in the present are

Anthropology of Christianity, as such) has both directly and indirectly shown Christians to be engaged in this project, of staking claims to what is Christian/most Christian/not Christian, and so on.⁶⁰ I offer here a few examples.

The Masowe of Zimbabwe, as described by Matthew Engelke don't have much use for the Bible because they claim to be after a more authentic, pre-biblical kind of Christianity. Calling themselves "apostolic" they claim to be living in "live and direct" connection with Jesus, as if he was still alive today.⁶¹ Like the apostles who enjoyed the very presence of Jesus, they have no use for the (corrupted and corruptible) written word about him. Rebecca Lester's description of the Roman Catholic Siervas of central Mexico has them "reclaiming a submerged 'authentic' femininity" by cultivating an inner sense that Jesus is growing in their wombs.⁶² They understand the modern world as broken, (again) corrupted, and that only a reclaimed, true femininity will heal it. The unpaid charitable volunteers encountered in Andrea Muehlebach's work on voluntary affective labour are portrayed as responding to Pope John Paul II's call for a more *authentic love*. For these Italian Christians, acts of service are deemed less genuine when they are given in return for a wage.⁶³

For the Black Baptists of Marla Frederick's ethnography, the cultivation of a public, politically engaged Christian praxis is more 'authentic' than maintaining a strictly private piety – which would necessitate attempts to split the self and its concerns in two and risks shying away from promoting social change in the American South.⁶⁴ Rebekka King's dissertation on those she calls "Christian atheists" describes how her interlocutors are similarly concerned with the cultivation of more 'complete' selves – except in their case, the authentic Christian is one who is pragmatic about Christianity's history of practical and

build on a 'debatable' past, mediated by cultural norms including the authority of textual evidence, assertions of interdependence with other pasts, claims to continuity with a larger historical narrative, and appeals to antiquity...Christianity, in all its varieties, exudes robust historicity through textual, ritual, dogmatic, visual, and storied forms that all draw on the power of the past to assert authenticity." See also Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment In a Papua New Guinea Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). Robbins notes how the quest for authenticity is a problem for anthropologists too: "the possibility that the cultures at once thought of as discontinuous in space (and hence discrete) and continuous in time (and hence authentic and enduring) now appear to be becoming continuous in space (and hence interconnected) and discontinuous in time (and hence constantly hybridizing, syncretizing, creolizing, or, more generally, simply changing in one way or another).

⁶⁰ See William Garriott and Kevin Lewis O'Neill, "Who Is a Christian? Toward a Dialogic Approach in the Anthropology of Christianity," *Anthropological Theory* 8, no. 4 (2008): 381–98; Timothy Jenkins, "The Anthropology of Christianity: Situation and Critique" *Ethnos* 77, no. 4 (December 1, 2012): 459–76; Klassen, "Christianity as a Polemical Concept"; Marshall, "Christianity, Anthropology, Politics."

⁶¹ Engelke, *A Problem of Presence*.

⁶² Rebecca J. Lester, *Jesus in Our Wombs: Embodying Modernity in a Mexican Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁶³ Andrea Muehlebach, "On Affective Labor in Post-Fordist Italy," *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (February 1, 2011): 58–82; Andrea Muehlebach, *The Moral Neoliberal: Welfare and Citizenship in Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

⁶⁴ Marla Faye Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). In Frederick's work, the notion of authenticity largely goes unquestioned – unlike in a number of the other ethnographies listed here. While other scholars haven't always taken authenticity for granted, Frederick lets it kind of hang there as a rather vague pursuit for her interlocutors.

interpretive corruptions. For them, the 'real' Christian knows the limits and inaccessibilities of the so-called "truth" but seeks to cultivate habits of kindness and community anyway.⁶⁵

Anna Strhan has shown how certain types of Christian meditation are more authentic than others: evangelical Anglicans in Britain believe that "calm, rational attentive listening" to God and their strictly word-based reflection on the Bible reflect an honesty and historicity that the emotionally driven tactics of charismatic Christians cannot claim. Emotions sparked by visual media and music, they maintain, cannot be trusted.⁶⁶ This question in Strhan's work is not unlike the one found in Webb Keane's ground-breaking discussion on sincerity: he explores the skepticism that goes both ways between those Christians who pray spontaneously, freely, most often with their eyes closed and those Christians who read or say prayers from rote, most often with their eyes open.⁶⁷ This begs yet another question of authenticity: is one specific habit (or genre of habits) more genuine than the other?

James Bielo cites authenticity as one of the major driving forces of the so-called "emerging church" movement: mostly young, American, and critical of mainstream evangelicals, members of the emerging church are skeptical of what they see as corrupted forms of evangelicalism, especially rich mega-churches, and those with a misguided overemphasis on social issues like abortion and gay marriage.⁶⁸ In work which preceded many of the others scanned here and the Anthropology of Christianity as such, Marie Griffith showed how American evangelicals have long been caught up in a broader therapeutic culture that encouraged the search for a real or more authentic personal identity.⁶⁹ Both Griffith's Christian women's weight-loss groups and Bielo's "emergents," along with countless other versions of American Christianity (and beyond) are similarly shaped and coloured by this wider trend: the quest for authenticity pervades Western popular culture, especially in the sale of goods by advertising, and as such its influence on Christian forms cannot be easily denied.⁷⁰

Furthering this notion, Courtney Bender has used her recent work on those she calls *The New Metaphysicals*, to note how: "we can observe claims to identify pure or authentic religions or spiritual traditions as the labor of specific interests. Such efforts take place within (and likewise have a hand in shaping) the pluralistic, heterogeneous, and non-unified social worlds in which we live."⁷¹ While

⁶⁵ King, "The New Heretics."

⁶⁶ Anna Strhan, "Practicing the Space Between: Embodying Belief as an Evangelical Anglican Student," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 28, no. 2 (May 1, 2013): 225–39.

⁶⁷ Webb Keane, "Sincerity, 'Modernity,' and the Protestants" 17, no. 1 (February 1, 2002): 65–92; Keane, *Christian Moderns*.

⁶⁸ Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals*.

⁶⁹ R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (University of California Press, 1997); R.

Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (University of California Press, 2004).

⁷⁰ Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1991); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). See also Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax: How We Get Lost Finding Ourselves* (McClelland & Stewart, 2011). It should be noted however, that Potter's work is often derivative of Charles Taylor's without so much as citing him. Potter's notes on religion are simplistic and problematic. How we got to an "Age of Authenticity," and religion's implication in this trend is much better tracked by Taylor.

⁷¹ Courtney Bender, *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

showing that claims of authenticity which posture themselves as “individual” are actually anything but, Bender is also concerned with showing how Americans (if only her northeastern Metaphysicals, but I would argue much more widely, as well) are picking and choosing their authenticities (depending on what's available), and are mainly “displacing earlier forms and expressions as less than authentic [while] glossing over the longer histories of exchange that shaped both.” Whatever is newly authentic displaces whatever used to be considered authentic, rendering that earlier version outdated, outmoded, and old by comparison.⁷²

Bender's notes on authenticity provide important insights into a broader discussion of authenticity's inherent impossibilities, something scholars have been onto for awhile. In her work on homebirth, Pamela Klassen draws a parallel between the desire for “spirituality” (as in Bender) and a “natural childbirth.” Both, she argues, “presume an authenticity or naturalness, and both claim to strip away misleading institutionally based medical or theological doctrine.”⁷³ But Klassen has also shown how such claims can never be fully resolved, that one's search for authenticity is never complete. A person “can never erase her past in the hopes of achieving a newly 'authentic' identity – she will be a hybrid of what she was and what she seeks to become.”⁷⁴ Scholars have not always treated the Christian's quest for authenticity graciously, understanding it as earnest and in good faith. It can get quickly filed as delusion or “hoax.”⁷⁵ And so here, I want to take its impossibility seriously without tossing it out altogether.

A number of fuzzy ideas tend to get wrapped up with the modern notion of authenticity, not all of them necessarily of foremost concern to Christians wherever we find them, but here at the Gateway from time to time, they pop up. Being “authentic” seems to hint at a contrarian stance, a sense of going against the grain, of swimming upstream – and this especially in tandem with a sense of the authentic as visionary, as seeing something most don't and pursuing it without being deterred. Authenticity seems to imply a spontaneous or otherwise inadvertent response to some outside stimuli that is somehow more honest than whatever is carefully plotted, planned, or weighed out over time. The rhetoric of authenticity also seems to promise a “wholer” approach to life, the dropped distinction between work and the rest of life, for instance, or doing something simply for the “love” of it and for no other reason. It seems something is especially, or highly “authentic” when it involves severing ties with whatever sought to divide your attention or hide your true self (under dress-up clothes for example, or in doing a job mainly for the money). For that matter, the authentic also seems to involve the casual, the approachable and otherwise unpretentious. There is often something inconspicuous about the authentic, something that cannot be measured or (un)corroborated. And so the authentic also acts as a kind of trump card – not unlike other mega-concepts like “freedom” or “community” – when

⁷² *ibid.*, p.112.

⁷³ Pamela Edith Klassen, *Blessed Events: Religion and Home Birth in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.68.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.xiii.

⁷⁵ Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax*.

dropped they are supposed to go unquestioned, unprobed in their unassailable goodness; they tend to end the conversation.⁷⁶ I would argue that “being-like-Jesus” is supposed to have a similar summative power – for Christians it might be considered the bottom line.

The “if Jesus” notion at the Gateway simultaneously invokes a number of these authentically-implicated ideas: Jesus too is cast as visionary, contrary, and somewhat obscured; humble, singular, and willfully estranged from power. If we take what happens at the Gateway Devotions as a cue, Jesus is a rebel, a kind of opt-out hero for the underdogs, voluntarily at the bottom of the heap, unassuming, down-to-earth and not exactly keeping to a strict schedule. If the Jesus-followers at the Gateway are anything to go by – their behaviours read back onto the one they're said to be emulating – Jesus is fairly laid-back and hanging out with the poor is the main thing he's got to do today.

This particular Jesus-orientation is either a low-bar for concord, a basest commonality, or a kind of higher calling to a rarefied ecumenism; both denote a way of better getting along with others. By deferring always to a very human Jesus, the Gateway workers are seeking either to overcome or undercut their internal differences. “Following Jesus” has a way of circumventing a number of debates both within the tradition but also without. There's a case to be made for the way it might quell external differences, too: it's possible that Jesus – or Jesus' *love* – is the lowest common denominator. It has a way of smoothing over their myriad differences and acting as if everyone has something in common.⁷⁷

It could also be argued that this particular focus on Jesus takes shape specifically in our secular age.⁷⁸ Setting aside the question of whether the “being-like-Jesus” stance is more or less “religious,” more or less pious, authentic, or true – such assertions are well beyond my interest and scope – we still need to look at the conditions of existence which have necessitated various kinds of simplifying and “stripping away.” In our day and age, many different moralities are bumping up against one another in heterogeneous public spaces, none of which are infallible, none of which are exempt from interrogation, and the need for clear articulation and justification to others who might not share their basic tenets and truths.

Winifred Fallers Sullivan (a legal theorist) and Jeffrey Stout (a political philosopher) have both (but each in their own way) compellingly argued that attempts at asserting “universal truth” or stretching truths beyond a particular religious tradition have their insurmountable limits. Truths are always contextual, Sullivan and Stout argue, they come from somewhere and make sense only relatively, in

⁷⁶ See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p.478.

⁷⁷ Reynolds, “Discourses of Love, Compassion, and Belonging.”

⁷⁸ I use the term ‘secular’ not in order to mark the supposed decline or retreat of religion (as is so often done) but (as Taylor does) to point to the conditions of belief in our time: the lack of an overarching and infallible common referent for our moral codes, the immanence of our institutions, the contestation and questioning of beliefs, all of which are made possible in our particular kind of modernity.

particular times and places.⁷⁹ Truth claims that try to deny this are often ignorant of difference, even violently discounting it, sometimes to the point of infringing on people's rights and freedoms. Sullivan and Stout's work makes clear the impossibility of reaching a common morality but equally reinforces the need for encounter, for conversation, for the rendering accessible of whatever a group of people claims is true, to stake claims in terms comprehensible to the other. In this way, the two people (or groups) can reach what Stout calls a "piecemeal" universality; it is only accomplishable here and there and bit by bit. The impossibility of reaching a common morality does not diminish the necessity of finding things in common, "truths" necessarily narrow in scope, limited to the gaps and discrepancies implicated in each act of encounter, a "common" morality inevitably *ad hoc* in its obvious fallibility, forged by those humble and ultimately hopeful for a better world.

We might understand the humble, impoverished, itinerant and basically loving version of Jesus then as the most translatable aspect of this particular Christian tradition. We might suppose that appealing to the life and teachings of Jesus has more traction with different kinds of people, even while it seeks to render the arguably tainted name of Christianity relatively harmless, even palatable.

In the quasi-public space of the shelter (albeit privately owned and operated, it is by and large publicly funded) the law precludes them from hiring only Christians, or only their "own type" of Christians, so to a certain extent they must all learn to get along. Posturing themselves alongside a 'common, everyday Jesus,' is something they hope will go a long way. Young, rebellious, somewhat cynical about the way things are, going his own way instead and living in the rough, the Jesus of their imaginations is a reflection on or inspiration for the workers' own uneasy position in this odd, liminal space I've been trying to describe all along.⁸⁰

This kind of manoeuvre is not at all unique: Christians have always navigated and negotiated their most sacred ideas in lived and living contexts. Matthew Engelke has posited the notion of "ambient faith" in order to describe the particular tactics of Christians in a (post)secular context.⁸¹ His attention to a London-based Bible Society is not so different than the context at the Gateway: the Bible Society is a charity, similarly taking in various kinds of Christians while trying to refuse or erase their respective labels and denominational affiliations in the spirit of ecumenism. They are concerned with their presence in public, rather than strictly private settings. They are trying to be "not so in-your-face" with their Christianity. Engelke shows how the group tries to background and foreground various references to their tradition, in an attempt to open up "a conceptual middle ground" with people who

⁷⁹ Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *Prison Religion: Faith-Based Reform and the Constitution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁸⁰ On the specific connotation implied when I use words like "imagination" and "imaginary" please see p.17n.35. See also Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space*.

⁸¹ Matthew Engelke, "Angels in Swindon: Public Religion and Ambient Faith in England," *American Ethnologist* 39, no. 1 (2012): 155–70.

might not share their particular concerns.⁸² Engelke understands the Bible Society as crafting the “sensual presence” of Christianity in public – how by hanging angels in town squares or meeting for Bible study in trendy coffee shops, the group is setting a scene or a mood which passersby can find either interesting or easily ignorable. In fact, according to Engelke, the group needs to accomplish both: a Christianity that is both seen and unseen, both there and not there; a Christianity “determinedly underdetermined.”⁸³ As per Engelke, “ambience is successful mostly...through its non-recognition.”⁸⁴ He sums up his analysis thusly: “The success of this project is, it ought to go without saying, somewhat beside the point. I am not arguing on the basis of results but, rather, intention.”⁸⁵ And likewise am I.

Hanging out like Jesus, I think, is an attempt to set a casual, loosely held, even immature (see Part IV) sort of *ambience* at the Gateway. It's a way of accomplishing, as Holden told us at the outset, a kind of Christianity that isn't “preachy” but instead, there and not there, depending who you talk to. As we saw in Part II, Salvation Army shelters have long been associated with a more concerted, direct attempt at evangelism – what some have cynically called a “bait-and-switch” move, providing shelter in return for salvation. But the workers of the Gateway, skeptical of (traditionally evangelical) efforts like these, and occupying an otherwise tricky situation, seem to manifest their religiosity in the ways I've have been describing above – by positioning themselves (however haphazardly) alongside Jesus-the-outcast in such a way that they can mostly hang out and be a friend, do Devotions or not, follow the rules or break them. They are crafting, as I have been trying to show in this section, a subjunctive mood or mode of being.

But the subjunctive, as I've already said, is always under-resolved and incomplete; it acts as if, even if it never fully arrives. And the so-called “authentic Jesus” or being “authentically like Jesus” is not only incomplete because authenticity is incomplete in the first place, but also because what the workers can know of Jesus doesn't seem quite enough to go on. It's possible that their (often failed) devotional attempts are shaped by just such a sense of difficulty and infeasibility, of not quite being able to fully realize what they intend.

I started Part III with Lou who I suggested was a kind of representative Gateway worker, almost an ideal type. I started this section on “If Jesus...” with Holden who is more the exception than the rule. Holden is what I most expected to find when I went to the Gateway, but it turns out he and I were both a little surprised to find that he's rather a lone soul. Holden has come and gone from the Gateway a few times: it seems he can't be kept away. Holden articulates what I would characterize as the more mournful, even lovesick side of the subjunctive. He's both more tentative about his hopes and more torn

⁸² *ibid.*, p.157.

⁸³ *ibid.*, p.162.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.163.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

up about their inherent impossibilities. Holden is an outlier, specifically for the ways in which he seems to carry the subjunctive even a step further than everyone else.

* * * * *

We were losing our shirts in the Downtown East Softball League and it was only the first game of the season. The game would end on a mercy, at 15-2. Some of the players were raw with frustration, all the edgier as each run came in against them. Some players had taken it upon themselves to reprimand others for errors and misplaced field positions. Others would defer to Holden as coach, seeking cooler, calmer wisdom from the bench. But late in the game, even one of those players who had been faithful to Holden was now shouting in from field: "C'mon Coach, you're not doing a very good job." And Holden called back with an unfazed sincerity and quick return that I've come to understand as his marker: "But Donny, you're doing a really good job *out there*. Keep it up!"

Holden's uncommon presence hinges on the small, everyday ways in which he treats a guy with respect, even esteem. This hasn't always translated itself so easily into my field notes; the moments are swift, even secretive, and often become overshadowed by bigger drama. He calls a guy "Sir," without so much as a whisper of sarcasm or condescension. He says "Thank you" with the measured warmth of a person who has just received something precious. He looks a person squarely in the eyes. He performs his endless frontline duties with what seems nothing other than a genuine joy in being helpful. He fulfills each request made of him – getting cups, checking the mail, doing the floor runs, making appointments – as if the other person's worth depends on them, too. I've heard him answer such requests with "I'd be honoured."

Sometimes, when a worker has said the same thing some eight hundred times – read the rules, pointed out the laundry list, given directions to the phone booth, reiterated the mealtimes – they've stopped saying it in such a way that whoever is hearing it for the first time can understand what's being said. Repetition has killed the details; they've been skipped, missed or otherwise rushed over. One can hear the gaps opening up in communication between a person in-the-know and a person who doesn't know at all: how to do the laundry; where to get their mail, where to find their housing worker. A front-liner and a new resident can go round and round in circles, or worse, escalate the given tension between a person *powerfull* and a person frustratingly *powerless*. But Holden somehow manages to explain things like it's the very first time. Whether consciously, or just intuitively, he communicates in such a way as to be understood. And when he's listening to someone else chase the dropped fragments of conversations like these, he can hear the missing pieces and often without ruffling anyone's feathers any further, clear away the tempers and confusion which seem to have been mounting simultaneously between them.

Sure, he has bad days; he gets frustrated. But I've also heard him apologize afterward. No matter whether the person he has let down or offended is his co-worker, a resident, or a friend. These are tiny things, non-events maybe, but the little things tend to add up; bits of relationality accumulating over time.

The notion that here, at the Gateway, he could live more like Jesus has held considerable appeal for Holden, as well as for some of his co-workers; perhaps not least the sense of sacrificing something of their own financial and physical security to be there.⁸⁶ The job is tiresome and pays little. The workplace is rather dirty and chaotic. You never know what might happen in the middle of night. You don't know how long you'll last before the place wears you out. And therein lies the basic subjunctivity of this whole thing: Jesus never got old; he didn't spend so long around the poor, either. What the faithful do see of Jesus in contexts only vaguely reminiscent of the modern "streets" is truncated at best, short lived, made up of snatched glimpses of interaction and wisdom and miraculous change that can only be taken so far. The longer they work at the Gateway, the more the workers are outlasting and outdoing what little they know of Jesus; living in hope and acting as if the short (anachronistic) life of Jesus has given them enough to go.

"I feel older than most of the staff there now," Holden admitted to me after he had left the Gateway for a time and come back again. It had been over a year now since he made the comments I cited above – his thoughts on "doing things and not just believing things," his sense that Jesus wasn't *preaching* the right way so much as *living* the right way." How so? I pressed to know.

I feel like some of the Christian motivations I went there with, have not dissipated, but they're up in the air. I ask myself questions over and over again and I don't have answers to any of them...I don't know if it's worth my time there, although sometimes I feel like it is. So that's kind of difference too. I guess I ask more sophisticated questions about my presence there whereas I used to just take it for granted that I'm in the right place doing the right thing. I'm kind of like: 'who the fuck can say anything?!'

He laughs at his own exasperated profanity.

"Who can say anything, you know, about what's right and what's good and what's worthwhile..."

This idea sort of trails off somewhere in Holden's mind and instead we find our way to the topic of a book we've both read. *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City* is the memoir of a young shelter-worker-

⁸⁶ Maya Mayblin fascinatingly analyzes Christians and self-sacrifice, noting how sacrifice is nothing until it is compared to Jesus' own, that is, until it is *produced* as such. Maya Mayblin, "The Untold Sacrifice: The Monotony and Incompleteness of Self-Sacrifice in Northeast Brazil," *Ethnos* 78, no. 3 (2014): 342–64.

turned-writer in Boston, Massachusetts, and has also recently been made into a film by a much lamer name: *Being Flynn*.⁸⁷ Holden wants to talk about it.

I've become obsessed with this book! I've read it a couple of times. And I didn't really like the movie but I keep watching it over and over, because by now I know the book rather well and I can fill in all the parts it leaves out..."

Happening to share a little of his enthusiasm for the story, I ask Holden what it is that resonates with him about the author. Oddly, he has trouble remembering the author's name, and settles finally on a nickname version of his own given name. In the moment my own memory of the author's name comes up short too, but when I check later, I find Holden's guess bears no similarity to the author's at all and I wonder now if it's a hint at how thoroughly he has placed himself inside the text.

He [the author] keeps working at the shelter even though he's not totally passionate about it in the end. And what I really resonate with is that it's taking something from him, it's taking a part of him, and I think that he mentions it really briefly in the book. He's meeting with his therapist who eventually says: Look, you've got to stop working at Park Street Mission, it's taking a lot from you. Just the way that he sort of looks at the world and there's nothing else that he wants to do, even though he's not so passionate about this anymore. It's not like he's some Jesus-y guy in relation to the other people there who are trying to do whatever it is they want to do. He's working there and he does care about the guys, but...

Holden stumbles over a few different ways of beginning this next phrase before settling on this:

He feels more strongly about *not* being a Bay Street guy or whatever than he does about 'I will be this.' So, in a way it's kind of a default thing. I also resonate with (it's not to the same extent for me) but every night he goes out and he just gets wasted. And, I find some solace too, in just going and sitting on your own, having a few pints at the bar and letting yourself unwind. And his character does that much more than I do...

I agree that the character does evoke this aura of being ruined and becoming more ruined as the story progresses – with brooding and with drink. But Holden is eager to redeem him(self) too:

...the other thing is that he's a writer and he's interested in writing. For me it's more that I read a lot. But I've also been able to do some writing, too. And there's this weird thing with him, there's like salvation in the stories. He goes and studies poetry and becomes a professor. And I feel like I kind of have dreams of one day [doing] something more that kind of engages my creative juices more. Not like you rise up out of shelter work, but

⁸⁷ Nick Flynn, *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City: A Memoir* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010).

way back there somewhere is that kind of thought, that that would be nice.

I spontaneously wonder aloud if Holden might get up a class and teach novels and poems to homeless people – he's fond of retelling the stories of Vonnegut and Salinger and Bukowski, and reciting memorized fragments of poetry aloud at the Gateway. Why not feed his passion more formally? But when he laughs that off with a kind of disinterest, I drop it too. We bat around some other ideas for a while and some other pieces of Holden's story, his frustrations, before I try in vain to get to a bottom-line: Do you still call yourself a Christian?

Yeah, I don't know. I don't go around proclaiming that. I think...I think I...I think I am somebody who's trying to figure out life and figure out God, to whatever degree God can be figured out, or... *embraced* maybe is a better word than 'figured out.' And like, I'm also comfortable with not having to put a label on it. Because there's no way to draw any kind of line. Cause I don't believe in the you're-in/you're-out stuff anymore. So, I just don't think about what I am all that much, in that way. I think about what I am in terms of my values and you know what kinds of things are virtuous and what not, but not necessarily in....but if you had to peg me, I guess you could still say that I am. I think I would still say I'm trying to be a Christ follower.

I push for clarification: What does that mean to you these days? What are the things that are virtuous? What are the things that you value? What does it mean to be a Christ follower, anymore? I ask him.

I don't know. Well, the choice to be there is a choice – I guess it doesn't have to be, but in my case it is a choice that's meant to be a selfless choice. I'm going to put myself in the situation where I'm caring for other people who need it and I'm going to try do a good job of it. And they're not really paying me all that well and there's not a whole lot of advantages of me being there. But, at the same time, there are huge advantages. Because you get to be in that kind of place, you get to be in these moments when you feel like this is a really good and true moment. You get to have long-standing relationships with people, when they'll come back—

He stifles a little laugh because of the irony of this – workers at the Gateway are not supposed to be in long-term relationships, they're not supposed to appreciate that guys are coming back again and again. But Holden does, especially when guys return...

—and they thank you for what you've done, that you've actually done something of significance for them, in their life. Which is really nice. So those are great, great things. The choice to be there, I think, like any of the big virtues I have ever tried to

cultivate are that selflessness or humility or – you know, for me, for some reason for *me* – not having a lot of shit, not chasing after money is something I feel to be important for me. So, [laughing] working at the Gateway allows me to do that too... And I see those values in Jesus. Like the whole story of God in the scriptures. I see those values in other religions too. So, yeah, I'm still trying, I'm still aiming for those things. But there's a whole lot that goes along with that that I can't really stomach anymore. And while I aim for them, they're still in question. Sometimes I think, is humility really worth anything, because what's it all going to amount to anyway?

For me, my lifestyle now, makes a whole lot more sense if I have a young, untimely death. Because then I'll be like, good, I didn't waste my time doing anything. I'll be like totally out of it. I wasn't, like, spending all my time planning for my retirement. You know what I mean? It makes less sense as time goes on because, uh...you know? I'll be just as poor as the rest of them. It's funny...

Here, near the end of our time together, Holden seems to be hitting on a really interesting version of the *Imitatio Christi*. While Holden thinks of himself as emulating a poor and sacrificial Jesus he knows on some level that following such a Jesus is a problem – especially in his present context which by comparison with Jesus' own is worlds apart, in economy and climate for a start (and not to mention what will happen the older he gets). If not exactly involving a death-wish, being like Jesus is tied up with this idea of “laying down one's life for one's friends.” In the unlikeliness of crucifixion, to Holden this means foregoing some of the securities and successes his peers pursue – and willingly so. He *chooses* not to make much money and not to be “a Bay Street guy.” But Jesus' itinerancy is difficult to copy in a place where private property rules and winter eventually comes. A place where there are, as I've said, these expectations that people should be able to take care of themselves, where there is a dearth of safe places to stay for free, and far fewer in February.

As we saw with the Jesus statue at the outset of this chapter, to take a version of homelessness some two thousand years old and fold it onto the late capitalist context of the modern West is to wishfully (if wonderfully) suspend reality. Those who idyllically subscribe to this idea that Jesus was voluntarily impoverished in such a way that mirrors the systemic socioeconomic poverty of today are, according to the theologian Robert Myles, reinforcing the neoliberal notion that poverty is a choice and that a healthy dose of good character is all you'll need to get out of it or at least be able to graciously take it on the chin.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Robert J. Myles, “Probing the Homelessness of Jesus with Žižek's Sublime Object,” *The Bible and Critical Theory* 9, no. 1–2 (2013); Robert J. Myles, *The Homeless Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Sheffield Phoenix Press Ltd, 2014).

But Holden's testimony (for lack of a better word) tells us something else too – the restlessness and helplessness of trying to follow Jesus all the way down. If Jesus lived among the poor, so the story goes, his “ministry” only lasted a handful of years: three or four. For many of the workers at the Gateway, their tenure among the homeless is by now pushing ten, even fifteen. To note how the workers seem even to be re-enacting Jesus' indefinite youthfulness foreshadows my concern in the next chapter on immaturity.

But here it's interesting to note how the stories told of Jesus and the poor are short and rather sweet. They often involve some miraculous act that heals a person or changes their woeful situation, and after such acts of super-power, the gospels often talk about Jesus withdrawing for a time to be by himself and recover. The very human workers at the Gateway can't necessarily enact such magic. And what's more, they have to show up again for their next shift at the shelter regardless how recuperated they feel after the last one.

To be like Jesus who both loved the poor and was poor himself is not pristine or easy work, it's not lush with quixotic tones of freedom and the foregone hassles of having only a very few needs. The workers at the Gateway do not have the luxury of supposing that theirs is always noble, heroic work. But maybe, at the best of times, they act as if it is, pretend it is, hope it is, anyway.

Part IV
Immaturity

“I guess I got addicted to this work”

(novices, incumbents)

I've long been tempted to label what happens at the Gateway as vaguely immature. And this needling thought ultimately prompted a thought experiment: could I figure out if that might also be a good thing? This section is intended to bear this out: why might one draw such an inference from what happens in a homeless shelter, and how might we come to terms with it?

So often on a Gateway afternoon I felt oddly transported back to summer camp: the shelter workers were oddly reminiscent of the bored, exhausted, or otherwise preoccupied counselors among whom I had spent my teenage summers.¹ By virtue of our common upbringing in the Salvation Army, which has traditionally run a number of “fresh air” camps for underprivileged children across Canada, I actually worked at summer camp with one or two people who now work at the Gateway and so in some ways, re-emplacing them there maybe wasn't such an imaginative leap. Other workers too, had spent their summers at different “church camps” in Ontario, and had been friends since then. A bunch of us had grown up with these similar summer camp routines: you get your allotment of campers out of bed in the morning – much earlier than you or they might like; you see that they're (relatively) clean, well-fed, and placatingly entertained – just enough to stay out of trouble. You keep to the schedule; keep to as few rules as possible; keep everyone safe. You slyly see if you can sneak away for a break, or even a desperate afternoon nap. You try to rustle up some enthusiasm – or at least some basic cooperation – for dodgeball, for campfire skits, for the kitchen's tuna noodle casserole, for whatever. You spend a fair share of your time with a hundred people talking all at once, going this way and that, so that when evening comes on, and things grow ever so slightly quieter as one by one kids hit the hay, it feels almost like a relief: you've made it through another too-long day just in time to do it all again tomorrow on another shoestring of energy and resources. As I recall it, camp buildings were fairly shabby and the activities fairly simple, but everyone made the best of it. A good time seemed to come out of thin air; one needed a plucky sense of humour more than anything else. So many of these (albeit subjective) memories mapped onto my experience at the Gateway too – right down to less-than-explicit sense that the homeless are like child campers of whom teenagers are in charge.

¹In Carrier's history of the friendship ideal, he locates the ideal friendship in “resort towns...where polite society shed normal obligations of estate and profession and trade to become even more unconstrained, more fully able to give play to the spontaneous and therefore moral sentiments, in making friends.” Even if the Gateway workers do not so neatly fit into the category of the friendship ideal, nor should the ideal be let to persist, there's something evocative about this notion of a “resort town” for thinking about the Gateway as a space for friendship. In some ways, folks at the Gateway (both residents and workers) are living in such a place: leisure-filled, even escape-oriented, exceptional, a place where friendship matters. Other interests – from economic pursuits and productivity– are set aside for the purposes of making happy friends. In this sense specifically, it tends slightly toward the Turners' distinction of the liminoid. Indeed, when trying to carve it out from the liminal, they do list friendship as one of the non-obligatory, entertainment-oriented domains to which the theory of the liminoid might be applied. See Victor Turner, “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbolology,” Originally Published as: *“Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbolology,” Part of the Rice University Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 3, Summer 1974 (Houston: Rice University), p. 68.

Of the Gateway workers I knew, if they hadn't worked a season or more at summer camp then they likely went to Bible College, or both. Minus the under-aged campers, Bible College dormitories also strike me as spaces of a kind of suspended adolescence – in between child- and adulthood, in between dreams and reality, in between what you want to be and who you will yet become. The live-in college experience bears with it a similar kind of exceptional freedom, not to mention idealism: the consequences and responsibilities of adulthood are visible, but don't seem so present, so heavy, just yet. Dreams and expectations loom large instead. A handful of workers all attended Tyndale Bible College, specifically, a trans-denominational but evangelical school on the northern edge of Toronto.² One by one, they made their way downtown, to the Gateway.

Many of the Tyndale alumni and a fair number of others begin the story of how they got to the Gateway with reference to someone they knew who worked there already. Most paths seem to lead back to Alex. While studying at Tyndale, Alex had joined the college's "Ministry Team," a group of students who made bag lunches on Friday evenings and came downtown to hand them out. "I guess I got addicted to this work," he once described it to me, "I could tell it was taking hold of my life." He's been here ever since – longer now than almost anyone else. Alex eventually became the Front Line Supervisor and was in charge of entry-level staffing. It's not just because he had the power to hire that later workers now trace their employment back to him, but more precisely because they knew Alex before they even set foot in the Gateway, or knew someone else who worked there because *he* had once known Alex, too. For a while (roughly a decade), staffing seemed to have kept branching out among Tyndale alumni, acquaintances and old friends; an intricate web of: "I knew so and so. We went to youth group together/worked at camp together/shared a room at Tyndale together. He told me they were hiring at the Gateway. That's how I got in." The workers I call Adam, Cameron, Wes, Andrea, Holden, Rory, Shawn, Daniel, Justin, Ryan, Seth, Will, Zack, Charlie, Corey, Erin, Joe, Evan, Ian and Lou, all start their stories this way. That pre-connection matters most to them. A handful of these, not unlike Alex and his so-called *addiction*, go on to give their narrative an air of inadvertency:

I didn't know what else to do, so...

I was working in this store and I didn't really like it...

I was getting married and needed something full time...

My friend who already worked at the Gateway suggested I put my resume in...

In his ethnography of chess, the ever-provocative Robert Desjarlais struggles to understand (his own growing) addiction to the online version of the game:

In writing on the phenomenology of drug addiction, pharmacographer David Lenson notes that 'the word's etymology points to *addictus* – the past participle of the Latin verb *addicere*

²Formerly Ontario Bible College, now Tyndale University College

(to say or pronounce, to decree or bind) – which suggests that the user has lost active control of language and thus of consciousness itself, that she or he is already 'spoken for,' bound, decreed. Instead of *saying*, one is *said*. The addict is changed from a subject to an object; at least one aspect of the user's consciousness becomes passive.'...“It can be hard to stop, to disconnect from the ludic loops...passion piqued, the player is played by the game. It toys with him, owns him.

While certain kinds of Christians might be apt to account for their presence in a homeless shelter as something of a “calling” from God, I rarely encountered it put in such terms. Still, the haphazard way in which many workers talk about how they ended up there shares with calling – and for that matter Desjarlais' addiction – a supposed lack of deliberation, of determination, an active pursuit. Working in a homeless shelter is something that largely *happened to them*, from somewhere beyond the self. It sometimes even took them by surprise. Few of them set out to do this work in the first place. Instead, they got somehow sucked in.

A significant part of that seduction has traditionally been the irreverent, sometimes profane, and seemingly countercultural things they've heard Neil, the Gateway's Director say about the shelter and what working there is all about. Maybe they had a chance to hear Neil speak before they came to work here; they have, certainly, since. I confess that it was his rhetoric that initially piqued my curiosity and drew me to study the Gateway, too.

* * * * *

Neil's speeches usually take place in somewhat sympathetic settings, liberal-leaning churches, the odd college classroom, the Gateway's own chapel. An external audiences, in listening to Neil speak, seem to be *looking in on* what happens at the Gateway as much as they are already *in on* his project: what he says is not such a foreign message to them, he seems to be articulating something they want to believe about themselves or the Christian tradition more generally. If the comments and questions at the end of these talks are anything to go on, what Neil says tends to resonate rather more often than it ruffles serious feathers. He circuits a small number of Salvation Army churches (the denomination in which he was raised; theologically conservative, to be sure, but slightly more liberal in their social orientation) and Anglican churches (the denomination to which he now belongs) and both share an historical tradition of social concern and charitable activity.³ He loves to speak and tells me that he wishes he was asked to give talks more often.

At the outset, Neil is likely to shuffle up to the front of the room and, flipping the chair around, sit down on it backwards, his legs straddling and his forearms resting on its back. He often begins by

³ On liberal protestants more generally, see Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism*; Die, *Religion and Public Life in Canada*. On the Salvation Army see Part II: “I spent the night at the Sally Ann,” above.

saying that he doesn't know quite what he'll say, has intentionally not prepared anything in advance, isn't quite sure what they want to hear. Still, what he does say follows what I've come to see as a fairly familiar pattern, not a script exactly, but a repertoire of favourite anecdotes, provocative sayings, plucked from his anecdotal storehouse, chosen somehow to match the day, the mood, the crowd.

In reproducing here some of the pieces, I want to highlight especially how idealistic notions of the poor (some of which we've already seen above in Part II) co-mingle with the more general seduction of relationships, of love which is meant to play upon his listeners.⁴ I'm particularly interested in how the pull of this idea – that at the Gateway, workers can be friends with the poor – is only heightened by Neil's posturing of it as a countercultural idea.⁵ By swearing and by saying deliberately shocking or impolite things, especially relative to the supposed sanctity of the Church setting he finds himself in, Neil's speeches are intended to coincide with the desires and defiances of his audience, and particularly the young. “I've got a lot of people here who want to follow Jesus but hate church,” he's fond of saying. And whether or not that's true for each worker, on a case by case basis (I know some could argue quite convincingly against it by their faithful church attendance record), his speeches are constructed in such a way as to keep appealing to that kind of crowd, as if to tell them you can throw off where you come from and you can still change the world, at the Gateway.

Rather than a representative whole, the passages below are merely samples – it's my impression that any or all of them could show up in any given talk, on any given day:

Every man just needs a home, a job, and a friend. If you don't have those three things, you're not really living, you're just surviving.

We're breaking down the definition of homelessness – not hand out. Not even a hand up – the new, sexier way to talk about what we do. Instead just hands. This is my hand. It might be dirty. I wipe my nose a lot. It's probably got piss on it. It's just my hand. But you can take it and we'll walk through this thing called life together.

We're all the same. We're someone's son, someone's brother, someone's friend. We can sit down here together over a meal and learn something from each other that we didn't know before. It's

⁴ gelical rhetoric, see On even Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*.

⁵ According to Paine and his critique of the romantic ideal, friendship has been (melodramatically) thought of as a kind of non-compliance with the rules of public propriety governing other spheres. It's seen as part of an “adversarial culture,” a way of cutting against class divides and kinship ties, etc. Friendship with the poor at the Gateway seems to assume such rhetoric as given and to some extent corroborates and salience and pervasiveness of the ideal. Robert Paine, “Friendship: The Hazards of an Ideal Relationship,” in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, ed. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999), 39–58.

not that I have my shit together and you need my shit. It's that we both are shit. But let's figure it out together.

There are 5 ingredients to any good shelter: Relationships. Relationships. Relationships. Relationships. Relationships. It's about love. They've been spit on, pissed on, sworn at. But show them they are worthy, valuable and hopefully they'll feel that too...Everything we do is about saying 'we believe that you're worthy, that you have capacity of being restored, and we want to walk alongside you to do that.

Since we opened, it's been a decade of hope...a decade of not listening to instructions. What does the word 'hope' mean? To see something that doesn't fit, that doesn't look quite right and think that it could be different. People who believe in Jesus have the market cornered on hope. There is no other hope.

When someone is declared unemployable, we say that's a lie! We stand against it.

It's time for us, the haves, to stop thinking about charity, because that's just too easy; that just perpetuates neediness. If we claim to worship the God of the universe, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, The Great Physician; if we claim that he is bigger than crack cocaine; if we actually believe that God is bigger than loneliness, then we need to put our money where our mouth is. And that requires relationship; that requires journeying alongside people.

My very first boss said to me: "you've got 2 years in this ministry before you burn out. So make them good ones." Everyday I get up and come to work to prove that guy wrong."

Over my years at the Gateway, I've seen 8 guys from my hometown; a town of 3500 people, with 8 churches in it that have more differences than things in common. I've seen 8 guys show up at the Gateway. That never would have happened if the people in my town knew how to love God and love their neighbour as themselves.

I fundamentally, theologically, biblically, do not agree with this

place. I built this place because we have dropped the ball and people are slipping through the cracks. Because we have completely screwed it up as Christians, doing what we're supposed to do, which is love God and love our neighbours as ourselves. If we got it – the two greatest commandments: love God and love your neighbour as yourself – which is the solution to homelessness, by the way – if we got that, this place wouldn't have to exist.

We have a lot of joy in this journey. It's frustrating too. You pour into a guy and he goes and fucks it up again. And that's what God does too. Although he probably doesn't use the word fuck. He's always pouring into us and we keep fucking it up.

So I came, back in those days, thinking I was here to save people. But I learned early on that I was the one being saved. My story now, to this day, still 23 years later is that I'm still the one that's being saved.

Neil often tells the story of giving his first ever sermon at the Friendship Room, the Salvation Army Drop-in which preceded the Gateway, how he had so carefully prepared for a pious expository of the scriptures until someone calls out in the middle of it:

“Shut the fuck up.” It made me feel great. I wish, I mean, how many times have you sat through a sermon and wanted to say that? I mean here I am, people are playing Ping-Pong in the back. A guy is shitting his pants. And I'm cleaning it up. And I had this profound epiphany of home. This is where I belong. This is what I will always do.

Especially in these last three quotes, we get pieces of Neil's own inadvertent story of 'coming downtown to hang out with the poor.' The so-called accident of life as a shelter worker is not unique to him, nor any of the workers who told me their own version. Neil's is arguably more colourful but fairly emblematic of the rest: something pulled them in and keeps them here.

Like Desjarlais' characterization of addicts, they are *spoken for*, something – in fact many things – hem(s) them in. But this idea that an addict is more *object* than *subject* bears reining in a little too: it's an idea running rampant in addiction treatment circles and the so-called “War on Drugs,” where professionals and policy-makers alike are apt to call someone an “addict” or a “user,” dehumanizing

them in the process, reducing a person to some struggle he has or some substance she consumes.⁶ It's important, on the whole, that we don't go so far as to classify addiction altogether, as Desjarlais almost does, as a kind of helpless passivity – there is always more to a person than their helplessness. I would argue that the flip side of helplessness is a kind of openness and possibility – of not being too sure that you've got all the answers, have things all figured out, that you don't need anyone or anything to help. In AA (Alcoholic's Anonymous), that's the first couple of steps: to admit that you're powerless, and to acknowledge there's a power greater than yourself. In the case of certain Gateway workers and the tales they tell of their life-paths, they admit that their goals were not always so obvious and indispensable; that their paths were not so perfectly mapped out before them. We might call this, likewise, a felt sense that there are things bigger than you, beyond your control; causes, problems, ideals that are pulling at you and/or holding you in place, at least for now. As I remember it, that's also what it felt like to be young: suspended where you do not have much in the way of power over your environment, belonging to a world you cannot command. Even so, you harbor passions and ideals and dreams that you might one day do something that might change the world. Adulthood, on the other hand, is so often bound up with notions of self-actualization, order and discipline, or at least the illusion of authority over yourself (if not also some others) ...and maybe even the disenchantment of some of your earlier optimism and prowess.

Admittedly, this is not every worker's story: the ever-widening relational circle of friend-workers didn't go on expanding forever. Under a later Front Line Supervisor, staffing shifted slightly away from this inwardly oriented circle by virtue of more public job postings and an active search for candidates outside the usual box. It meant that people who showed up to work at the Gateway didn't necessarily share similar evangelical roots, and they told stories of their coming in rather more deliberate, intentional terms – if also less specific to the Gateway itself: “I had gotten my Social Service Worker certificate (or a similar credential) at such-and-such a college and I knew I wanted to work in a shelter. I saw the ad online and applied,” so their story goes.

Still, it's worth noting how, for a time, those who would ultimately end up being the long-term workers at the Gateway (and who still make up a considerable portion of the second floor staff particularly) were friends first and co-workers second, and how their primary interaction with each other still bears with it the marks of *intimacy*, and indeed, an *immaturity* arguably more characteristic of adolescence, of growing up.⁷ There's a potency and urgency to relationality in youth that doesn't always extend into

⁶ I got this idea from Donald MacPherson, founder of Insite, the first Safe Injection Site in Canada. He was a panelist and contributor to the Religion in the Public Sphere Community Forum, Religion and the (De)Criminalization of Drugs, held at the University of Toronto, March 2013. MacPherson acknowledged that it's hard to find alternatives to this language, but certainly the most important part is to be sensitive to the power dynamics embedded within them.

⁷ When James Carrier critiques the pure, idealized definition of friendship prevalent in modernity, he points out that “friend” is often a added distinction, affixed to some pre-existing relationship: co-workers, kin, patrons, clients, might also become friends; over the course of their otherwise ordinary interaction they might develop the kind of “spontaneous and unconstrained sentiment or affection” that makes them call each other friends'. On the whole, I am completely in line with Carrier's dismantling of the romantic ideal, but this idea of friendship as forming out of, or on top of other kinds of relationships bears

adulthood.⁸ In both their familiarity and playfulness with each other, these long-time workers lend the Gateway a rather less-than-professional ambience.⁹

Those who have the longest history together, who share memories and experiences that extend well beyond this place, form a kind of 'cool group.' They eat lunch together most everyday and laugh again over a host of inside jokes. They get together outside of work for RibFests and Chili Contests and SuperBowl Sundays. There's a March Madness basketball pool every spring, for which the prize is a ziplocked bag of their collective beard hair. And they all sort of dress alike too: in cargo shorts, team-sport hoodies and hats. This group forms almost an exclusive club, to the ranks of which other workers may aspire but not quite fit in – newer workers, but especially women. Women workers did not as readily conform to the informal dress code, care enough about their betting brackets, or relish the thought of winning a prize of discarded facial hair. Each year the winner was meant to add some of their own locks to the baggie and there were perennial jokes about what alternatives a woman would offer should she win. Collecting these symbolic bits of themselves in an elaborate inside joke was one of the more material ways in which women were kept just out of the loop. Still, to a certain extent the casual closeness of this in-group also tended to set the tone for the rest of the staff and other niche groups formed and tried to follow suit.

In Part III we considered the subjunctive prepositions that guide and animate the Gateway. Here, in Part IV we'll see how some of that is lived out in the everyday. Together these sections are meant to give the sense that this is above all a friendly place. Over the course of this chapter we'll see how that ambience of friendship bears with it a good amount of fun, sometimes little in the way of ardent seriousness, as well as a kind of laissez-faire attitude. There is also sometimes the sense that they're bouncing almost always on the edge of chaos and just squeaking by. All of these, it seems to me, are the marks of growing up, of becoming something new. Shelters in general seem tacitly mandated to press people into this sense that they have not yet quite arrived at adulthood but ought to be, at the very

exploring, even if it is a relic from a woefully narrow definition of friendship. What's interesting about the Gateway is that they are not first co-workers who become friends, but often friends who become co-workers. They come to work at the Gateway because they are connected socially – that is, both affectionately and, in a way theologically—and co-worker is the added distinction to their relationship, superfluous even. When friendship happens first – as seen in some cases here a kind of dorm-room-fraternization – it's interesting to ask: what kind of work follows? Is there an immaturity persistent here because immaturity came first and a definitive leap to adulthood and co-worker status was never fully made. Carrier, "People Who Can Be Friends: Selves and Social Relationships."

⁸See Reed-Danahay, "Friendship, Kinship and the Life Course in Rural Auvergne." Reed-Danahay argues: friendship as "greatest emotional urgency," greatest traction, sway, significance, between "nascent sexual maturation and the assumption of adult social roles – heightened during youth, declining after marriage. A liminal state! Homemaking, as I argue elsewhere is a marker of maturation, homelessness exists in the adolescent-type stage just before it. Friendship is more powerful there, compensating for the lack of other kinds of social support – in between the protection of parents and solidarity with a spouse. (hers has a class element too – middle-class friendship is mainly private, personal, the outcome of individual choice, whereas lower class male youth are more likely to seek out friendship as a matter of necessity, and to have friends who will help them survive.

⁹ See Engelke, "Angels in Swindon." As I noted above in Part III, for Engelke, attention to "ambience" draws some much needed focus to the sensual and material aspects of affectivity – the setting of the scene, and the sensual registers it plays to. So much of what I'm calling "immaturity" in this chapter is similarly a feeling or felt sense – intentionally or intentionally fostered.

least, on the cusp of something more grown-up, of being housed. Built in to such an idea about what it means to be homeless is a kind of normative immaturity: the shelter cast as an immature place to put immature people.¹⁰ One might say that the workers are just playing their part in that social drama as best they can, embodying that ideology. But, by the end of this section, which also exists as a kind of day-in-the-life of the shelter, I hope immaturity will be seen in both its pejorative and positive connotations.

¹⁰ This is something we've already touched on in our discussion of context and "stuckedness" above. Suffice it here to quote Samira Kawash – with the corollary that the notion she presents here might be extended beyond the specifically American context to Canada, and even slightly beyond the epitome of home ownership to all kinds of housing: "In what can only be called a contemporary mythology, home ownership is held up as the supreme achievement of American adulthood. This mythology is underpinned by an array of subsidies, preferences, and prejudices that are granted an additional force by the intense cultural identification of happiness, normalcy, and success with a detached single family house." Quoted in Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter*.

shelter talk

(play)

For a while on Fridays, I would catch the first train downtown and arrive at the Gateway before most guys were up. Things are oddly quiet and bright so early in the morning: fluorescent light glaring in the entryway and in the Drop-In, waiting for the sunlight to catch up. On any given morning around 6:00, just a handful of guys sit at scattered places in the Drop-In, each claiming an entire table for themselves, taking down just the chair they need for themselves and leaving the other six or seven upside down on top of the table, almost like a fortress barrier between them and the other early-risers. Seems it's too early to be too social, so they read the paper in silence. A few copies of the *Toronto Star*, a few copies of the *Toronto Sun* and a solitary *National Post* have been, as always, delivered to the front desk and ferried to the Drop-In one by one: first come, first served. 6 am is your only chance to get the whole paper, intact.

If mornings are quieter for one thing, residents and workers also seem a little rougher around the edges, a little rawer than usual. Maybe mornings are different because everyone is waking up to the reality of the shelter, every morning; they wake up and remember: I'm still here. This morning, I thought again about that book Holden and I both read, *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City*, and I got to thinking that might just be the way some people feel at the Gateway, in the morning – they wake up and think: another shitty night's sleep in a room full of other people. Someone was snoring; someone was jonesing; someone kept rooting through his stuff. A shitty night's sleep for one guy because someone else was having a shitty night's sleep of his own. I mused out loud about this to a guy who had been waking up at the Gateway for about a year now, getting up early almost every morning to claim a paper and a table: “yeah, that sounds about right,” he said with a tired half-laugh. It gives this idea (a recurrent Gateway tagline) that “we're all in this together” a decidedly different meaning. There's no isolated individuation upstairs in the dorm. There are no autonomous decisions about when to go to bed, how long to sleep, when to get up. It's all triggers and reactions, and catching chances as they come. So, in the morning, the shelter feels peculiar. Everyone (and me too, although for reasons more to do with the misaligned graduate-student-hours I tended to keep) is waking up to a feeling of unrest. Except, of course, for nightshift workers, who haven't slept at all. Regardless, it's time to face the day. At the Gateway, to refuse to get out of bed means to risk losing it.¹¹

First thing in the morning, a guy gets his meal card: this tangible marker of his residence here. It tells him that he's booked in for the day, that he can expect three meals and a bed again that night. It's this square piece of blue cardstock that says he belongs here, today. Tomorrow, if all goes well, he'll get a

¹¹ To be “late off the floors,” that is sleeping in, or otherwise failing to be quick out of bed more than three times in a month results in a “BNU” – BNU ordinarily stands for 'Bed Not Used' but is ironically also assigned in the case of Bed Used Too Much. Three “late off the floors” leads to one BNU and means disbarment, for a period of one night to one week.

new one. And the same, the day after that. Sometime overnight, a worker stamped each blue card with today's date, wrote each bed number and each name on a card. This morning, whoever draws the job of covering the front desk (while the other two prepare coffee and tea or run up and down between floors doing Wake-ups) will hand out those blue cards as residents emerge from upstairs. This task offers an opportunity some workers take rather seriously: to practice remembering residents' names, to see how many they can get right, to catch guys they haven't yet met and get on at least a momentary first-name basis. Sometimes I like to try this out too, but today it winds up being Seth. "Don't tell me," he might rush to say, picking his brain for a name, running his thumb through the stack of blue cards trying to pick out the right one. A name like John or Jeff can sometimes appear four or five times in a hundred, only making it trickier to find the right one – then he'll need to remember their last names too. Others, Seth will greet by name, by nickname, or just pick out their card silently and push it across the counter to a guy he assumes would rather not be chatty in the morning. With the passing of each blue card, Seth will also have to click open the door that leads toward breakfast. He'll do a kind of ballet between the counter, the clicker, and the ringing phone for the last tired two hours of his shift.

On Fridays, the breakfast is hardly worth getting up for. Anecdotally measured, it's the worst breakfast of the week: bagels and cream cheese, oatmeal, toast and pastry, some fruit, if we're all so lucky; all empty carbs and little in the way of protein. Today, maybe we all face the reality of this place on an unsatisfied stomach too.

Having just put out the first of three daily urns of coffee and tea, Ryan, the nightshift team leader, has sat down at empty table near the back of the room, with a paper which he drops as soon as I show up and sit across from him. I know that among the current occupants of the Drop-In, he won't mind being disturbed, and sure enough, he's right ready with a topic of conversation: "Have you heard about the Mother God movement?" he asks me. Now that I've been here a while and know him a little better, such a starter doesn't seem so out of the ordinary. People who know I study religion are always coming up to me with questions like this (What do you think about the pope? The crusades? The Moral Majority?) Have I heard of the Mother of God movement? I haven't. But Ryan is not deterred. He tells me how he was stopped on campus recently (he takes night classes at a local university) by two Korean students, on the premise that they needed his help with a survey they were doing for class. It turned out to be more evangelical than sociological, but Ryan was happy to go along.

A conversation like this, driven by one very interested party and a willing listener, is likely to go on for a while in the Drop-In. Residents and other workers may join in and leave the conversation as it unfolds but they're more likely to interrupt the conversation, just to get what they need from a worker (some more cream? Some more sugar? Some more cups?) or with something completely unrelated that must feel pressing in the moment. Workers like Ryan get good at being interrupted and returning precisely to where they left off.

Without me really noticing, J.R., a long-time, well-liked resident has joined us at the table. He seems to have been studying my face quietly for a moment before breaking in while Ryan is talking to me:

“You don't wear much make-up, do you Amy?”

And I confirm it: “A little mascara, but not much else.

“Well, you're pretty; you don't really need to wear make-up.”

Thanks J.R.” I say.

“You should have been a model.”

“Oh yeah? You think so?” I'm flattered but skeptical, then he begins to make sense:

“We'll you would have had to get skinny.”

“Exactly!” I agree with a laugh; willing to admit I've never been slim.

“My daughter is a model. She's in New York City now. She lives to walk the runway.”

Its clear now that this is what he wanted me to know all along. And now that it's out, the conversation is over and J.R. goes off with his cup of coffee and his stale scone from the tray of donated, day-old pastries. And just as quickly as we'd gotten sidetracked, we're back to the Mother of God movement...but only until Ryan is called to the front desk.

I've come to almost relish the moments in between conversations like these: a few minutes to sit quietly, read the paper myself, or at least pretend to read it while I rehearse what I have just heard in the hope of capturing it later in my field notes. But the solitary gap rarely lasts too long – I'm a captive and coveted listener in a place like this.¹² When Jordan descends the ramp into the room, he takes Ryan's place not just in supervising the Drop-In but also at the table where I'm sitting. It doesn't take long for another resident to sit down with us too.

Bending over the paper, Jordan reads aloud a headline about suicide. He reviews the high points of the article but I just listen, without really engaging him on the topic, preferring instead to let it drop. But when, continuing to read my own section of the paper, I come across something that strikes me in the moment as interesting enough, I read it aloud, too: a 74-year old woman in Alberta has been charged with the shooting murder of her husband of some 40-odd years. She had originally been charged with manslaughter, as if killing him accidentally, but she had confessed her intent to her grandson who eventually came forward, admitting the woman had done it on purpose. Jordan and I wondered out

¹² See also Desjarlais, *Shelter Blues*.

loud how bad it must have been to have lived with someone for so long and only after 40 years to find it so unbearable that the only way out was to shoot the man. And then, this neatly dressed and quiet man sitting with us, let's call him Karl, spoke for the first time and as if to draw a line under the whole thing: "You always tell someone. You have to tell someone." Without any encouragement more pronounced than our attention to him, he went on:

"Once I read in the paper that anybody who commits a crime, deep down, they want to get caught. I read that and right away I connected with it. I felt it right away. I used to be really good at getting in and out of places," he went on, "you'd never know I'd been there. I'd take off with all sorts of stuff. And I'd always get away with it.

"But I remember this one time, I broke into a warehouse, jimmied the lock on the garage door, and just drove my truck right inside and closed the door behind me. I had a really nice truck! I filled that thing up with so much stuff that the trailer hitch was dragging on the ground. But I didn't care. I drove away anyway. Left the garage door open. Sparks flying everywhere. I just didn't care anymore. It just seemed like everything was broken. And I wanted to get caught. To know that someone would stop me.

"Some people are raised by the fist," he said, becoming quieter, reflective, "I was raised by the fist. And when you're raised that way, eventually you just want to be put in line; to feel like things aren't so out of control."

Jordan and I listened intently; Jordan nodding along, almost soaking up this insight. Karl didn't stay much longer at the table once he had finished his story. He ate his breakfast quietly and went on his way. Things to do, I suppose.

After months of sitting in the Drop-In, hoping sometimes to be talked to and other times to be left alone to my observations and my thoughts, I've come to think of both of these conversations and countless others like them as of a type, a genre: *shelter talk* is equal parts random and pressing, equal parts rambling and truncated, equal parts likely and unlikely. Workers often note that they become friends with residents because residents themselves sought them out, almost presented themselves for familiarity and conversation. And I think we can see above how that's true: in a room of roughly 4 workers to 100 residents, one might as well wait to be talked to; it won't take long. For the length of his shift, a frontliner is a sitting duck, ready and waiting to be needed, confided to, let in. Some workers call it "the tractor beam," claiming that sometimes you can almost see a resident coming toward you with something to say. But even when you're not looking, a story can sneak up on you, be dropped there in front of you – on the table while you're having breakfast, for instance – and its teller might disappear just as quickly as he appeared, sometimes never to be seen again. If you do see him again, that story may have grown in the meantime – either into something more familiar or more surreal. It's often hard to say which: haven't I heard all of this before?

The more philosophical among the workers have long since decided not to parse the details.

“I believe them 100%,” Buck tells me, “And I disbelieve them 100%.”

Holden too, splits himself in half when listening to residents' tallish tales: “You've always got to believe a guy to his face to preserve his dignity but that doesn't mean you believe him in your head. When you're talking to a guy one-on-one, you don't want to disrupt that moment, that opportunity, by not believing them. I'll believe a guy until I get burned.” For the most part the frontliners, as keepers of stories and confidences, seem to know it's a kind of game and play their part.¹³

There's a veritable parade of characters floating by with their backstories, some uniquely weird: there's the Russian spy, the Mexican pimp, the murderous chef from Wales, the east-cost factory worker with no more fingers, the cagey Greek who is always asking you about your connections, the racist American ex-patriot – all of them in residence at the Gateway at one time or another.

But other stories are, by comparison, fairly generic and play on heavy repeat:

I used to be rich.

I used to work for rich people.

I used to play on this professional sports team or in that major rock band.

I used to live abroad.

I'm related to someone famous.

I won the lottery and then I blew it.

I went to jail for murder.

The government stole my [whatever].

I've lived here, there, and everywhere.

At the end of the month, when I get my cheque, I'm going home.

The late anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff (who perhaps not co-incidentally trained first as a social worker) once supposed that the stories we tell are our “equipment for living.”¹⁴ “It's almost as if we are born with an inconclusion,” she reasoned, and we each need to “fill that gap with a story.”¹⁵ In her ethnographic work on Jewish old people, she made sense of their eagerness to tell her their stories with reference to the sheer necessity of narrative, how it helps us not only to make sense of things, but helps us to know we're alive in the first place; it tends to render the invisible, visible. Aren't stories, then, all

¹³ On play see Sam D. Gill, “Play,” in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (Cassell, 2000), 451–64. According to Gill: “Our challenge is to find a meaningful way to hold together at once two or more irreconcilable positions and to do so without smoke and mirrors and without forces or too easy difference-denying solutions. Our ability to do this is among the crowning human capabilities...this ability, which may be called 'play' is a common one at the root of so much human pleasure and so many aspects of human culture...” (p.452)

¹⁴ Myerhoff, Kaminsky, and Weiss, *Stories as Equipment for Living*.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 18.

the more necessary for getting by on the edges, where people are more likely to be overlooked or ignored? In Myerhoff's estimation, stories become all the more urgent the closer one comes to death; she recognizes the rising risk of someone going unheard in life altogether. Whoever comes to stay at the Gateway is similarly in danger of being ignored, their homeless state coming to overshadow everything else about them. If their story goes unheard, might they, in a way, vanish altogether? None of the men I met at the shelter – on either side of the front desk – were any less in need of telling stories to someone, in need of knowing and feeling their worth by being heard. Stories told in the shelter require a willing listener, someone with an openness to the play of the (un)real. It's possible these creative re-tellings are a kind of vocal daydreaming, are being told to one-up someone else, to abdicate or conversely to take responsibility for past wrongs, to scapegoat, to blame, to reconcile, or told in order just to be believed, or to make themselves believe.¹⁶ Whatever their function(s), the accuracy of the story is almost entirely unimportant in the Drop-In, the telling and hearing is the crux of things; it seems to help the teller survive – maybe especially because of the stuckedness I drew attention to in Part II: the crag fast discursive exile and anonymity of homelessness in our time.¹⁷

The life of the shelter is richer for some of its more fantastical elements – much in the same way Yann Martel wagered that life was more interesting with belief in God than without. In his novel *Life of Pi*, Martel pushes his readers to keep believing that his story is true as it grows ever more unlikely and unreal. He argues implicitly that if life with God is more colourful, does it really matter if God exists?¹⁸ By the same quizzical logic, if stories make life at the Gateway somehow more livable, does it really matter if they're true, either? In letting a lot of these things slide, we might say that the workers implicitly agree with such a notion; that staying open, even to that which is dubious, is more important than adhering to the cold hard truth. The frontline workers have a way of keeping multiple possibilities always in view, they engage in a kind of truth-play. It could happen...¹⁹

This came alive for me (and since I've already compared it to religion, I suppose you might even say I was converted to it) one evening, when, with time on our hands, a dear old resident whom I'd known for some time, tried to flesh out for me some of the stories of his life, once lived up and down the

¹⁶ As Ehn and Löfgren would have it: "Daydreams may be used to escape a problematic reality or a boring situation, but they also serve for remaining there, seeing the 'there' in a different light, or making plans for a change. This 'stationary mobility' – to stay put in a place at the same time that in the mind one moves elsewhere – raises an important question about presence and availability...how we try to liberate ourselves at interior theatres by pretending to be someone else, inventing a more attractive life history, disappearing in memories, and dreaming about alternative futures. These activities serve as an escape from reality, but they also make it feasible to survive everyday life." Billy Ehn and Orvar Löfgren, *The Secret World of Doing Nothing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

¹⁷ If there's a difference to be noted in the way residents tell stories to each other, by comparison with the way stories are told to workers, I do not have data/evidence to support the distinction; such things were beyond my express purview.

¹⁸ I owe these insights on subtext in *Life of Pi* to a graduate seminar on Religion, modernity and Canadian Literature at Queen's University with Professor William Closson James, Winter 2004.

¹⁹ Gill cites Jonathan Z. Smith on myth saying: "For Smith the power of myth is located in the play that arises in the process of application, in the oscillation between 'fit' and 'no fit,' rather than the resolution of 'fit.' For Smith, myth is understood as a species of play." We might say that the stories the residents tell are creative and interesting in precisely the same way: they both make sense and do not make sense, at the same time, the tellers and listeners both swing somewhere in between. Gill, "Play."

eastern coast of the United States: of playing pro-ball, of training in the off-season at an ivy-league university thanks to an uncle he had who coached there; of being once a social worker; of building custom kitchens that were photographed in a magazine and when seen by someone rich and famous in Canada meant a move up here to ply his trade; of his two sons, his two wives, the grandson he would see the next day. In the middle of one of these stories I heard a voice in my head, of a front-line worker, Justin, who had since left, a worker I'd imagined to have a kind of cynicism rather peculiar to this place: "Baseball is a game of meticulous records," he had said to me once, when all I knew about this resident was this pro-ball story. "And we can't find him anywhere on the roster for the team he claims he played for." Justin said this like it was a project he and his co-workers had undertaken, in order to suss out the details and know for sure, and I can't say for certain who was involved or what they found. But Justin had meant it as a shot at this gentleman, implying even that lying had something to do with how this man had ended up homeless. For a quick moment in the middle of that story, I remembered the worker's dig. And then started to make mental note of some of the other details of his story: the name of his coaching uncle, the magazine his work had appeared in. These are verifiable facts, I thought to myself; I could check and see if all of this is true! But then, later, as I was trying to recollect all of these to my field journal, I stopped short: does it really matter? Isn't it a better story, this way? Isn't there some magic here, some richness in the fantastic elements, even if the moral of the story is how this man was on the cusp of greatness, was so close to powerful people and still ended up here. The story sure had an "If I had it to do over..."air about it. Isn't it kinder not to fact-check a storyteller and discredit him?

Other than this one skeptical worker, and even then not to his face, no one seems to give this man a hard time about his past, as he tells it. His story lives at the Gateway, is allowed to live at the Gateway, among so many others like it. Here, at least at the frontline level (what happens upstairs, in Case Management meetings is often the opposite) stories are not poked through with holes; the tellers are not constantly disabused of their own wishful/hopeful/integral conclusions; the protective equipment is left mostly as is.

* * * * *

By 8:00am the nightshift has given way to workers on days. Buck is always early, grabbing a bite of breakfast from the kitchen well before his shift begins. Erin too, is punctual, arriving by bicycle. Ian has a way of slipping in just in time, and situating himself behind the front desk just before the night guys disappear. When I wonder out loud to Ian too about the morning mood around here, he tells me matter-of-factly: "If you wake up and 40 guys are farting, snoring? Ugh, I feel like you have a reason to be upset with stuff. That's why, morning time, for the first half of the morning anyway, it's just venting time. I just let guys vent. Because if they don't vent, they just stay angry." He settles into his chair at

the desk, leaning back, his hands behind his head, ready and waiting to entertain complaints, confessions, snippets of conversation, whatever might come his way today.

Frontliners are collectors of stories, not unlike anthropologists themselves. They are hoarders of names, faces, the supposed circumstances that brought someone to the shelter in the first place, the habits, tendencies, appetites that keep them coming back: scraps of information seem to stick to their velcro-minds. Workers often share the bits and pieces with each other, pooling their resources of knowledge, layering the story with new fragments, ever in search of a more complex understanding of a person living in their company and care. It used to strike me that these stories shared among the workers were something akin to tales told among families: the same way one might joke about a cranky uncle, an eccentric aunt, a cousin in trouble, a perennially funny friend. Sometimes erring slightly more in the direction of gossip, or even a proud performance of whatever they've managed to find out, the story goes in circles, round and round an audience made up only of the players themselves. But in the field of social service provision, certainly frontline workers at the Gateway have happened upon something that is lacking: an anti-anonymity, however incomplete.²⁰ The case managers, upstairs, have the authority to come right out and ask a resident: why are you here? What can you do? What do you need from us? The case managers are private confessors while the front-liners, less powerful and out in the open, must, for the most part, be content to sit and to wait for the stories to come to them. The skeletal stories they pick up are consistently in search of flesh for bones – or, as Myerhoff put it, ever in search of conclusion. Many of them seem to delight in gathering up whatever they can find, in filling the gaps.

Their willingness to gather things up instead of tuning out, as well as their openness in lieu of suspicion and the rush to certainty are reminiscent of the subjunctivities on which life at the Gateway depends – shelter talk is a game of make-believe. But such playfulness with possibilities is also a kind of immaturity. Both the telling and hearing of stories at the Gateway involves a kind of inventiveness and a sustained suspension of implausibility which perhaps more readily abide among the young. Maybe we grow more skeptical with “maturity,” itching to lock things down. The willingness to let unusual and imperfect truths air at the Gateway (of not disabusing people of their own narrative armour) is a trusting, humble, and arguably adolescent kind of acceptance, an acceptance integral to the formation of friendships at the shelter.

* * * * *

This morning, it's not long before a man – severely troubled and mentally ill, but seemingly fond of the Gateway much as they are fond of him – slides in the front door and by the front desk, mumbling in

²⁰ See an interesting argument similar to this in Todd May, *Friendship in an Age of Economics: Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism* (Plymouth, U.K., Lexington Books, 2012).

Ian's direction his intention to shoot him twenty-five times. Ian feigns shock in my direction when in reality he's heard this a dozen times before. "See it's not even real," he says to me when the man has gone by. "It's like a dream." For Ian, one strange moment often triggers his memory of another, and he begins to tell me about a guy he knew well, who came up from the crowded Drop-In one day and slapped his hand on the front desk to get Ian's attention and uttering just one line before going on his way: "I think I just saw my son down there." Ian is bemused by this more than anything else. "The best part is he said 'I *think* I saw my son down there,' he doesn't really know!" "I hated that," said Ian, finally. "That was about the time I realized that anything and everything could happen at the Gateway."

With that, I slid off the windowsill next to him, a habitual perch of mine, and headed upstairs to find the Outreach team: I was supposed to follow them around today.

coffee, cards, cigarettes, and riding around in a van

(amusement, strengthening bonds)

In the Outreach van, Eddy is ever a tour guide of the grotesque: whatever odd or ugly thing that occurs to him as we drive.

“I used to smoke up in that doorway,” he says, pointing to an office tower that houses a prominent newspaper. “See how there's good cover from the wind?”

“See up there?” he says, pointing, a moment later, to a covered driveway that ascends to the entrance of the posh Westin Harbour Castle hotel. “I'd go up under there and find really long butts!”

“My dealer used to make us wait in that park,” he laments, pointing to what is actually less a park than a bald patch of earth next to a giant Loblaw's store. “Can you see why that would be a problem? A bunch of crackheads just sitting on benches out in the open...?”

And then a few minutes later, further along the Lakeshore Boulevard, he is somber: “I died under that bridge.”

Adam, next to him, driving, corrects him: “You *almost* died under that bridge.”

Eddy is indignant: “They had to pump my stomach!”

Eddy inhabits yet another liminal echelon, all his own. He's the only worker at the Gateway who is understood as having once “lived on the streets.” If he'd been a Gateway resident, maybe Eddy's stories would be let to slide, but as a colleague, Adam (himself a kind of stickler for the neat and tidy) can't resist pushing for a slightly truer version of events. Still, the interrogation doesn't last and the story seems to stand at that: Eddy died under that bridge and lived to tell me about it on the usual Friday Crack City Tour I'd lately grown accustomed to taking with him.

This Friday, we had a shelter resident with us in the van. Adam had agreed to drive Peter across town and drop him off at a west-end hospital for an appointment – just so long as he didn't tell anyone he's been done a favour on company time and company gas. Adam is less likely than some to break the rules. An exception like this one seems reserved especially for guys who have been around the Gateway a long time.

I had first seen Peter the Sunday before and he hadn't appeared to be in such a pleasant mood. He and a new frontline worker seemed to be getting off on the wrong foot: the worker hadn't been around long enough to know Peter from years previous when he had stayed there before. Peter expected more consideration for his veteran rank and some leeway, but he wasn't getting it. Maybe he had a chip on

his shoulder: he certainly hadn't wanted much to do with me. Getting into the Outreach Van this morning, he was impatient to have me unlock the side door for him, but crawling in beside me he didn't exchange any pleasantries or eye contact. He made small talk with the backs of Adam and Eddy's heads. My attention and input unneeded in their conversation, my mind drifted back to that Sunday night.

Mickey, a full-time-turned-relief-worker, had turned up to cover the night shift and had almost immediately set about quelling the tension between Peter and the newby worker: with a nod in the direction of the door, he said to Peter, "Want to go for a smoke?" Peter acquiesced and they headed for the door, patting their various pockets in search of lighter and smokes. Mickey has, a handful of times, tried to quit smoking. Once he planned to receive a box of nicotine patches under the Christmas tree and quit at New Year's. But (as with a handful of others around here, Buck, Joe, Justin, Seth, Lou, George, Eddy, and Jordan have all tried, at one time or another) those attempts never lasted too long: just the length of time between Gateway shifts, it seemed. When they came back to work after three or four days off, being surrounded by smokers was too tough to take. When it occurred to me to check up on Mickey's latest resolution—"I thought you had quit!"—he gave me the finger and a smile; claimed he just hadn't started to quit yet...

In the meantime, until quitting sticks, smoking is one of Mickey's signature moves – dissuading, redirecting, and calming something down before it has a chance to really kick off. If this is a reason that Mickey risks his health by smoking, maybe it's a good one.²¹ From what I can tell from the other side of the window looking out on the smoking pit, Mickey talks a fair number of guys around by asking them, simply, to go have a smoke with him. It pauses a tense moment; quells tempers, gives them a chance to talk things over. That night, it seemed like Mickey and Peter came to an understanding, smoothed things over: the new worker was just doing his job while the seasoned resident was just looking for some held-over respect. Mickey played the middle man; his insurmountable smoking habit helping to grease the wheels.

"Cigarettes are like currency," Joe had told me, once before. "You give a guy a cigarette or bum one from him and you've got time to talk." It's as if the chemical draw is equally matched with smoking's social implications: it breaks up the day, it levels the field, makes strangers into (albeit fleeting) friends, it calms people down – again, both chemically and with the altered pace it imposes. It's a mentally, even emotionally restorative pause – much as it might be simultaneously destroying some other part of your health.²²

²¹ See Richard Klein, *Cigarettes Are Sublime* (Duke University Press, 1995). "Smoking a cigarette is usually considered doing nothing," writes Klein (p. 35). Cited also in Ehn and Löfgren, *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*: "Smoking belongs to the category of action that falls between the states of inactivity – a somewhat embarrassed, embarrassing condition, unclean, unproductive, a mere gesture." Klein's book on the rituals and routines of smoking in history shows how wrong this opinion is. Smoking, he argues is indeed a very powerful way of doing nothing."

²² Klein discusses the upside of smoking at great length (time to rest, time to think, opportunities to socialize, etc.) and

In the van, I sit quietly beside him when Adam asks Peter if he knows me. “I’ve seen her around,” he says gruffly, eyes still straight ahead, standoffish. I say that it’s nice to meet him even though I’m a bit afraid of him too; not at all sure I’ll be able to win him over.

Stopped at an intersection, Eddy has yet another object of interest to point out: “See where that big Cineplex is? It used to be just as tall but it was all one level and 80 people lived in there. I did too. Until it burned down.”

“Please don’t talk about fire,” Peter interjects, abruptly. And as his story emerges it becomes just a little bit clearer why he’s so angry. Since the last time he was at the Gateway, Peter has had a job as a cook, and his own house which has recently burned down around him, while he slept. He tells us he woke up to the sight of the ceiling burning above him. “Now I’m decorated,” he says trying to joke and rolling up his sleeve to reveal his scarred hand. “This is my decoration. And I’ll never wear shorts again!”

We reach Peter’s destination and he gets out of the van, considerably warmer than when he got in. We take the back roads back to the east end of downtown, where we belong.

The Gateway’s Outreach team generally occupies a lower, east side loop; they’ve been allotted a catchment by the city’s “Streets to Homes” program.²³ They offer mainly housing resources to whomever they find in their catchment, supply the odd bottle of water or pair of clean socks too, and otherwise just drive around until those opportunities present themselves. Riding around with them, I’ve seen parts of this city I might not otherwise have seen – might not otherwise have noticed: these grey and gritty in-between spaces that until now just seemed to exist on the way to somewhere else – the underside of the Gardiner Expressway or the industrial wastelands along Lakeshore Blvd. The Gateway’s loop encompasses the constellation of shelters I’ve already referred to as the Homeless District, as well as the arteries connecting this district to other seemingly vacant places: Toronto’s Portlands and its Don Valley. In their territory there is no shortage of overpasses and underbrush, alleyways, abandoned rail lines, service roads; all kinds of nooks and crannies that trigger Eddy’s stories and offer all manner of hideaway for whoever wants less than nothing to do with the shelter system.

Adam, Eddy and the other regular Outreach workers, they all know the city, know where to look, know what to look for. It isn’t written down anywhere, it gets passed on from worker to worker and often from Eddy’s lived experience to the rest. You can only ride around with them long enough to know what they know too, all of their catchments’ squatting potentialities and it on-again/off-again residents.

connects smoking to the deftness, creativity and productivity of great thinkers and artists over time.

²³ ‘Streets to Homes’ is a city-funded service in Toronto connecting specifically people who live *outside* to rooms and apartments. The City contracts and funds various Outreach Teams and Housing Workers who are often affiliated with a particular local service/shelter like the Gateway. ‘Streets to Homes’ has organized their contractors to cover catchment areas across the city.

People who live outside often build on top of old sites, those already tried out and abandoned by someone else. They start with whatever's still lying around left over instead of starting from scratch. This means that for the most part, Outreach guys can just keep checking the same old places – especially as the seasons change.

In fall, the trees shed the cloak of protection they've been extending to campers all summer, the Outreach workers can see better whoever has been hiding for a few months now and check to see if they plan to hunker down for winter or perchance want, pre-freeze, to avail themselves of the team's offer to secure some housing and move indoors. In spring, the makeshift squats that were relinquished to the snow last November tend to pop up again. The melt makes available once again the fodder of urban-outdoor-homemaking: lawn chairs; stolen park benches, picnic tables, tarps galore and ratty tents; suitcases, various strewn clothing items, blankets, cushions and pillows; a life preserver; propane canisters; old batteries, booster cables and chargers; tires; bicycle parts; so many socks; shoes and boots – only sometimes in pairs; a cast iron pot or two; (empty) water bottles; old stove pipes; fire pits; broken records and VHS tapes; a remote control car; a duvet cover exactly like the one that was on my parent's bed growing up; a jug of kitty litter hanging from a tree. These are random things spotted at any old encampment.

Adam and Eddy's insider knowledge includes nicknames, not only for the spots that are likely to spring up into encampments from time to time (like the Bottle Diggers' site: a cluster of tents reinforced with plywood, struck on top of an old landfill, deep holes dug out of the earth between and behind them, tunnels and collapsed ground all around, out of which are retrieved pieces of old, (in)valuable glass) but also nicknames for the people they sometimes find in those places ('Fake Sleeper' or the 'Backwards Couple,' called those names, incidentally, for the ways in which those folks try to avoid contact with the Gateway's Outreach team whenever they come around.

With Eddy, this special knowledge is almost like something he needs to protect from outsiders like me – while willing to tell you a whole lot about the places he's lived and scored and almost died, he's less forthcoming with other people's information. That is, until the day I spot my first site from the backseat window: a snatched glance of blue tarp in the bushes, something Eddy and Adam had missed in the front. With that, I had somehow proven my worth. At the beginning of my time with them, Eddy was more likely to get out of the van without saying a word about what he saw or planned to do. He'd jump a fence, scamper up an embankment, or disappear into a methadone clinic, and return to the van a little while later without offering much in the way of explanation on the tail end of things either: you don't need to know.

Adam, for his part, takes whatever he sees very seriously and has to check out anything that catches his eye. They see a lot. No doubt about it. Their eyes are peeled for signs of life outside. But there are

definitely other times when the conversation inside the van is lively enough to keep their attention much more narrowly circumscribed – do they miss things? It's possible they see just enough to keep themselves in business. That they know just enough about who might be where that they always have a little something to do, but not too much. Just a couple of things have a way of jamming their schedule quick, and they feel all of a sudden swamped. I heard someone say recently that tasks tend to grow, expand, to fit the time allowed for them; that a small number of tasks can be stretched out over a whole day if they are let to. The Outreach day passes quickly and feels full, even though someone else might not think their job was such a whole lot to do. Being used to long days in the van, feeling relatively free of pressing responsibility can be jeopardized so easily. Requests from the outside, appointments, scheduled tasks can feel onerous, constricting in a way they might not be if a person is used to such things, constantly under pressure or exposed to others' whims. The Outreach team's impulse is apparently to protect the freedom – the freedom to just discover things. The thrill of the find is the key, and makes the Outreach workers sage but cagey specialists in their field.

Today, we drive around for while, checking the usual places. Adam pulls over when flagged down by someone they know. Once or twice, Eddy opens up the back hatch, rustles around in black garbage bags and produces clean socks or the odd backpack, as needed. The uncooled cooler between the front seats is full of room-temperature water bottles and in lieu of much else to hand out, they go one by one, out the window to whomever.

Along the way, they happen to find a new parkette and a new panhandler, neither of which they've come across before. The parkette was mentally logged by both of them as a place to tell the others about and to check on again later (they keep only sketchy notes, lest anyone be checking up on them). The panhandler took off as soon as he saw them coming. Bee-lining it into a cell phone store when they were within spitting distance. They left a pair of socks and a bottle of water where he had been standing, in case he intended to take up his place there again.

My notes on time with the Outreach team often admitted a frustration:

September 24, 2010: It's a warm day for September, sunny and bright. "So, the best job at the Gateway?" I mused out loud – having heard workers on other shifts enviously describe Outreach this way. I guess, Cameron replied, sort of nonplussed. "But it's hard though, too. We've got to be everything to everyone in our catchment area: housing worker, case worker, frontline, chaplain, addictions counselor, driver, mover..." But it sure seems like busyness is a construction more than anything else – busyness is as busyness says that it is. They set a low bar for themselves – they plan to house just 12 people a year, 1 a month, and try not to exceed it. To raise the stats this year means that next year they'll have to work harder and won't have enough time for goal number one: 'making connections.'

May 2, 2011: They didn't do much work today. It had been raining overnight. The air damp and chilly for May, so they just drove around a lot. For three hours. Every inch of their catchment touched on. But only once stopping, getting out, leaving the van to explore on foot.

May 9, 2011: They can get out of doing a lot with easy rationale:

"I don't anticipate a lot of activity down there, this time of the year."

"A guy is trying to make money and we'll just get in the way of that."

"The city did...[all manner of evil] so we can't...[find the guy, do anything to fix it, whatever...]."

They drive around for hours on end, looking for any sign of a site and sometimes I wonder how hard they're looking. But then, who am I to judge? One day, at a spot very near my home, we went to check under a bridge that I walk beneath on my way to the grocery store, at least once a week; I had never thought to look up – there, squeezed into a spare space in the scaffolding was an almost cozy, tarped and blanketed bed. Someone had lived there and somebody would probably live there again; without the Gateway Outreach workers, might it otherwise have gone unseen?

And when two friends, living outside, along a rail bed, woke up one morning to find a third friend dead, they didn't know what else to do except call the guys they knew on the Gateway Outreach team. The two friends split quick, leaving the Outreach workers to find the body and call the police. At least all that wasting time sometimes amounted to connection, however small. Being on-call, being trusted, and then showing up, that's what they do.

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Back at the Gateway, Adam waves silently to the front-desk workers and heads upstairs to eat his packed lunch at his desk. Eddy takes a few minutes to glad-hand around the Drop-In – he's a friend to any- and everyone – before disappearing somewhere on his bike: he's usually got some pressing errand during his lunch-hour off. I wait until the lunch line has died down a little before approaching the kitchen window myself: macaroni and cheese, sparse salad, a piece of fruit – unbruised bananas are the most besought but mostly we settle for whichever piece the volunteer happens to pull from the large stainless steel bowl filled mainly with soft apples and tough oranges. People come and go around me, refilling their cups with juice from the dispenser, looking for ketchup, clearing their trays and sorting their dishes into the wash buckets, leaving behind the odd piece of fruit in the middle of the table for someone else. Some head out again, straight away; the less time around here the better, especially if it's nice day. Others settle in for the afternoon.

Five afternoons a week, at the swift conclusion of lunch, the shelter is beset by countless come-and-go “community members” who frequent the Gateway's Drop-In program (an open and available space

more than a program, per se).²⁴ They come for lunch leftovers and vie for the day's 50 extra supper tickets, they fill every seat in the place and enjoy meeting their friends, mostly men, but a handful of women, too. Tuesdays and Fridays, though, come almost as necessary relief to the folks who live here: the Drop-In is "closed." That is to say it's not so much closed as restricted: only residents may hang around; only residents share the one o'clock allotment of coffee and tea; only residents make up the pool of available players when someone is trying to find a fourth for euchre.

Euchre is almost an entry-level game, at least compared to cribbage, which also runs rampant around here.²⁵ Crib is slightly more intimate: it usually takes off between two people who know each other, and the game itself rather well. Crib takes longer to play and takes a little more skill (math, for a start). But the basics of euchre can be picked up on the fly and a game tends to grow outward from the organic need for a fourth: you find yourself calling around the Drop-In "do you play? Do you? Anyone for euchre? Sometimes you take what you can get, teach the basics, and get on with things. Euchre tends to grow democratically too – each player needs a partner and if you didn't know that person to begin with, at least by the end you know his name and a little something about how he play his cards. For the length of the game, workers and residents are roughly on the level, they need each other to win tricks.

A rambunctious game of loud knocks and even louder laughs might even draw a handful of onlookers, who, peering over the players' shoulders, offer commentary or advice. "You should count on your partner for at least one trick" might incite you to try your chances with a weak trump. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" might tempt you to be a little more cautious, while the precise meaning of that expression is always contested. "The Lord hates a coward" is repeated often both to encourage and to sanction a player who "goes alone." So-and-so has "got the stopper" wishfully mitigates a confident player's impending triumph. The audience has the added function of forming an informal queue of potential players, ready to fill a space at the table when a one-off game is over quickly and a player exits, or when someone has been playing longer than their desire for a smoke will calmly allow.

Daniel is a player of particular penchant and skill. Quiet and unassuming on the whole, he is the go-to worker when trying to get up a game. He prefers players who are just as skilled and just as mild-mannered as he is and tries to avoid those who showboat by going alone too often just for the sake of it, or who tend to show how poorly they play by renegeing a laid card, absent-mindedly cutting their partner's ace, or trying too often to "table talk," (cheating).

²⁴ The budget for the Drop-In is not covered by the city – which affords the Gateway only an allotted portion for overnight accommodation and meals for each resident booked in, each night. Funds to run the drop-in, to afford an extra staff member on Drop-In days and 50 extra suppers, must be raised by the Gateway from private donors. As of my time there, they had not yet succeeded in securing or allotting sufficient funds to this area in order to run more "programming" – more activities, recreational outings, classes, game tournaments, etc. The Drop-In consisted mainly of 6 hours access to shelter dining area, some cards, some ramshackle chess games, and whatever was playing on TV, and dinner at 4:30.

²⁵ While cribbage is more common across the English-speaking world, euchre is less popular and by some estimations a fairly Ontario centred-game – and southern Ontario to be more precise. It's worth noting in this chapter on immaturity that native Ontarians (and other Canadians) may recall playing euchre as teenagers, especially at school with their friends.

This afternoon, Daniel descends the ramp into the Drop-In with a treasured deck of cards. It seems we're always looking for cards. One frontline worker gets them donated from a casino, from time to time, a hole-punch through them, a mark of their supposed disposability and uselessness. Sometimes the chaplain agrees to spend some of his budget on cards. Sometimes a stack or so gets given at Christmas. Still, it bodes well if a person has and protects his own deck. Daniel recently got a new job at the Gateway that came with a lockable desk: a euchre deck was now easier to come by when he wanted to play.

Daniel and Wes (a second-floor staffer) have agreed to meet here today and get up a game. Wes recently found himself reprimanded by his new supervisor for not wasting quite enough time with guys in the Drop-In. So, especially in the afternoons lately, he has been coming downstairs for cards. The two of them look about for players. No one ever really wants to play with Sonny who seems totally lucid one minute and on another planet the next. He plays in ways you expect during one hand, and in ways you would never anticipate the hand after that. All the while, he assures you "It's OK. It's OK." His sheer eagerness to play and the mischievous twinkle in his eye when he feels sure his crazy plays will amount to a win mean that Daniel and Wes will let him play anyway...play, and lose.

Henry and Billy, two residents and best friends, taught me to play euchre. Men as old as the hills, it seemed to me; one worn more with drink than with time, so it turned out. When he died and I met his family, they seemed pleased he could be credited with teaching me the sort of skill that would help me fit in around here, something invaluable, irremovable.²⁶ Another gregarious resident had given me 2am lessons in cribbage when he couldn't sleep and I was hanging around the nightshift. It got so that I'd rather be sneaking euchre games than almost anything else. A crack-addict I know took to bugging me about this: "Amy, you've got a problem. We've all got our demons. We should form a support group," he'd tease.

But there's a sort of unwritten rule about the balance of workers to residents in a game and I'm a little too worker-like; I can't play with them today. The inference seems to be that too many worker(type)s would disrupt the equity – they know each other too well, are more than likely to fall back on their shared stories and inside jokes, are winningly able to foresee how their partner might play. The odd time when power seemed to disrupt the dynamic of a euchre game was jarring, especially for its rarity. Once, a merely occasional worker/player, showed himself to be a particularly sore loser at cards; he complained about losing game after game as if he were the first person to ever have such a streak. Scoffing turned finally to a bald, poor-taste joke. "Hey! I know where you live!" he shot back at a

²⁶ See Rapport, "The 'Bones' of Friendship: Playing Dominoes with Arthur of an Evening in the Eagle Pub." Playing dominoes with Arthur, Rapport writes, "provided me with a route into relations...when I first arrived in the place as a stranger." "For facing Arthur, say, across the domino table, I seemed to be building a friendship as I sought to extend the line of dominoes between us, uncertain of his intentions as to his hand, needing his calculated input for the relationship to develop." He notes the leveled differences between them: "Nigel the university man and urban sophisticate is being educated by the unlettered farmer."

resident who cut a trick he expected to win with an even higher card. A low blow, it seemed to me. But he said it again. The inherent imbalance that is mostly unsaid during cards, even actively effused, was laid bare in that moment, and was all the more striking for its rarity. When playing euchre, workers can suspend some of their incumbent power for the sake of the game. If only for a few minutes, all the players are necessarily on equal footing. Taunting a person who lives in a shelter with “I know where you live,” bears with it a heavy and obvious corollary: “But you don’t know where I live, so there.” Drawing attention to the homed/homeless divide jolted me back to reality.

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Apart from the TV mounted high in one corner running the afternoon reality shows one after another (shows about food trucks and hotrods and storage lockers full of surprisingly lucrative junk), there’s something ironically familiar about the Gateway’s Drop-In area on a non-Drop-In day like today: it’s oddly reminiscent of a coffee shop, but almost inversely so.

Before fieldwork at the Gateway, I was more likely to sit idly in coffee shops, of a weekday afternoon. Like many a romantic graduate student, I expect, I would take my lonely scholastic self to a coffee house – ostensibly to read, perhaps more accurately to see and be seen. I would sit at a small round table in a small and trendy place nearby my stiflingly small apartment and fritter away time and money on the ceremony of drinking coffee. The more I thought about it, the more that coffee shop became a chimera of the shelter’s drop-in area. Both have one wall of exposed brick – all the design rage, these days. Both are littered with newspapers and magazines – either being read or ignored; the odd laptop opened in front of the studious or introverted. Both are alive with the sound of chatter, on topics both serious and otherwise. Both can boast some local art. Swapping, for the most part, women for men, each place is just as full of people killing time and trying to feel not so alone, all hovered over cups of coffee and tea.²⁷

In one of these places, however, the coffee can cost four dollars a cup while in the other it’s free. In one, I suppose it matters much more how you are dressed, how you look, how you smell. It tends to matter, too, what you were drinking: was it fairly traded? organically grown? locally roasted? rich and delicious? In one you are more likely to ruin a mediocre cup of pre-ground, no-name, canister coffee with too much powdered whitener and even more sugar while in the other artificial creamer isn’t one of options and you’d never be pressed into choosing from just one creaming option in the first place (non-fat, half-fat, soy, almond, whatever). In only one would you find yourself commenting on the perfection of latte art in your cup.

²⁷ Historically, coffee drinking was largely public and male, imaginatively tied up with virility and power. Coffee was to the 19th century what cigarettes were to the 20th century: an emancipatory practice for women. See Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “The Romance of Caffeine and Aluminum,” *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): 244.

All of this which happens on the inside, is to say nothing about what happens on your way out the door: your to-go cup, its telling logo, whatever task or occupation or errand that cup of coffee accompanies you to. I once knew a Gateway regular who would bring a Starbucks cup to the Drop-In to fill it up with free coffee and then go back outside to pretend some more than he wasn't homeless. I'm guilty of taking my travel mug into a coffee shop to fill it up on a similar pretense: that I'm deeply concerned for the environment.

The coffeehouse and the Gateway's Drop-In exist along parallel (and arguably classed) lines in the city: they allow space for the killing of time; they help to fill up what might otherwise have been empty or wasted with something else. They remake the modernist drink of (hyper)productivity into an idling companion.²⁸ Coffee has long been considered a harbinger of progress, a sign of vitality, and a sobering solution to various social problems (e.g. unemployment, alcoholism).²⁹ But in a certain light, simultaneously in the present-day coffee shop and the Drop-In, coffee is not so much invigorating as pacifying. Among other things, these are spaces for nursing a cup of coffee over hours.³⁰

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Supper, at 4:30, always seems to come too soon. (The caterers insist on leaving the kitchen by 6.) Still, there's a queue formed when the window is rolled up and volunteers starts dishing out plates of chicken legs, steamed vegetables, and rice.

By now, I've had a long Gateway day – not quite a frontline worker's 12 hours but close, and without a noticeable break. I've been too busy watching and my head is full of the day's details and the strain of keeping it all from oozing out my ear before I have a chance to scratch it into my notebook. I decide I've had enough, eschewing dinner I head toward the front desk to collect my belongings and go. I get there in time to see one last interesting thing:

Guys are looking for razors. They're always looking for razors, but razors are rarely on hand. I feel sure that I've recently seen a donated box of razors, when earlier in the week when I had been sent to clean up the storage closet. But Erin is still waving off the askers as usual: "I don't have any razors,"

²⁸ On the history of coffee consumption see Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *The Saga of Coffee: The Biography of an Economic Product* (Allen & Unwin, 1935), and Schnapp, "The Romance of Caffeine and Aluminum."

²⁹ In his short story, "The Idyll of Miss Sarah Brown, Damon Runyon had the Salvation Army pegged with the image of salvation alongside "a cup of coffee and a doughnut?" It seems the Salvation Army has been doling out all three all along. They've proffered the same solution to the problem of homelessness, all these years. The temperance movement has always been tied up with coffee – except where extremists deemed coffee just a lesser intoxicant. In her work on Catholic acts of love Andrea Muehlebach connects coffee and charity. (Muehlebach, *The Moral Neoliberal*. During his research working with the mentally ill, John Marlovitz juxtaposes his addiction to coffee and his attempts to heighten his own awareness with the homeless drug addict's attempts to chemically slow down or mute their awareness. Coffee is necessary on the part of the helper, he supposes. John Marlovitz, "Give Me Slack: Depression, Alertness, and Laziness in Seattle" 24, *Anthropology of Consciousness* no. 2 (2013): 137–57.

³⁰ See Suzanne M. Hall, "Being at Home: Space for Belonging in a London Caff," *Open House International* 34, no. 3 (2009): 81–87. Hall offers the example of London Caff as a place to spend time and take your time, and links this place to feelings of belonging and being at home, too.

she's all too used to saying (maybe with a quick glance into the plastic tub under the counter where they're once-in-a-while kept, but sometimes not). "They're all gone," she tells me when I asked about that box. A hot commodity, the razor, so I believe her; they're almost always out. But the question is floated again a few minutes later when Buck happens to be nearby. After the usual brush off from Erin, Buck, nonchalant but without missing a beat, tells the guy: "You need a razor? I'll get you a razor. Wait 5 minutes; no, wait two minutes! I'll be back," and he disappears into the stairwell and returns a few minutes later. I see him coming, carrying a large cardboard box marked "Cornflakes," hoisted on his shoulder, almost triumphantly – a trophy. With his foot he kicks open the door to the front desk and drops the box, three quarters full with razors, onto the floor with a slap. Without saying anything, he turns on his heels and walks out again, down into the Drop-In. Erin is amazed – not in awe so much as dumbfounded. She asks him later where he found it, but all he says in return is: "You have to know where to look." That much is true, but you also have to actually get up and go look too, I think to myself. They've been without razors at the front desk for a while now and virtually a hundred of them were sitting in a box in the closet upstairs. It's easier to say they're all gone. Fewer steps. The same often goes for toothpaste, deodorant, shoes. If it's not readily obvious and a worker doesn't feel like hiking, the item simply doesn't exist. Word got out about this surprising stash of razors and a handful of guys come up from the Drop-In to claim one while the going was good. Erin found a place under the counter for the box.

I head for home and remember something Buck is often fond of telling me on the heels of a situation like this: "Some people are born lazy. Some people acquire laziness. Some people have laziness thrust upon them." Initially, I'll admit, I didn't know exactly what this means – especially its third clause. But I would learn later that it seems to be a spoof on a line from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: "Some are born great, some achieve greatness; some have greatness thrust upon them." Buck has inverted it so completely that it has started to lose sense. Can laziness be thrust upon you? I didn't think so until I'd spent time at the Gateway. Buck would often say this as he was lugging out the garbage, or hauling things up to storage, anything he came across long left undone by the others. Seems it might have aptly been applied to this situation too. Buck takes some pride in doing what others don't and picking up dropped threads. It's also one of the ways he passes the time: by paying attention, sleuthing around for mistakes, getting little things done, and being generally in-the-know.

“meaningfully wasting time”

(recreation/ re-creation)

On the staff retreat, in 2010, about halfway through my time with them, Alan, their guest speaker gave the Gateway a way of talking about what they were doing there – all those card games and cigarette breaks, cups of coffee, and all of that driving around. He called it “meaningfully wasting time.” Take dating, for example, he told them. “Doing nothing is how you get to know each other; how you love...It takes time to get to know a person, to love a person.” For some Gateway workers, this idea seemed to have a proud resonance. They understood themselves as “just hanging out with the homeless,” getting to know them before being able to help them, becoming friends over a period of time – maybe just when they needed a friend the most. In extending a kind of hospitality to the unhoused, they were waiting *on* and waiting *with* the homeless, in the meantime. Some of the workers would later re-employ Alan's idea, and this language of “meaningfully wasting time” as a kind of sanction for what people looking in might have otherwise called *doing nothing*, or even outright *laziness*. It seemed to go hand in hand with another sort of trump card saying I'd heard in management meetings leading up to their biennial accreditation process: “we care about love not details” one or two of them would say to excuse their unpreparedness for evaluation.

On the way home from that retreat, I rode in the backseat of a car while a first- and second-floor staffer talked over this idea of “meaningfully wasting time” up in the front. I'm not convinced that each of the small car-groups of workers were also discussing these things on the way home; I had lucked into an oddly earnest conversation between these two, who (both acknowledged this) hadn't ever spent much time together, even though they had worked in the same building now some three years. They too had happened into this particular car sharing arrangement and over the course of the drive, promised to keep talking, sharing information, collaborating a little bit more. Ian, the frontliner, talked about how he does indeed have almost infinite time to “meaningfully waste” in the shelter's Drop-In but that it often feels like more *waste* than *meaning* because he has so little power to do anything that would tangibly help whoever he's playing cards against, hanging out with, talking to. Ian can hear a guy's story and come to know a little something of what he hopes for and needs, but his role almost as *paid time waster* means that he is hemmed in, while the real work gets done upstairs.

Jill, who works as a case manager on the second floor searched around for the words to describe her own frustration: at having all that power and responsibility Ian lacked (for helping guys access housing, resources, medical attention and the like) so much so that she actually has very little time left over for wasting. Jill was jealous of euchre and cribbage and meandering conversations about sports and the mayor, all the hanging out, while she was too busy pushing papers in her office: what would happen if she didn't?

At the end of the day, it's Jill's job to help people access whatever they need in order to *move out*. Residents of the Gateway are – absent any infraction of the rules – sort of allowed to stay at the Gateway for roughly a year, without much hassle. But by the end of a twelve-month stay, time tends to speed up, the specifics of their case files are attended to a little more closely, and residents are less gently and more deliberately pushed out the door. As a case manager, it's Jill's job not only to apply some of that pressure but to make sure that there are things lined up for a person, beyond the Gateway. On any given day while frontliners while away the time downstairs, Jill is at her desk, making elaborate checklists each and every day in her hackneyed notebook, often not leaving her office until each item had been scratched off. In the car that day, she talked about “holding a tension between” love and details, but as I observed, she was mostly tied up with the details and could only feel bad about the lack of love and hanging out.

Thinking about this notion of “meaningfully wasting time” and this conversation between Ian and Jill for a while thereafter, I realized I was learning two important things about time. One, that hanging out is both a hallowing and hollowing out of time – it looks at something simultaneously in two ways, as both empty and full (and as such it's yet another a kind of play akin to what we saw in “shelter talk”). And what's more, that “meaningfully wasting time” is a learned behaviour, it takes time and space, but it also takes skill, even a kind of discipline: in more ways than one, “hanging out” is socially and culturally contingent, and depends a fair bit on *knowing how* to do it. Maybe this is something like what Buck meant when he said laziness can be “thrust upon you;” hanging out somehow sucks you in and bends you to its ways.

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Is “hanging out” something or nothing? Is time spent at the Gateway empty or full? And does the answer depend on how you look at it, or, perhaps more precisely, who is doing the looking?

As of late, there are scholars who seem to be teasing so much out of “doing nothing.” Tom Lutz has wistfully raised doing nothing to the level of cultural phenomenon and traced an almost sacred history of it, from Jack Kerouac to Richard Linklater's *Slacker*. In his estimation, laziness is idealized protest against the excesses of capitalism.

Swedish anthropologists Billy Ehn and Orvar Löfgren have taken as their task an ethnography of what they call, tellingly, “the secret world of doing nothing.”³¹ The title itself is just the beginning; they lend their whole subject an air of romantic mystery. They argue, while looking closely at what they call “non-events” like waiting, daydreaming and running routines, that there is a lot of imagination in such

³¹ Ehn and Löfgren, *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*.

things, a fair amount of emotion, what they call “the special power of that which is ignored.”³² They see these apparent forms of doing nothing – what they call “the undercurrents of everyday life” – as rich cultural practices, necessary to survival in modernity.³³ And while there's something to be said for attention to the “camouflaged” ordinary, there's also a frothiness about their analysis, too. In their estimation, daydreaming is not just a coping mechanism but a politics. If only that were so easily the case.

In his captivating ethnography of cocaine production in Columbia, Michael Taussig issues an important caution to anthropologists in particular, worth mentioning here for the way it tempers and balances the above.³⁴ Confronted with his own boredom during ethnography, and his own infuriating sense that Columbians were lazy – even though “they are supposed to be sitting on a mountain of gold” – Taussig struggles to make sense of it and not make too much sense of it, at the same time:

I should however, begin with lethargy as well as with games – with the tumbling in the calm. Nothing could be less glamorous, or so resistant to representation. As the days pass like wet paste one into the other, your admiration for the spiritual and physical strength of the people here grows in leaps and bounds. Boredom hangs like a pall over the village smothered under its blanket of heat and humidity. In a well-intentioned effort to combat racist stereotyping, anthropologists are often moved to evoke equally stereotyped tropes of the cultural 'dynamism' and cultural 'richness' of the coast, yet I find it hard to know what is meant here. Certainly such statements reflect oddly on the rigor of everyday experience imposed by the climate and the physical brutality of the work necessary to stay alive. For what is elided by such tropes is the existential soul strength that monotony demands. Here ethnography fares poorly because this formative experience, namely, this sticky vacuum of heat and boredom, seems pretty well unconveyable and, worse still, all manner of narrative, paradox and so-called data are then desperately shaped by the observer so as to jolt the emptiness with meaning.³⁵

Taussig admonishes us, as cultural observers, not too readily to romanticize the emptiness, to rush to fill it with agency, for instance, or meaning – and perhaps especially when we're talking about classed forms of doing nothing; the ways in which waiting, for instance, is differently experienced, differently imposed, and differently enacted depending on one's socioeconomic standing. To put it in overly simplistic terms: some people are made to wait and others are not.³⁶ In Taussig's Colombian drug trade, or similarly in a homeless shelter, we ought also to attend to the ways in which waiting and laziness and inactivity all wear on you and wear you out; or how they tend to beget ever more of themselves,

³² *ibid.*, p. 209

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Michael Taussig, *My Cocaine Museum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.205; 59-60

³⁶ On political economies of waiting, see Ghassan Hage, ed., *Waiting* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2009).

breeding ever more inertia; or how waiters can become ever more vacated, disenfranchised, and incapacitated over time. Taussig issues here an important caveat. But perhaps especially when we're talking about classed modes of passing time, there's also a tendency to take this too far.

Bruce O'Neill's work on homelessness and boredom in post-communist Bucharest is one such example of this tack: for O'Neill, time in a homeless shelter is almost entirely hollowed out.³⁷ O'Neill claims that boredom is linked to money, or at least to the lack thereof, and that the homeless men he knows are bored with their situation not only because they are out of work but because they have nothing to spend. As O'Neill paints the picture, "boredom references their exclusion from an urban life that increasingly unfolds through practices of consumption. It's a brutal kind of boredom." Drawing on Romania's communist history, O'Neill claims that while the poor were still poor under communism, at least everyone was poor together – queuing in breadlines at once, collectively unable to produce or consume. In the newly capitalist system, however, these homeless men have largely lost their sense of "solidarity and forward progression" in the company of others. O'Neill believes they are bored now because they also feel atomized and alone, and endlessly so: "bored to death," O'Neill finally puts it.

It strikes me that O'Neill's work leans opposite to the overly dramatic one Taussig laments above; O'Neill's time is instead evacuated and boredom is all that's left. The boredom of O'Neill's Romanian "street homeless" is such a far-reaching despair, the "corrosion of personhood," he goes so far as to say. Reading the narratives of O'Neill's interlocutors and the ways he has sussed out their claims to boredom, it seemed to me that they were often about something else altogether. In reading how these men describe feeling *tired*, *hopeless*, *unhealthy* and *excluded*, I began to think that boredom had an almost too-convenient way of showing up. What these men seemed to be describing was something more like depression. Depression is perhaps much more than an affective state like boredom. And depression is, arguably and to varying degrees, the despondent inability to interpret situations and actively respond to them, perhaps the inability to manage or make sense of things – the passing time for instance, or the feelings of uselessness that underemployed homeless men must certainly face in Romania and elsewhere.³⁸ Depression can certainly seem to slow down time and empty it out.

As I read, I got to thinking, in spite of the fact that I know so little about the problem of translation: does *Ma simt plictisit* in Romanian mean any more, or less, than the English *I feel bored*? Is there really such a clear and easy equation between the two? I admit I'm ill equipped to make firm claims about such things – I don't speak Romanian and O'Neill has most likely studied the language in depth. But internet translation tools have understood the phrase *Ma simt plictisit* as "I feel tired," and that, I buy. The narratives of homeless men which O'Neill employs appear to have so much more to do with

³⁷ Bruce O'Neill, "Cast Aside: Boredom, Downward Mobility, and Homelessness in Post-Communist Bucharest," *Cultural Anthropology* 29, no. 1 (2014): 8–31.

³⁸ See for example Marlovits, "Give Me Slack."

feelings of fatigue, of being worn out with their predicament. Homelessness is, so I'm told, exhausting and depressing but it is not altogether boring. In O'Neill's account the bottom line is that the homeless are bored – everything else we might say about them leads back to this idea. Positing boredom as an all-encompassing experience, and summing up all kinds of things with reference to being bored has the effect of hollowing out the experience of time so that there's nothing much left to say about it. As far as we can tell from this article (and admittedly, there must be more to O'Neill's longer dissertation), there is little else going on for these men than their boredom: there is little agency, little imagination, little subversion, little freedom, little fun.

I want to position what happens at the Gateway in between the willful romanticization of time and its woeful vacancy. What happens at the Gateway everyday is both *meaningful* and *wasteful*, all at once. As such, it is not out of step with work Simon Coleman and Tamara Kohn have gathered together under the heading *The Discipline of Leisure*.³⁹ This volume, they assert in their introduction,

is dedicated to exploring some of the blurred boundaries and ambiguities that emerge when we bring leisure and work together in our ethnographic purview. We accept that the two are often separated in ideologically charged ways, but we wish to juxtapose such ideologies with practices that tell rather a different story.

The ethnographies in the Coleman and Kohn collection aim to trouble the work/play distinction in various crucial ways. In adding the Gateway workers to such a conversation, I wish to show how things grow ever trickier when work *is* play – not quite in the same way as professional sports, which is a fairly obvious example of such a blurring (and is well-treated in the Coleman and Kohn volume), but in perhaps a somewhat idler way. While “hanging out” does not involve the same kind of physical training it might take to be a paid athlete, I would argue that it still involves a kind of training, a learning to be lazy, if you will. A learning not to want for much, expect too much, need very much; the ability to settle down into the posture of doing nothing; to get good at and to make a habit of letting time go by. Not to mention also, learning and *knowing how* to fill that emptiness with meaning. The workers implicitly and explicitly know that guys mainly leave the Gateway in order to occupy sparse and isolating rooming houses – why rush to get them there? Why not learn to wait around here instead, and to make the best of it?

I get this idea from Taussig's discussion of the Columbian hammock people, which juxtaposes them with European explorers. In stark contrast to their own capitalistic appetites and tendencies, the Europeans arrived and concluded disparagingly that Colombians were “slaves to their lack of need.”⁴⁰ But having only a few desires and low expectations is only “enslaving” in contrast to the steady

³⁹ Simon. Coleman and Tamara. Kohn, eds., *The Discipline of Leisure: Embodying Cultures of “Recreation”* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007).

⁴⁰ Taussig, *My Cocaine Museum*, p.204; 205.

accumulation of capitalist wealth. Karl Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue once asserted a person's "Right to be Lazy," as a kind of political protest against the forces of market capitalism which would have him be ever busier in his earning. And while, as a political movement, laziness (not surprisingly) never took off, there's something here for us to think with: the way that appetites and wants and strivings can be willfully (or indeed, unwillingly but necessarily) quieted and stilled over time, leaving a certain kind of laziness in their wake. What's the point in wanting more – more wealth, more freedom, more stuff, more *home* – if you're unlikely to get it? We've already seen that homelessness isn't always so easily gotten over, pushed through. Learning to valorize the time in the shelter, the waiting, the hanging out, learning to fill it with meaning, is also a kind of tactic, perfected wherever time and space allows for it.⁴¹ If only by accident, the shelter is a space for waiting, for killing time when there's not much else to do: no work, no chores, no one else to take care of. But time spent in a shelter is not altogether empty and useless either.

"Time behaves oddly in the shelter," Tanya Luhrmann once observed, and I think that's true – although I have my reasons for thinking this which are quite separate from hers.⁴² Time feels funny at the Gateway for the fairly basic irony of its existence as a temporary, "emergency" solution to a deeply experienced and stubborn problem. Time has ways of slowing down and speeding up there without much warning. If a resident's name comes up in a case management meeting because someone thinks a guy has been staying there too long, there might be, all of a sudden, a more concerted effort to make things happen for that guy, to fill his time with appointments and forms and plans.⁴³ If someone manages to fly just under the radar, if his name never comes up, well then time can maintain a steadier or ever-slower pace for quite some time. Robert Desjarlais, in his ethnographic treatment of a Boston homeless shelter, called the workers there "keepers of time," with their schedules and clocks and appointment calendars; time was one of their mechanisms of power.⁴⁴ At the Gateway, this not entirely true, nor it is untrue. The workers "keep time" here *differently*, anyway – in the everyday meantime of shelter life, they help to slow it down and fill it up, if only with different kinds of doing nothing. Their recreation literally *re-creates* time (and even the *people* in time) into something else, something (newly) significant.

Time at the Gateway is meaningful first in a purely semantic way: it is laden with meaning – meaningful. The Gateway staff put all kinds of emphasis on time spent at the Gateway, in such a way that is

⁴¹ I'm using 'tactic' here specifically in the way it is employed by de Certeau (of which I'll say more in Part V: damp). de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

⁴² Tanya M. Luhrmann, "Down and Out in Chicago," *Raritan* 29, no. 3 (January 1, 2010), p.153. She goes on: "There are stretched-out patches of boredom, no way to get comfortable because everything's a little damp and a little dirty and there's no place to sit that's yours. But time also has the compressed, intense quality of the unpredictable. The shock of arrival never fades."

⁴³ It depends too on who your case manager is. While I was at the Gateway, one case manager was often more externally-oriented, trying to get residents into better situations outside the shelter, beyond the momentary crisis while the other, counterpart case worker was craftily trying to keep people in, nurturing their comfort here indefinitely.

⁴⁴ Desjarlais, *Shelter Blues*, p.101. Along with radios, blue shirts, plastic gloves, keys, knowledge of residents, and rules

not out of step with other Christians who *make* something meaningful by their attention to it and their heavy expectations of it.⁴⁵ The time that is *let* to meander at the Gateway is meaningful because, as Alan preached at the outset of this piece, time and presence are irreducible things, one needs to *be there*, in one way or another, *over time*, in order to communicate, to know and be known. Scholars and Christians alike have long believed and idealized this. Indeed, it's not clear, even with all of our present virtual connections, that there's any good way around this; if any number of the “dehydrated packets of images and information” we call Facebook friends, for instance, can ever replace the potency and intensity of being present and attentive in real time and space.⁴⁶ Time is meaningful at the Gateway because of its subjunctive and very real potential for friendship-making. Perhaps we can't say that Gateway workers and residents are exactly friends – if we were to adhere to some (romantic, enlightenment) ideal of friendship – but we can say that they wouldn't be anything like friends at all if they didn't pass time together in some of the ways I've been outlining here.⁴⁷

But, for all its possibilities, we ought to keep its actual wastefulness in view, too. Wasted time only makes sense relative to our shared ideas about productivity and efficiency; waste only exists in relation to someone's or something's supposed usefulness. When I say that waiting and boredom and hanging out tend to wear on a person and breed ever more of themselves, I realize that's quite true at the Gateway too – for workers as much as residents. A fair bit that needs doing goes altogether undone: thorough cleaning, careful record-keeping, meetings that no one feels like having right now, to name a few. The story I tell about safety razors is one such instance of the downside of laziness, the way a kind of “not-me,” “not-my-job” mentality grows over time, and how only the bare minimum tends to get done. I found that workers often appeared as if backing away, hands up from a task, so as to not get taken advantage of while someone else was doing even less; maybe thinking, ‘Better not do too much, they'll expect more of me later.’ If everyone says, “that's not my job” sooner or later it's no one's job at all and it just gets dropped.

⁴⁵ Anthropologists are guilty of this sort of thing, too: appropriating the Christian concept/practice of meaning-making as a sociocultural category of their own. Religion in general is too crudely understood as processes of fabricating meaning, when it is also processes of power and history. See where this is argued in Matthew Engelke and Matt Tomlinson, Introduction, *The Limits of Meaning: Case Studies in the Anthropology of Christianity* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007); Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 2009), p.40.

⁴⁶ In *Words Upon the Word*, James Bielo has argued convincingly that evangelicals in particular are so focused on the necessity of relational intimacy that they tend to perform, recreate and even, in a way, force friendship and intimacy in regular weekly Bible study groups. See also John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). In Peter's history of communication, he maintains that there both presence and time are irreducible, in order to communicate one definitely has to be there. On “dehydrated packets...not unlike a collection of baseball cards” see William Deresiewicz, “Faux Friendship,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 6, 2009. <http://chronicle.com/article/Faux-Friendship/49308/>. Accessed January 8, 2013. At the Gateway, there is an Internet connection at the front desk. There are a few computers in the multi-purpose room on the second floor, put there once with the good intention of offering computer hours and email access to residents – this was short lived. Since the advent of “internet sticks” some residents have their own laptops and their own portable Wi-Fi connections in the Drop In. There are only ever 3 or 4 people who own a computer. The question of Internet access on smartphones among the shelter residents cannot be easily gauged.

⁴⁷ On the romantic ideal of friendship see Bell and Coleman, *The Anthropology of Friendship*; Desai and Killick, *The Ways Of Friendship*. See also Part II, above.

In the case of razors, the lazier of the two workers, the one who couldn't be bothered checking for supplies to restock the drawer, was a young woman, but that's not usually the case. The ability to waste time, and waste time well (that is, the habit and skill of it) seemed at times rather gendered. As with Ian and Jill above, it was not just the nature of their jobs and the upstairs/downstairs divide that acted as a fault line, but their gendered notions of that it means to help, and to be productive, as well. Of the other few women workers, there was Carolyn who if not always stressfully busy was at least very good at affecting it anyway, performing her busyness along with a steady string of complaints about all of the hoops she has to jump through as an administrator. I admit that I saw little of Julia, ostensibly because of her own fevered occupation in her work: she rarely had time to stop and talk, just kept her head down at all times and kept powering through. And the same went for Andrea: she worked alone at her desk, careful always to prevent distractions with headphones and the door closed; she was always prepared for meetings with printouts and talking points and always seemed anxious to draw a line of conclusion under those meetings in order to get back to her desk and her work. I felt the tension in myself as well: I was easily sucked into doing tasks that no one else seemed willing to do, and was left holding the buck after a number of other people had passed it. I found that feeling wearing. I can't follow this idea all the way through here, but especially on one occasion when I was stuffing envelopes long after paid workers had gone home for the day, I wondered if it's somehow easier to waste time if you're male, and whether the women are more prone to make up for time wasted and duties shirked by men by working harder and being (visibly) busier.⁴⁸

Whether or not it's a question of gender, it's still a question of learning and skill: some people are good at wasting time and some people are not. Some people know how to make wasting time meaningful and some people do not. Both meaning and wastefulness are socially contingent – they exist only where there is time and space for them. Adolescence is one such time: when you're young, “hanging out” is rather more permitted than later in life. Teenagers are “good at” hanging out in a way that people in other stages of the life-cycle are not as likely to be. And hanging out tends to be more laden with meaning and possibility in younger years than when one is more grown up.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ For more on this, see Dan. Clawson, *Unequal Time: Gender, Class, and Family in Employment Schedules* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2014); Charles N. Darrah, “The Anthropology of Busyness,” *Human Organization* 66, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 261–69.

⁴⁹ See Ehn and Löfgren, *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*, p.34: “Teenagers said to be waiting for adulthood – for the fulfillment of all kinds of desires held off from them, for now. “They’re waiting for “action, adventure” control. “ For Ehn and Löfgren, boredom is most often linked to adolescence – an in-between state.

immaturity revisited

(discovery of something not yet known)

“The Gateway is never-never land” a disgruntled worker once said to me on his veritable way out the door to a new job. “They’ll never grow up.” Taking into consideration much of what we’ve seen over Parts III and IV – the idealism, the oversimplification of complicated things, the openness and playfulness, the hanging out – has helped me to agree with him, in a way; all of this seemed vaguely or overtly immature. But, by now, I also wonder if that isn’t for the best, if what might seem at first a mean critique of the Gateway is a posture, a mode, a way of being among the homeless that is both necessary and important.

What is immaturity, anyway? What’s left once we’ve disabused it of its manifestly pejorative connotation: its apparent not-enough-ness? *Maturity* has a way of setting a high bar and maligning anything that doesn’t quite rise to meet it. It’s employed more often as judgment than praise, leveled from an upper vantage point: You? You have some growing up to do. The accuser has arrived at some teleological end point while the other had better keep climbing and catch up.

These days, there are all manner of pop-explanations for the supposed problem of the “boy-man” – the perpetually immature male – the discourse surrounding which offers a convenient example of this trend. There are supposedly scores of twenty- and thirty-something males drawing out their adolescence, apparently in front of video game consoles and in the comfort of their parents’ basements; they are cast as an alarming problem. That problem is set against an assumed metric of maturity. Historian Gary Cross’ monograph *Men to Boys: The Making of Modern Immaturity* is fairly representative of the type.⁵⁰ It purports to track the cultural history of the supposed slacker phenomenon. Whatever the merits of the research, everything from the author’s tone to the typesetting on the cover – which has “Men” in large letters and “boys,” small – depicts an overall diminution, he wants to warn us that things are moving backward not forward and that we’re all in trouble. In *Men to Boys*, immaturity is bad and in myriad ways, *less*: less desirable; less satisfying; less virile. While maturity for Cross is plotted against these rather mythical rulers of “responsibility,” “seriousness” and what the author thinly construes as participation in the “self-denying settings of family and marriage,” immaturity on the other hand is not only the marked absence of these but a perversion of proper progression in their pursuit. The boy-man is considered self-centred and sluggish in the main, but Cross also goes so far as to suppose the immature person is also more likely than others to be given over to violent crime, prison time and general uselessness. While Cross tries to temper all of this with the claim that he is “emphatically not making an essentialist argument about “maturity,” he over and over again employs certain “standards of maturity” as if they are given. Chief among them are “family providership,” “formality of dress,” the ever-more-vague yet potent notion of “respectability.”

⁵⁰ Gary S. Cross, *Men to Boys: The Making of Modern Immaturity* (Columbia University Press, 2008).

Barbara Ehrenreich, in something I consider to be a fairly (if inadvertently) Foucauldian project, traces the genealogy of the “breadwinner ideal” in her book *The Hearts of Men*.⁵¹ She shows how the idea that men ought to earn a decent wage and take care of a family has been constructed over time by reference to the heroic achievements of masculine maturity. From 1950s novels and psychoanalytic texts onward, Ehrenreich plots the progression of this notion that a man ought to be “predictable,” “sober,” “wise,” (and certainly heterosexual, too). In nodding also in the direction of the rebels and outliers to these powerfully normative ideas, she only proves the rule: that primarily white, middle class American men have long constructed and conformed to narrow notions of what it means to be a “grown up.”

Certainly, polemics about the homeless are often mounted in such value-laden terms and shelters cast as way-stations for men who refuse to grow up, who languish instead, indefinitely jobless, spouseless, and without ambition.⁵² The countless card-games and cigarette breaks, all of this “meaningfully wasting time” in the Gateway's Drop-In, might indeed tempt the observer to superimpose the judgmental language of “immaturity” onto what happens there. In cynical and strictly monetary terms, it might be argued that Canada's welfare state is *providing* for these men more than any number of individual “breadwinners.” You might say that case-management methods of moving people out of the shelter are designed in some ways to make men act more “maturely” to keep bank accounts and appointments and jobs. If I could say for certain what “respectability” is, I might admit to its ostensible lacking among the homeless, perhaps especially if it's somehow tied up in things like earning a steady wage, paying taxes and bills, owning a home or any other participation in what seem to be the “approved” economic practices of our time and place. But if *respectability* means something more broadly, like being consulted, looked up to, even revered, I would have to argue vehemently that such things cannot be precluded from shelter life: they surely persist, crisscrossing over the front desk, between the young and the old in perhaps unexpected ways (some workers and residents are almost painfully aware of this: “He could be my father” or “I could be your father” is often asserted as much in the exchange of wisdom as grief). And we might indeed say that life in the shelter is somewhat “unsettled,” or for certain people *pre*-settled, on-the-way to being settled down somewhere else for a longer period of time. But being an adult, being all grown-up has too often the air of being definitively *finished, accomplished, done*; surely the next step is to be *done for* and there would be little left to talk about.

The more I found the Gateway's ambient immaturity capturing my attention, I felt sure there must be something more to (im)maturity than is often imagined; there must be something in the posture and practice of immaturity that is not so easily discounted, breezed over, looked past, along the way to growing up.

⁵¹ Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011).

⁵² See Joanne Passaro, *The Unequal Homeless: Men on the Streets, Women in Their Place* (Routledge, 2014), p.36. She argues how “Homelessness [is] indexed the failure of these men against the ideals of Traditional Manhood.”

In a short, provocative, editorial-type piece, early modern philosopher Immanuel Kant, responded to the question “What is Enlightenment?” with inverse reference to something variously translated as our “self-imposed tutelage” or our “self-imposed immaturity.”⁵³ Putting deference to some book or priest or professional firmly behind us, Kant wagered, would bring a maturity of reason. One ought to have the courage to think for oneself, to exercise his or her capacity for critique (at least in the privacy of their own room). But Kant's essay has also been misread as if what he cares about most is the achievement of independent autonomy, of self-reliance, and freedom from imposed authority. Such a version of enlightenment is heavy on the end point; emphasis is on the goal and enlightenment something to be worked toward and ultimately achieved; as if now a *grown-up*, one who goes along his or her unencumbered way in the world. But maturity is a word that by now has all kinds of ideological baggage traipsing along with it, which it's likely Kant did not mean to imply. In later interpretations of Kant's enlightenment, a finish line gets read in, some wiser, fuller, sounder point of arrival, while whatever lies before, outside or opposite it is inevitably the *immature*.

When, two hundred years later, Foucault re-read Kant's “Enlightenment,” he proposed to give us (and Kant) “a way out” of this value-laden problem.⁵⁴ Foucault notes how Kant defines enlightenment “in an almost entirely negative way, as an...exit.”⁵⁵ Foucault argues that while Kant may indeed have been concerned in his other work with the teleological progression of the enlightenment age, its historical progress from origin to a crowning age of reason, here in this piece, Kant is more concerned with *difference* and what makes today *different* from what came before. The answer for Foucault's version of Kant isn't so much about the overdetermined goods of *freedom* and *autonomy*, things we now too readily associate with “adulthood,” but with something much less oriented toward an ultimate fruition. Foucault reads Kant as calling instead for “the courage, the audacity, to know,” and thinks of such daring as a kind of opening up, a becoming.⁵⁶ The emphasis here isn't so much on the *telos* but the process, the *enlightening*, if you will. Foucault understands Kant's enlightenment here as an attitude, more than anything else, a way of looking at and relating to the world, “a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving” that comes out from under the old ways of doing such things regardless of whether we can call our enlightened selves “mature,” regardless if such a thing is even possible or ever fully complete.⁵⁷ Foucault was especially skeptical about this.⁵⁸

⁵³ Immanuel Kant, “What Is Enlightenment?,” *Berlin Monthly*, 1784.

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?,” in *The Foucault Reader*, trans. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984). See also Mark Vernon, “Postscript: ‘I am Not What I Am’ - Foucault, Christian Asceticism and a ‘Way Out,’” in *Religion and Culture*, ed. Jeremy Carrette (New York: Routledge, 1999), 199–210.

⁵⁵ Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?” p.34.

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p.35.

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p.39.

⁵⁸ Vernon, “Postscript: ‘I am Not What I Am’ - Foucault, Christian Asceticism and a ‘Way Out,’” p. 209.

The problem with our too-often and too-easy notions of maturity is that they are, contra-Foucault's reading of Kant, closed-off and stodgy. Instead of an exit, an enlightened move out of and away from systems of oppression, forces that seek to govern and stifle us, the modern notion of "maturity" tends merely to recreate powerful discursive limits, to narrow and lengthen a pre-determined acceptable path, forcing people and ideas into its tracks. Foucault claims instead that enlightenment is meant to open up in us "an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them."⁵⁹ In positioning Kant's enlightenment as a "a way out" of old categories, old binarisms, old forms of knowledge, Foucault is also calling for a kind of productive creativity, some exercise of imagination.⁶⁰ If maturity is too easily seized in the pursuit of locking things down, why not find a way out of that, too?

It seems likely that Foucault's concern with "a way out" was inextricably tied up with his broader concern with what he calls "refusing the blackmail of Enlightenment." That is, critiquing the almost inescapable categories and domains of analysis that have the air of inevitability but which are always historically contingent rather than inherently true.⁶¹ Foucault's wider project practiced and promoted the necessary posture of questioning who we are and how we got here (however that might be construed) and examining the limits of our shared terms and institutions. Certain Foucauldian scholars have also reasoned that Foucault's conception of enlightenment is part and parcel of a more personal problem, too; that it is not disconnected from some of his later (mostly informal) musings on homosexuality and friendship. It's possible that this is the place where his intellectual project and his social activism meet.⁶² What if finding *a way out* of certain categories and forms of knowledge would also make possible the creation of yet un-thought-of, un-tried, and un-regulated forms of sociality?⁶³

In a 1981 interview later entitled "Friendship as a Way of Life," Foucault claimed that there was an inherent danger in "*coming out*, in declaring 'this is who I am'" (emphasis added).⁶⁴ He argued that in doing so a person would be basically adhering to old essentialist, reified distinctions between hetero- and homosexuality, opting for closed categories and codified relationships instead of seizing the opportunity to open up, to explore, to make something new. "Perhaps it would be better to ask oneself," reasoned Foucault, "What relations...can be established, invented, multiplied and modulated" at this new juncture? According to David Macey, "Foucault looked forward to a culture which invents ways of

⁵⁹ Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" p.50.

⁶⁰ Vernon, "Postscript: 'I Am Not What I Am' - Foucault, Christian Asceticism and a 'Way Out,'" p. 206.

⁶¹ Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" p. 42; Vernon, "Postscript: 'I Am Not What I Am' - Foucault, Christian Asceticism and a 'Way Out,'" p.202.

⁶² Mark Kingston, "Subversive Friendships: Foucault on Homosexuality and Social Experimentation," *Foucault Studies*, no. 7 (2009): 7-17.

⁶³ NB: Foucault is thinking about this in the late 80s/mid 90s, when acceptance is not widespread.

⁶⁴ Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life." My discussion here also draws on: Steve Garlick, "The Beauty of Friendship: Foucault, Masculinity and the Work of Art," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28, no. 5 (2002): 558-77; Kingston, "Subversive Friendships"; Vernon, "Postscript: 'I Am Not What I Am' - Foucault, Christian Asceticism and a 'Way Out'".

relating, types of existence, types of exchanges between individuals that are really new and are neither the same as, nor superimposed on, existing cultural forms.”⁶⁵

For all of Foucault's concern with homosexuality as an opportunity for people to face each other without strict codes to follow, it doesn't seem to me that there is anything narrowly unique about it as an opportunity for inventiveness, as if it is our only momentous chance for remaking the conditions of modern sociality.⁶⁶ Instead, in the spirit of Foucault, I think we ought to be on the lookout for other (potential) relationalities which might also be, in his own words, “slantwise” and “diagonal,” which cut across the conventional and the convenient in yet experimental ways.⁶⁷

Foucault notes how male interaction in institutions – in the army, in prison, and in times of war (his examples are all seemingly “liminal” spaces, as I consider the shelter to be, too) – already tend to remake men's relationships with each other, they already show us the “multiple intensities, various colors” of relationality. So, why not what happens in a shelter too – a shelter that both is and pretends not to be an institution, a shelter premised on the idea that unlikely friendships must necessarily be formed? It seems to me that what we have seen happening at the shelter poses a similar set of problems and possibilities as Foucault's concern with homosexuality. What happens in the Gateway's Drop-In everyday is similarly a troubling of the too-easy binary between the homeless and the homed, for instance, or between friend and stranger, or between the folkish notions of the rich and the poor. What happens there is, at its most hopeful anyway, a defiance of normative expectations of both friendship and “home” and what it means to be productive (for both workers and residents), while it simultaneously posits in place of such hegemonic ideas a kind of social experimentation and the creation of alternative relational forms.

Foucault hypothesized that it is not the male sexual act that is troubling for people but the *way of life* that tends to frighten them.⁶⁸ This idea is definitely dated, belonging to a very different time, but it bears thinking about again in this context: it seems to me that similarly transactional interactions with the poor or homeless are more comfortable for many people, more understandable than this idea of “identifying with” and “living alongside the poor” which is in play at the Gateway. There's an easy neatness to giving money, for instance, to a person panhandling on the street or by virtue of your tax dollars allotted to social welfare. There's something clear and uncomplicated about weekly-demarkated volunteer hours spent handing out food or clothing (as the “do-gooders” do). But it's not hard to see that there's something much messier about stopping to talk, about sitting around for a while, about relating over time. Like the homosexual relationships of Foucault's time, relationships forged in the

⁶⁵ Vernon, “Postscript: ‘I Am Not What I Am’ - Foucault, Christian Asceticism and a ‘Way Out,’” p.205-206.

⁶⁶ I can't say I understand fully Foucault's explanation for attention to men over women; why and how precisely it is that women's alternate socialities can only prove less potent. He doesn't adequately answer the question of women, I think.

⁶⁷ Foucault, “Friendship as a Way of Life,” p.138.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.136.

marginal space of the shelter, are not yet so prone to normative codes, and so they may exist instead as possibilities, opportunities for making something new. There's inevitably a danger and a downside here, a precarity that I've yet to take up in these pages: know that I am not naive to it. For now, it's the possibilities of such a relational openness that I'm interested in, the space of social experimentation and becoming.

At the intersection of Foucault's thoughts on friendship and enlightenment is an opening up, a creativity which I am suggesting is a remarkably *immature* stance – if only in juxtaposition with the closed and declarative limits (the “guardianship” Kant thought we should find our way out of) which modernity is always in danger of recreating.⁶⁹ Foucault's “way out” is inventive and hopeful and full of relational possibilities – it doesn't yet know what it is, what it will be and maybe even defies the notion that it will ever end up being anything definitive at all. That's the enlightenment project at its basest, Foucault argues: to simultaneously critique and invent reality. In stark contrast to Jacques Derrida, who claims that friendship is impossible, Foucault sees the full range of friendship as yet inadequately tried, and some of its possibilities altogether un-attempted.⁷⁰

As we have seen, so much of what happens at the Gateway is animated by this idea that the workers are “hanging out with the poor, the way Jesus would if he were alive today.” This notion has a way of appearing derivative, of following an old pattern of relationality: being a friend like Jesus. But as I suggested in Part III, the snippets the Gateway workers have of Jesus and the poor can only stretch so far, especially when day in and day out, year in and year out, men move into the Gateway, move out and then in again. Not only with the passing of time but in the face of the seemingly immovable problem of socioeconomic homelessness in North America, with so little to go on, the workers must be creative, inventive in their friendships, instead.

At the risk of hyperbole: that which is said to be *mature* can only get older, more senile, eventually decrepit.⁷¹ By contrast *immaturity*, which is necessarily outside of power, is more prone to possibility, inclusivity, spontaneity, and more relational. There's a potency to immaturity that should not be too briskly dismissed. As a teenager, maybe you, like me, still thought you could escape wherever/whatever it was you came from, be a new person, and really make a difference. Wasn't it also adolescence when friendship seemed at once the most urgent, the most vital, and the most likely to spin out of your control? Even when it's accidental, coincidental, temporary, provisional or messy, (as at the

⁶⁹ Vernon, “Postscript: ‘I Am Not What I Am’ - Foucault, Christian Asceticism and a ‘Way Out,’” p.207. See also Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). NB: historically homosexuals were accused of a kind of perpetual adolescence – and that is not at all the sort of idea to which I'm subscribing here (See Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p.24).

⁷⁰Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (London/New York: Verso, 2005).. See also a more thorough comparison of the two in D. Webb, “On Friendship: Derrida, Foucault, and the Practice of Becoming,” *Research in Phenomenology* 33, no. 1 (2003): 119–40. As well as Ashley Lebner 's ethnography on the impossibility of friendships in Brazilian Christianity, more specifically: Lebner, “A Christian Politics of Friendship on a Brazilian Frontier.”

⁷¹ I get this idea from Leela Gandhi, she puts it in such blunt terms. Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

Gateway, it undoubtedly is) the immaturity of friendship may be the exact seat of its power. That's my best-case-scenario-analysis of the Gateway: that *hanging out* (as I have argued, a rather skill-full activity that is only cultivated in certain places, wherever space is allowed for it, youth being one such instance) is a remaking of small social relations between workers and residents in a homeless shelter and a hopeful attempt to change bigger things. In its openness and playfulness, in allowing time to pass and to accumulate, in letting familiarity grow and ties to be forged, the immature posture of *hanging out* brings with it a measure of *homefulness* where it might not otherwise exist.

Part V
Irony

IRONY brings us back to the problem posed at the outset: what's it like to live and work in a place that “should not exist” but does? In this last section, I consider the compounded paradoxes in this tension.

According to Michael Lambek's notes on irony, the ironic is not just a dramatic conceit, a way of knowingly looking in on (or down on) naive characters from the outside; irony is not just lapsed intentions and missed opportunities. Instead, for Lambek, it is “a major mode of human experience and social life” predicated on “the fundamental undecidability of agency and intention.”¹ Irony is not, as we're tempted to assume, the opposite of sincerity, of earnest striving, of good faith; it is a way of living in the uneasiness of multiple realities, of calibrating more than one attitude, position, point of view, truth. It is a way of recognizing that nothing is all that certain, unconditional, or complete, and a way of eking out an existence anyhow. It's not that our characters choose wrongly in the moment, against their better judgments or their better selves; it's that the game was rigged in the first place. There are only ever false choices: imperfect, ambiguous, irresolvable, contingent.

It is in such a spirit that I offer these last observations. Alongside the other dimensions of the liminal we've seen so far, they attest to an *ironic* in-betweenness – a *making do* in the middle of inconsistencies, messy predicaments, and things people cannot control. We'll see how different possibilities – and multiple realities – bump up against each other, live on top of one other, and otherwise co-exist. I'll consider here the workers' see-saw-like approach to rules, the dual-implication of *hospitality* and *hostility* in the Gateway's offer of shelter; what appear to be the mutually exclusive practices of generosity and solidarity in their posture of friendship; the inherent contradiction between *housing* and something I'll call *homefulness* in the impetus to move people out of shelters, and finally the impossibility of saying definitively if there *is* or *isn't* a solution to homelessness and living (however ill-at-ease) in the breach.

As Lambek warned, when writing or reading about people's imperfect and *undecidable* lifeworlds it may be difficult to resist smugness – to not point out the tragic mistakes, to not dwell on the way things could have been different. I have definitely struggled with this tendency in myself and likely have not been able to edit it out entirely; traces of my self-satisfied and “superior” knowing will undoubtedly remain, despite my efforts. The ironic undecidability of my ethnography itself is a factor here. As I mentioned at the outset (and have maintained all along) I have been waffling between at least two attitudes toward the shelter: that it *is* the best in the city and that it *could* do better. I, too (although in different ways than do the workers) live in this strange elliptical space in between “it should not exist” and... “it does.” In conclusion, I find it impossible to choose between arguments on closing down or championing the Gateway and the shelter system in general. Both are still reasonable possibilities for me, at the end.

¹ Michael Lambek, “Introduction: Irony and Illness - Recognition and Refusal,” in *Illness and Irony: On the Ambiguity of Suffering in Culture*, ed. Michael Lambek and Paul Antze (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 1–20.

damp

(power *and* weakness)

It's 5 o'clock. Buck is still at work but almost finished his shift; it began at 8 and will end at 8, likely right on the nose. All afternoon, he has been turning people away when they check to find out if they can eat here tonight – today the Drop-In is closed, so they can't.² He tells them “The lawyers are serving at Osgoode Hall,” and he tells them how to get there.³ He's more direct, rather short with the people who aren't as familiar with the usual Drop-In schedule, meal ticket procedure, or his authority over such things: a couple of guys on rollerblades he's never seen before, for instance, get curt, cool treatment. But when a small, young, sad-looking man comes in to get on that night's waiting list for a bed, Buck goes about the business of signing him up, and eventually stamps a supper ticket with today's date, taken from the pile set aside and yet to be stamped for tomorrow, and he slides it across the counter to the man. Countless times, I've watched workers give away leftover blue meal stubs ripped from blue bed cards no one had picked up that morning and would otherwise go unused. But there are none of those leftover today so Buck fudges a new ticket altogether. The guy is 9th on the waiting list; there's no guarantee he will get in that night. He'd told Buck he'd been at a funeral home all day, had just seen his buddy dead, lying in the casket; that he had to go back again to the funeral home tomorrow and is just trying to handle his depression. Buck makes sure he'll have a meal, at least; he can't promise a bed. Buck doesn't seem particularly taken in by that man's sob-story but instead of sending him over to the lawyers along with the others he's been turning away, he stamps the contraband ticket #109 (there are only 108 sanctioned tickets to match 108 shelter beds) and hands it over.

“Buck, what a guy...” He made me promise I'd put in that line, that I'd start telling about him this way.

He's a guy who has loaned (and probably would again) \$50 to a crack addict so he could get his ID back from his dealer: “I did something stupid” this man admitted to Buck one day, “If I had \$50 bucks, I could get it back.” “Guy was stuck. So I gave it to him,” Buck said to me that evening, after his shift, on a northbound subway.

“I'm not going to pat myself on the back. I'm still not sure if I did the right thing. I've been burned before. Once, I loaned a guy my metropass – on the second day of the month! To get to work, to make \$10 an hour for 10 hours, and to visit his mother – and the guy sells the metropass for \$20 to buy crack! That's the math on the street...”

² On most other days of the week there are fifty allotted dinner tickets for drop-in guests. Most of them get picked up early in the afternoon – folks are taking their chances by 4:00.

³ The “Lawyers Feed the Homeless” program operates at 4 meal times per week at Osgoode Hall on Queen St. W.

Burned yes, but even so when someone asked Buck for a quiet word, to ask a favour, to ask for help getting out of trouble, Buck gave the guy a hearing. “We work it out between us, we come to an understanding,” he tells me of similar situations. “You burn me, and I’ll make it tough for you. But where else is a guy gonna go?” Buck’s retrospective rationales often include more than one point of view.

The next day, Buck did get most of his money back from the brother of the guy who had borrowed it. The guy owed his brother money too, but Buck was to get his first. Respect for Buck, and respect for the place where he works: these things hold some sway around here.

Respect for Buck is built on a series of good turns, direct answers, common courtesies and bent rules, favours, good-natured jokes, and a rogue sense of fairness. All of this is perhaps summed up best in a compliment Buck once relayed to me: “Guy told me, ‘Buck, you’re the nicest prick I know.’” And Buck readily agreed: “You know what? That’s true.”

Buck lives by his own well-earned, well-honed set of rules. Capable of a kind of old-school fidelity to this place – a homelessness shelter – and to the idea that even if someone is homeless they are not somehow less of a man. Buck has worked here longer than almost anyone. I’ve asked him more than once how he lasts so long when those around him tend to dry up, burn out, run away. Buck usually deflects my question again with his familiar and nonchalant shrug.

* * * * *

A man came into the Gateway to visit a friend. Hadn’t been seen in a while. Had been arrested. Buck saw him go by the front desk and remembered him right away. He disappeared for a few minutes and re-emerged with a sketchbook, and some pencils tied up with a rubber band. Buck had been cleaning out the lockers the day that guy had disappeared, suddenly and unexpectedly, without any news. When a guy doesn’t turn up for bedcheck, his things are moved to storage for a little while. Workers are supposed to throw out that stuff if it’s still there two weeks later; they’re supposed to take anything useful down the street to Goodwill, then pile the rest in a trash bag and throw it on the heap outside. But this time, as he’s done a handful of other times, further plying a well-bent rule, Buck had put aside the sketchbook, those pencils, like the treasures they were to their owner. He kept them upstairs somewhere – although it’s hard to imagine where, empty spots to put things are rare in the shelter, much less places where you can be sure someone won’t walk away with whatever it is you left there.

The guy was amazed to have these small things returned to his keeping. He thumbed through the sketchbook looking at rough but detailed sketches of castles and cliffs and drawn memories of his home in New Brunswick. He couldn’t believe that Buck would save this stuff.

Buck shrugged his modest, innocent shrug. “I knew I'd see the guy again,” he said over and over to me, an aside to the scene he was playing in, knowing I was writing these things down. “I was bound to bump into him.” As likely as it is for guys on the street to lose their belongings – for them be taken away, thrown away, to grow legs and walk away – it's just as likely you'll see a guy come back to the Gateway; you'll see him as long as you're paying attention. And Buck usually is. He has an uncanny knack for faces, even a decade or so after he first happened upon one.

* * * * *

One evening I passed Buck in the stairwell. He was bringing the full Christmas kettle upstairs to Neil's office and seeing me, stopped off to tell an old story. There are two things one needs to know for this story to make sense. First, that at Christmastime, the Gateway, like any other Salvation Army centre, gets to put out a Christmas kettle (a “bubble”) in a grocery or liquor store, in order to collect money. And two, that there's a policy here that no one who is staying at the Gateway is allowed to donate money back to the Gateway, lest they suspect they are buying some privilege (that seems to be the logic). So, one evening in December, Buck tells me on the stairs, there was a resident who really wanted to donate \$50 at Christmas. But Buck couldn't accept it. The guy was adamant though, to the point of tossing the bill on the floor in order that it might be “found” by a worker and innocently taken in. Buck thought to himself: what if we just find \$50 in the kettle? So he took a kettle and the guy out to the back parking lot where no one was looking, he covered his eyes, held out the kettle at arm's length, pretending not to know that the guy would put \$50 in there. This is a kind of classic Buck story and he thinks it's hilarious; he has a flair for the dramatic in any ironic tale. But too, it's clear to me, he has taken seriously the man's agency, his desire to donate, and Buck has made a decision according to his own sense of what's right. He knows the policy (and all the others) but he never fights too hard to uphold them when they don't quite make sense to him, in the moment. He remembers his breaches precisely. He carries stories like this around with him and is reminded of this one in particular whenever there's a kettle in his hands. He tells it to me – his favourite audience these days – with a crooked smile and a twinkle in his eye, acting out the part where he covers his eyes and holds out the kettle pretending to be both blind and oblivious. I'd wager that all of this endeared him to the giver, even more so than if he had just taken the money easily in the first place.

* * * * *

“Did someone just use the sanitizer?” Erin asked snappishly.

Buck, incredulous: “What did you say?”

“Did someone just use the sanitizer?” she repeated.

“Do I look like the sanitizer police?” Buck shot back.

“It's just that I smelled alcohol and I wondered if someone had just used the sanitizer or if it was—” Buck cuts her off before she has a chance to finish articulating her suspicion: that someone around here is so drunk that the smell of alcohol is hanging in the air after he's gone: “It's not your job to be a cop,” Buck says once and then twice. And without saying anything in return, Erin departs the front desk. Buck wastes little time turning back around to me in order to editorialize the situation with one of his usual wise pearls. In this case, it turns out to be: “Some people around here think in black and white. But the world is full of grey. Look around you, kid. There's grey everywhere.”

* * * * *

“We call ourselves a damp shelter,” Jill once explained it to me. “We try to run a clean and dry shelter – emphasis on *try*.” The city of Toronto bears toward non-exclusion, the fewest possible barriers to admittance, while The Salvation Army is fervently abstinent and tries to run their shelters in a fashion similar to their teetotalling churches. I've heard the Gateway's overseers called “The Sanhedrin.” Meanwhile others have redubbed the city's standard computer program: Shelter Management Information System (SMIS) has become Satan Messing In our Stuff. Workers disdaining both, the Gateway lives somewhere in between wet and dry; hence *damp*.

Buck is almost the personification of this posture – in the best possible sense. He exists in this middle space between hard rules and free-for-all. He is constantly calibrating his authority, his available power, in order to see what comes of it. Does a guy just need a break? Or does a guy need a solid lesson in respecting this place? As you might expect, that happens a fair bit too. Buck decides which, mostly on the fly. He routinely bends the rules in one way or another. He simultaneously sets an example for other workers to do the same and foils others' attempts to hold the rules fast and in place, often only re-trenching their desire to do things by the book. (One worker was nicknamed by residents RoboCop, precisely because of his tendency toward almost mechanical rule-enforcement and his distinctiveness from Buck. But in fact, it takes both kinds of workers to hold the Gateway's dampness in place, its playfulness, its wishy-washiness. It's the *ad hoc* tacking back and forth between breaking rules and applying rules that keeps things bouncing just on the edge of chaos but never spinning completely out of control. The workers seem collectively to know that either extreme would be a mistake.

Over my time at the Gateway I saw rules get clandestinely bent and broken all over the place:

A ratty sign next to the TV declares that there's a pre-arranged viewing schedule, made by an anonymous worker, which will always be kept to and enforced, and that attempts to sway the workers

on shift, to persuade them to show something else will mean that the television is turned off indefinitely. But depending on the worker, the favoured team playing an all-important game, or the annoyance threshold for a particular program or personality, there is some fairly regular flubbing of this ostensibly hardline. Other workers, meanwhile, remain doggedly faithful to the rule, switching off the TV in irritation the minute they're approached about changing the channel.

Sometimes sporting events on TV are allowed to infringe on curfew, but certainly not always. Overtime in playoff games and Olympic hockey especially call for extensions beyond bedcheck. Pleas for certain basketball or football games work on a few workers, and one avid cricket fan would let guys stay up for that if they asked. But still others seem wholly immune to any and all such sympathies and draw a firm line at 10:00: the TV must be off and the Drop-In deserted.

Workers are not supposed to hand out sleeping bags. The logic seems to be that it encourages people to sleep outside, and amounts to a kind of "harm reduction" The Salvation Army does not abide.⁴ But every so often some donated sleeping bags find their way onto some shelves in the backroom on the second floor of the Gateway. And then every so often they also find their way off those shelves and into the hands of someone sleeping outside. It's not official. But it happens, seen or unseen.

During the day, when the dorms are closed for cleaning, residents are only allowed to access their belongings at two standard "Floor runs" at 10 am and at 1 pm. Otherwise, residents who need to get something from their lockers are supposed to be "supervised," and a worker is supposed to accompany them to and from their floor. Some days, such requests are so numerous, or the grief they get for saying 'no' so significant that some workers just let a guy go, saying only "Up and down, OK?" As if to say: be quick about breaking this rule.

Will knows how to sneak food from the kitchen for someone, without letting the catering staff realize it's missing. "It's our food. We pay for it. We should be able to give a piece of fruit to someone who needs it," he reasons.

Ian is always trying to push the limits of the waiting list for beds. He's not supposed to add extra names. He's not supposed to tell extra guys there's a possibility of a bed, but he can't help it! Just in case there are extra beds available, he wants to be sure a guy is waiting around.

Jordan lets a guy he knows have an undocumented overnight pass, ostensibly to go see his kid: "If a guy hasn't done anything to make me doubt him, hasn't given me any reason not to trust him, I'll let him go

⁴ Since then, The Salvation Army has instigated new operating principles for its shelters which approve of Harm Reduction principles. This means primarily that the Army sees its emergency shelters as a way of reducing the harms associated with 'sleeping rough,' that a shelter bed could in fact be the difference between life and death. It does not necessarily take in the full extent of harm reduction strategies however, and certainly does not include concerted harm reduction *programs* like safe injection sites, managed alcohol service, and the like. It's unclear to me how the above scenario would be viewed in the new policy climate.

see his kid,” Jordan justifies it. But it seems that it was more than the lack of abject reasons that made Jordan bend this rule – he and the resident had become, in a way friends. That probably holds more sway in this situation than the supposed benefit of the doubt. Such graciousness is not often extended without first an established knowing in the positive. Jordan made sure that he would be on bedcheck that night so that he could mark the resident present, in his bed. He trusts the resident to “keep it on the down low.” He makes him promise: “This can't get around or it'll ruin everything.” (I suppose Jordan shouldn't have told me.)

There are all kinds of things, little and big. Sometimes they'll let someone do their laundry after hours. Or plug in their phone to charge at the front desk. Maybe they'll keep something valuable in a safe place for a little while so someone can run an errand hands free. They'll let a non-resident get a cup of coffee even on afternoons when the Drop-In is available only to guys staying there. Over and over they don't restrict someone they could (and maybe should). In acts of conscientious objection to the official Non-Fraternization policy which attempts to prohibit such things, I've heard of workers going with residents to plays, to baseball games, to movies, to comedy clubs, to church. And like the bit about Jordan above, these are both poorly and proudly held secrets around there.

* * * * *

Rule-keepers are equally prevalent and arguably just as necessary; they provide balance and thwart outright mess. Rule-bending or breaking can really only happen in cooperation with rule-keeping. Rule-breaking only has the potential to turn workers and residents into friends *because* the rule about not-being friends exists in the first place. It's a question of pragmatism too: in the context of the (damp) Gateway where rules get bent all the time, any swift attention to the rules tends toward paternalism and makes antagonists instead. When a twenty-something worker tries to enforce a rule it can sometimes incite retorts like “you're not my father,” or “we're not children you know, we're homeless but you treat us like children.” I've watched residents try to get around one worker's ‘no’ by trying their luck with another worker – something kids with more than one parent probably try all the time. And in response to such a thing, I've heard workers talk back just like parents might: “You can ask around all you like, we're all going to say the same thing – the rule is what it is.” I hope I've shown that this isn't quite the case, the rules are much more muddled than this But in saying so, the rule-keepers are trying to leverage their available power and maybe even trying to over-compensate for not having quite enough of it. Rule-benders on the other hand, I've come to understand as downplaying whatever authority they have. Both postures are a kind of calibration, experimentation, or play.

In such a space, in between total power and absolute weakness, Michel de Certeau imagines a host of artistic tricks, creative manipulations, makeshift behaviours and small flights of escape, which he calls

tactics.⁵ In contradistinction to *strategies* which are deliberately, purposefully enacted by the powerful and those in control, de Certeau is interested in the rather subversive forms of *making do* that take place in spaces that are owned and governed by someone else. At the Gateway, at the behest of the city of Toronto and The Salvation Army, staff members manipulate their available power in ways I'm inclined to understand in the spirit of de Certeau's *tactic*. These behaviours are somewhat hidden, somewhat rebellious, somewhat impromptu, somewhat scattered – just as he says.

But things at the Gateway are perhaps not as neatly divided up between the powerful and the powerless as de Certeau spends his prose supposing. On the one hand, we have the Gateway workers doing precisely the sorts of things de Certeau imagines: manipulating, poaching, and re-using the powers that be and the rules as they are, 'making use of the cracks' in the system, as it were.⁶ And they do this in order to fashion an alternative sort of dwelling – which is precisely one of de Certeau's own examples of tactical manoeuvre (think especially of renting and making home in an apartment which is owned by someone else).⁷ But in the case of the Gateway workers, they are not de Certeau's isolated consumers/immigrants/factory workers facing one strategic Goliath; they exist somewhere in between having the power to impose rules on others and being subject to them. They exist somewhere in-between strategies and tactics, and cannot be neatly folded into either one. Still, de Certeau's *tactics* is the far more compelling of the two to think with here – especially since according to de Certeau, it is the tactical who must act clandestinely and carry around with them the memories of their transgressions since they cannot shore them up anywhere or employ them to increase their own power or ownership over a place – just like Buck and the others do.⁸

At least in some sense, the workers' tactics are abstracted. They need the rules and work against the rules in order to gain for themselves something like friendship, or at least "respect" from the Gateway's residents. And certainly this can be read as an attempt to make the Gateway "more habitable" for themselves during their shifts. But at least part of the project is also to make it more habitable for the people who live there, even after a worker's shift is over and he goes home (inevitably to make do and work on his own *dwelling* some more) At least simultaneous with their own trickery, the workers are trying to abdicate some of their relative power to those who have even less. Ostensibly, they act on behalf of the powerful, but they are also users and manipulators of power that does not belong to them.

On the whole though, it's hard to tell if rule-bending at the Gateway is a matter of "victory" for the weak over the powerful, or even an "enjoyment" quite in the way de Certeau (sometimes) rather optimistically suggests. In the sections above on Subjunctivity and Immaturity I was must more

⁵ Michel de Certeau, "'Making Do,' Uses and Tactics, in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 29-42.

⁶ *ibid*, p.37

⁷ *ibid*, p.xxi

⁸ *ibid*, p.xix

concerned with those kinds of hopeful possibilities – the way that what is iffy or surprising or playful at the Gateway might have the power to change bigger things. Here in Irony, however, I'm also tempted toward the darker side of the may-be; that is, how *making do* and *acting as if* in the midst of competing hopes/powers/ideas/realities isn't just empowering and full of potential, but also rather wearing, disorienting, awkward.

numb
(edges, thresholds)

“...all days are nights to see...and nights bright days...”

– Wm. Shakespeare, Sonnet 43

Fieldjournal Entry⁹ – January 21, 2010, overnight shift:

When it gets cold enough; when the true temperature dips below -15 in this city, or the wind whips up an even chillier effect, the Drop-In has to be cleaned up earlier than usual, half of the chairs stacked along the back wall and half of the tables folded, rolled, and propped up against it too.¹⁰ After the regular ten o'clock ritual of bedcheck, and after the waiting list has been taken care of, everybody left waiting for somewhere to sleep must be given a spot – even if its just a cot set up between the cafeteria window and the coffee station in the Gateway's Drop-In. A “Cold Alert Advisory” means that no one can be turned away from a publicly funded shelter. And so, thin brown blankets and white pillows (virtually as thin) are tossed onto whatever number of rickety canvas cots remain yet unbroken (this number steadily decreasing with wear and tear and time). The lights in the Drop-In and the hallway leading to the front desk are turned off – unless there's a Cold Alert, those lights burn constantly, they are otherwise never off.

On nights like tonight then, the Gateway's entranceway is unusually surrounded by darkness on all sides; the foyer feels shrunken in size – quieter and smaller than ordinary, hemmed in, rendered so by the metaphysical capacity of light now absent: you can't see beyond the lobby anymore. The darkness abutting the glass doors leading down to the Drop-In is like a wall of silence and so the sound of what happens beyond the opposite wall, outside along the ramp, seems to seep in through the seams of the doors and windows and to bounce off the blackness, reverberating around the front desk.

Riley stands quietly at the counter (residents' side), puzzling over his Sudoku. He gets stuck at one point and leaves for a few minutes to get his “chocolate fix” at the gas station across the street. Waylon sits quietly – well quiet-ish – on a rare chair by the Drop-In door. Every so often, he erupts in laughter at this or that absurdity, as he sees it. He doesn't miss a thing. I think of him as doing what I'm supposed to be doing – especially with the heightened sense of awareness which seems afforded by the darkness all around this one strict square box of light: he's watching what happens the way I ought to be watching. He reacts to every tiny thing that's going on – in sarcasm mainly –

⁹ Edited slightly to make it clearer and more comprehensible.

¹⁰ This also happens in Extreme Heat (with Humidex over 40°)

but I should be paying such keen attention too, trapping these images, these stories in my brain, even if the critical capacity to comment on them evades me in the now.

The truth is that these days I'm having trouble doing any of those things.

Apart from the unusual darkness of the cloistered Drop-In, things that are supposed to seem strange are oddly normal now, forgettable even. The colours and dimensions of this place, its oddities and intimacies – the things I wish would pervade my work seem woefully out of reach, as I write this. After more than a year here, I'm troubled by an acute fear: that I'll never be able to capture what's happening at the Gateway, not because it's too strange, but because by now I've become worn out by its strangeness.

Is it something like a frog being slowly boiled in water? You don't notice that you're slowly getting cooked: closing off, senses dulling; growing older and wiser or just more jaded? Someone – a “street worker” who has been through this sort of thing before told me recently: This is normal – the breakdown of your usual processes, the failure to register and react to what's happening out there in front of your glassy eyes, just beyond your grasp; your ability to understand what is really happening here and why.

* * * * *

In Part IV, I left off my day-in-the-life of the Gateway around suppertime; I pick it up here at about that same time in order to offer something of an any-given-evening at the Gateway, by the hour.

Evenings pass much like afternoons around here: cards, TV, smoking, guys coming and going, questions and answers, phone messages left and picked up, so too the mail; a few lucky laundry doers sort and fold outside the office where a handful of others might be meeting with the after hours addiction counselor. As of 6pm when the dormitory floors are open, some take their first stab at sleep. Some nights there are things to do or see in the chapel: on Mondays there's a men's support group meeting; Tuesdays, a second-hand clothing room; Wednesdays a chapel service; Art Club on Thursdays – all run by volunteers. For a while now, there have been vague but cheerful intentions of Friday movie nights, but since no one is directly responsible for these, they rarely come together.

By 7:30 or even sooner, the three daytime frontliners are starting to gather from their various posts and preoccupations around the shelter and are hovering at the front desk in anticipation: they just want to get out of here and go home. They swap some of the day's insights and stories, write some emails to the other shifts, and wait for the last half hour to tick away. For the most part they punch the clock on the dot and leave, having already retrieved their coats and belongings from their lockers, ready to go.

At 8 it's shift change; the night workers take over. As usual, when Lou turns up he seems to be operating on very little sleep. He often arrives for his shift looking a little rough; beaten up by the world? A toque hiding his mess of hair; his clothes holey and sagging. It sometimes seems that he lives entirely on cigarettes and bad coffee and whatever leftover junk he can find in the kitchen to eat in the middle of the night. He's fond of telling bald jokes and shocking stories of the terrible things he's seen, the substandard living conditions in his apartment, his late nights drinking, his own veritable poverty. He's not the only night guy who passes his shifts like this: many of them live as if on the edge. Being always awake while everyone else is asleep tends to beat you up even some more. The more you do it, the harder it gets to take care of yourself: by and large, they tend to roll out of bed just in time get here; they leave in the morning in order to fall into bed as quickly as they can. More often than not, they spend the day in fitful sleeping – at the beginning of each shift they would ritually take turns reporting on the number of sleep hours they had each achieved that day. Some spend their days off trying to right their upside-down clocks, just in time to upend them again. For others, their time off is spent doing other middle-of-the-night things: online gambling or gaming, benders and other bad habits, navigating messy relationships – as one worker put it to me: “it's all very rock n' roll.” Someone offered another hackneyed phrase instead: “you live hard, you play hard.”

Strangely unlike days, the night shifts often begin with “briefing.” The extra staffer who works 12-12 covers the front desk while the night guys retreat to the now quiet, empty kitchen for a meeting that usually lasts much longer than it needs to. The express purpose of this meeting is to divvy up the night's chores and decide who will take which break: first break 12-2, second break 2-4, last break 4-6. Usually someone has a preference, based sometimes on how much sleep they got that day or what they have to do tomorrow, trying to squeeze in a well-placed nap. These two logistical items can be sorted out in a mere matter of minutes, but some teams tend to lollygag around in the kitchen until there's nothing left to talk about, until they simply *must* get on with things – like putting out any night snack which may have been donated over the course of the day.¹¹

Finally, they pray. This is mainly Ryan's job. Lou is for it, in theory, but doesn't often do it. He seems fearful enough of the night-times that he'll take all the help he can get, just doesn't feel like saying such things out loud. On a given night shift, there often will be only one, at best two people willing to pray – “Christian” enough to pray. This guy stands out on any given rotation – Ian when he worked nights, Ryan, Justin, and maybe Zach – but only in a pinch. They always ask for peace. “Give us a calm, quiet night,” Ryan prays this evening, rather pragmatically: “If you can have anything to do with that, great.

¹¹ The Gateway receives at least bi-weekly food donations from Stikeman & Elliott LLP, a large corporate law firm in Toronto's financial district, nearby. Twice a week, and oftener when they are expressly called on, a worker from the Gateway is dispatched with empty Tupperware to pick-up any food leftover after meetings at Stikeman Elliot. The worker goes in by the loading dock and uses the service elevator to the 53rd floor, following a path through the cubicles to the kitchen where they'll load a card with containers full of sandwiches, cut fruit and vegetables, yogurt cups, and leave their empty Tupperware for the next time.

If not, give us wisdom and insight and help us to make good decisions.” Supplication for guidance and strength were so often at the centre of their simply-stated prayers, something which seemed to point not only to the limits of their own understanding of this place, but also to a kind of impending chaos. They don't know what might happen at the shelter overnight; they don't know necessarily how they'll face it; they ask for metaphysical help at the prospect.

On Tuesdays, after briefing, they have to haul out to the curb a mound of garbage that has been growing and festering in the shed for roughly a week. Sometimes, residents will see this happening and lend a hand. Some workers hate to ask for help with such a dirty job and wave them off.

Out in the Drop-In around this same time, no one sits very still while the TV plays the nightly programs: a movie, a game, a string of random comedy shows or old episodes of *Law & Order*. There's lots of coming and going, mostly in and out of the smoking pit or up and down the ramp necessarily breaking one's concentration. For most of the day they may not visit their lockers, and after bed-check the Drop-In will be off-limits, so I suppose between 6 and 10 there's a certain luxury in being able to go all places at once, a certain freedom and spaciousness that the shelter lacks the rest of the day. At the front desk this is the time to hand out towels and write down wake-up calls, or answer the phone when guys call for last minute Personal Late Passes, knowing that they're not going to make it on time. We all wait for 10...

Bed check. Whoever is responsible for bed check tonight will take the bed list on a clipboard up to the floors to see if everyone is where they ought to be – at their beds. Some people go upstairs just for the few minutes it takes to be counted and then swiftly return to the ramp to smoke and talk – to go any further afield after 10:00 pm is to forfeit your bed. Others take this as their cue to sleep. Still others have been up there for hours already, sleeping, and have barely noticed being checked. Either way, this hour signals a change: after this, it is nighttime. Grown men have, in a way, been put to bed. The free reign residents had after 6 has been more than halved: the Drop-In is closed, only the ramp at the entrance is open space. So then why stay up after 10? Unless you really can't sleep. Unless you really must smoke. Unless you refuse to train yourself to the shelter's schedule. While some night guys (that is, workers) feel a little funny about telling men twice their age to go to bed, and while they certainly don't ever *make* a guy go to bed, the narrowed space and stricter regulations reinforce the unsaid: that 10:00 is also sleep time, there's little else to do.

Bed check takes 10 to 15 minutes and then the checker goes to the computer and intakes any new clients, slotting into beds that have gone unused the names on the waiting list. Those names may or may not match people *actually* waiting around in the Drop-In – a guy's plans tend to change over the course of a long shelterless day. Nor, will the names on the list necessarily match a guy's official ID. When registering at the Gateway a potential resident is asked three questions: What's your name?

Have you been in Ontario the last three months? Where did you stay last night? The answers to any and all of these questions are never corroborated or tested, and most of the time the workers don't seem to care what the answers are or if they're true. A guy can have any number of reasons to offer up a name that isn't really his own. A fudged answer to the question of a name merely creates a new file and a clean slate in the city-wide computer system. The only acceptable answer to the second question is Yes, I've been in Ontario three months, and so most workers will just go ahead and enter it, whatever the truth may be. And for the third, "transient" or "staying with friends" are catch-all answers and as long as workers keep alternating between the two selections, no one much cares about that one either.

The process of signing (new) guys into empty beds can take half an hour or so. It's usually after 10:45 before everyone is where they will finally spend the night. Not often, but sometimes especially in winter, there won't be enough open beds to accommodate the waiters, and the workers will call around to other shelters to find beds for whoever overflows. Three or four times during these 40 minutes, someone will call from Toronto's central Hostel Referral Centre to ask if the Gateway has any empty beds; they'll be put off at least until bed check is over and the waiting list exhausted.

11:00. This is the first of two of the hardest hours to get through; it's a waiting game. The front desk area feels crowded (especially with me around) and there's not much that necessarily needs doing during this time. Only one person can sit at the computer and look things up on the internet whenever the meandering conversation calls for it. There are a few people still coming and going from upstairs. Sometimes the odd card game comes together at the counter – mostly crib because it doesn't take as many players or as much space. Someone keen might work on cleaning the Drop-In during this hour: wiping down tables, turning up the chairs, doing any straggly dishes, refilling the sugar and creamer, mopping the floors, emptying the slop bucket that catches drips from the water cooler and cups of unwanted coffee – which stinks and in the summer months collects a crowd of tiny drowned flies. Back at the stuffy front desk, it often seems like midnight will never come.

Nothing much happens between 12 and 1 either. Someone might look up videos on YouTube or answer random questions with the help of Wikipedia. Conversations crop up about sports or cars or news or cities someone has visited, or a kind of gossipy small talk about other workers, other residents, other shelters. It's also another good time for the conversational genre I've described above as shelter-talk – confessions, random insights, urgent plans, and tall-tales. Nighttime settles in. Around this time, whichever worker drew the job tonight will start to fill in the blue meal cards that residents will get in the morning. Guys might trickle in on late passes anytime around now. Those who have had official late passes for the purposes of paid work might have had their suppers saved, in which case a worker will retrieve a cellophane-covered plate from the kitchen – either having heated it for two minutes in the microwave or not, depending on their present measure of generosity – and this resident will be one of just a precious few around here who gets to eat his supper in peace.

1 to 3 seems like the hump. These hours could be something or more of nothing; no one ever knows what could happen. To greater or lesser numbers and degrees (and curiously dependent on the time of the month, relative to payday and full moons, depending on your superstitions) a parade of people can march in and out the front door and by the front desk, in the middle of the night. It can be altogether quiet. Or it can be one random story after another; one incoherent conversation after another; one (un)reasonable request after another – for beds (but by now the answer is usually “no”), for food, for use of the washroom, for blankets and sleeping bags depending on the season, for a smoke, for a light, for a hit, for and audience to their rant. Over the days when one month changes into another, when, as they say “cheques are out,” the parade seems to become even less predictable – now you have to factor in the binges some people have been waiting for all month long. The workers brace themselves, anxious in anticipation of eruption, of conflict, of not being able to make themselves heard and understood to a substance-addled mind. On nights like this no one is at ease; there is constant movement through that tiny vestibule. There are more beds free at the Gateway during these peak end-of-the-month times, but more people ineligible to stay there too.

It was nearly 4am one night when a guy turned up, six hours late for bed check and claiming that he had merely fallen asleep in the park. Incredulous that there was no second chance after this mistake, no letting it slide just this once, he refused to leave. When, desperate for sleep he stopped arguing and tried to lie down on the ramp outside, then in the driveway and finally on the sidewalk, workers kept stopping him from getting comfortable, telling him he couldn't be here or there and would have to move (again). He finally gave up trying and came back in, concerned now about collecting his belongings and taking a shower. Will told him he could get his stuff at 7:30. But there would be no shower.

“Showers are for residents,” Will told him, “and you're not staying here.”

“I am staying here,” the man countered.

“No, you're not. You don't have a bed here. You're not on the list.”

Sometime in the middle of the night, during the six hours the man was apparently asleep in the park, that list had been updated. It went from being a list on which his name appeared to a list where his name was not.

“Just because I messed up once?” His (perhaps calculated) surprise only mounted the more he and Will kept going around in circles, having different versions of the same conversation, on and off between 4 and 6:30. He couldn't quite grasp the logic. And the more I listened to the much-repeated bottom line – “Showers are only for residents,” the more I wondered if he was onto something.

Resident is a carefully chosen referent. As opposed to *client* or *guest* – as the homeless might be referred to in other social service settings – workers at the Gateway quite deliberately call them residents. It seems to suggest that this place, for the time being, is their home. They are in residence here. They reside. There's a more permanent connotation in such a descriptor, one made all the more ironic when used to describe such a very precarious tenure. It hinges on this: “You (don't) have a bed. You're (not) on the list.” And possession of a bed can vanish in a matter of minutes; at the magical stroke of 10 o'clock each night, with a few clicks of a mouse on a computer screen, it's done. One's bed has become yet another crossed-out thing. A guy goes from “staying here,” to “not staying here,” with an ease and a swiftness belied by the indeterminate length of the verb tense “staying,” much less the term “resident.” It's no wonder the two men don't agree.

“I'm staying here.”

“No, you're not staying here.”

A missed window of opportunity has made all the difference (or maybe wouldn't have, if the guy happened to be friends with the right worker). By the next night, the man was “staying there” once again. He was back on the list, had a bed and could take a shower. A hospitality temporarily suspended was once again on offer.

By 5, a handful of guys are up and about, waiting for the Drop-In to open. By 6, a worker will have made a large vat of coffee and one of tea (with 18 tea bags). If they're feeling especially benevolent (and many of them do) they'll have this ready early and will open the Drop-In a few minutes before they're strictly supposed to. About that same time, another worker will take a clean green garbage bag and walk five blocks to Starbucks to collect whatever that store wasn't able to sell the day before. It comes back all heaped nakedly in that garbage bag, to be spread out on a tray and left at a table in the Drop-In, to be picked at and sampled along with the early morning coffee.

The last hour before 8, a perfect storm starts to brew: the workers are overtired and restless, eager to get home to bed. And guys are emerging from upstairs maybe in their own bad moods – too little sleep in a too-noisy room or a less-than-comfortable bed. I remember one morning in particular when an especially difficult guy, we'll call him Mr. Hanks, emerged from the dorms upstairs, immediately demanding something that he didn't reasonably have grounds to expect but holding firmly to his right to such a thing, anyway.

Earlier that morning (and every morning), a worker was dispatched to the kitchen to get a handful of simply-assembled bag lunches: a sandwich (ham or corned beef mainly, the odd time left over roast beef, peanut butter and jam if you're vegetarian, on a hot dog bun), a piece of fruit, a juice box. The bag lunches sit in a small pile on the windowsill behind the front desk, waiting to be picked up by the guys

whose names have been put on the list the day before. Bagged lunches are for guys going off to work and needing to take a simple meal along with them. The catering staff always call in the evening to get the count in order to make the requisite number of lunches, and whichever front line worker answers the phone may or may not inflate this number by one or two, just in case – as a buffer – so that if a worker really wants/needs to, they can give a lunch away, as they see fit. But today, this isn't the case. There are only the number of lunches called for.

Still, Mr. Hanks is intent on having one of these meals, regardless of the fact that he hasn't signed up for one. When, first thing, he's given his blue meal card he insists that he wants to “pay for” a bagged lunch with his regular lunch ticket. Sure, someone might neglect to pick up their ordered lunch and ultimately there may be one leftover, but we won't know that until at least 10:00, Holden tries to reason with Mr. Hanks. Hanks, an on-again-off-again resident, has presumably been here long enough to know how this works; and either way, today I observe that it's being explained to him calmly and clearly by Holden, over and over again. He persists: “I've got a meal ticket and I want to use it to *pay* for a lunch. I won't be here at lunch so you owe me a lunch. Give me one of those bagged ones, to-go.” He repeats his misappropriated rationale, regardless of Holden's own reasons for refusing. The conversation goes round and round in the usual circles but with Hanks becoming increasingly loud and agitated and Holden becoming more curt in his explanations until they seem to shut down altogether and he merely repeats 'no' until Hanks slams his fist on the counter, smacks open the front door and leaves in a huff.

At the end of the shift, at 8 am, the night guys leave and so do I. I head out thinking about Holden and Hanks and wonder all the way home why Holden, despite the escalating tension, never said something like: “Look, I'm tired. Can you just take it easy?” Why, at the end of an upside-down shift – twelve hours spent awake and working while everyone else rests – there isn't finally a little more consideration to be had, even from a guy who seemed maybe intent on a fight in the first place. A worker like Holden always tries to be on his best behaviour, to be perfectly of service, to be respectful. But doesn't that make it a one-way street? Shouldn't there be a little more give-and-take, some mutual acknowledgment of needs; a little honesty: “Look, Pal, I'm worn out. This isn't the time to make trouble. This isn't the time to try get your own way.” I suppose it's more “professional,” but in the long-run it's tough to do. They just keep taking it though, trying to be more polite than they feel.

* * * * *

In the middle of a stretch of night shifts (and for me it was never more than three or four, and I only observed overnight shifts over a period of a few months), it wasn't hard to see the truth in that classical anthropological aphorism, that people “cannot cope with chaos” – that there is this limit “of interpretability...of analytic capacity...of endurance...[and] moral insight” which threatens always to

disorient and confound us.¹² It's what we fear the most – bafflement. That's what it so often felt like to be at the Gateway, and in the middle of the night especially so. It's a place where things didn't always quite make sense and teetered just on the cusp of comprehension and containment. Why am I here? Why are *they* here? What can change now? Can things get any better?

“Fucking crazy!” the Gateway workers are fond of calling someone who is, in one way or another, mentally ill.¹³ And, for that matter, they seem to resort to such language for anything uncanny. They are largely untrained in symptoms and diagnoses and counseling methods and so they slip into a mystified and melodramatic banality: he's fucking crazy; that's fucking crazy; *all* of this is fucking crazy.

Buck adapted an old adage: “we're doing more and more with less and less until we're doing everything with nothing,” he said one day to Riley who had come down the ramp and into the Gateway past a man standing on the sidewalk in front of the building, shouting at the passing cars. “You guys don't have what it will take to help him,” Riley had said matter-of-factly – he wasn't being flippant so much as lamenting it. Not only do workers not know what to do or say to help that man, it also seemed that they, like me (in my late-night field journal entry above) had no place to put what was happening to them, while they watched things like this happen, day after day. We went numb instead. And went through the motions. In the apt words of Lauren Berlant: “Being overwhelmed by knowledge and life produces all kinds of neutralizing affect management, coasting, skimming, browsing, distraction, apathy, coolness, ...picking one's fights, and so on.”¹⁴ Gateway work (and to some extent, participant-observation thereof) is a lesson in all of these.

The newer, politically correct name for something like this is “compassion fatigue.” In a discursive move away from “burn-out,” “compassion fatigue” makes the problem a kind of repetitive stress injury among caring professionals and a site for legitimate occupational therapy. But around the Gateway, workers are more apt to fall back on the old language: “burn-out” came as personal confession as often as it did a criticism of a co-worker who seemed not to be doing their job as well as they might. Working *in spite of* burn-out was considered yet a further mark of the worker's growing incapacity for making things better: another level of helplessness/hopelessness. In other cases, it was a kind of proud defiance, a retort to some critic who assumed they weren't tough enough: “I've been here a long time, I'm tired, but I'm still here!” Burn-out was also a way of talking about a transformation from an earlier,

¹² Cited in Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p.87.

¹³ Desjarlais called his shelter “a crazy place to put crazy people” and while this one is not expressly designated as a shelter for the mentally ill, as his was, the Gateway is still one of the default, overflow care centres for the mentally ill – thanks to the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric care in Canada, the severe scarcity of adequate programming in a population of increasing fragmentation, disorientation, disease, and the still stagnant stigma of such a diagnosis – especially among men. Desjarlais, *Shelter Blues*. See also Tanya M. Luhrmann, “‘The Street Will Drive You Crazy’: Why Homeless Psychotic Women in the Institutional Circuit in the United States Often Say No to Offers of Help,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 165, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 15–20; David A. Snow, Susan G. Baker, and Leon Anderson, “On the Precariousness of Measuring Insanity in Insane Contexts,” *Social Problems* 35 (1988): 192.

¹⁴ Lauren Berlant, “Thinking about Feeling Historical,” *Emotion, Space and Society* 1 (2008), p. 6.

or naively optimistic posture, and as such seemed a kind of permission for slippage: “I used to care too much but I realized I couldn't anymore.” Burn-out popped up as explanation and accusation and ever-present threat but is something oddly unattended to at the Gateway.

Along with twenty or so members of the Gateway staff, I participated in a training workshop for Crisis Prevention/Intervention (CPI). A human resources person from another Salvation Army shelter came to lead the day-long session. “Self care” was meant to be a component of the training – one's capacity for calm, careful crisis management depended on one's own well-being, something which in this line of work is cultivated rather than given. In order to complete the program and receive a certificate, participants had to report on at least one hour of self care: you had to actually do one hour of something you considered restorative and plan to implement that activity into your life more regularly. A month or so later, I was pulled into helping the administrator get ready for the shelter's accreditation evaluation. By then, only one person had submitted their self-care report and received their certification card. But in order to meet the standards of accreditation, all the Gateway's personnel files had to be complete. On the whole, there were a startling number of forms misplaced and unsigned and out-of-date. In the push to get all of this sorted out in short order, I was also instructed to fill out the CPI certification cards and distribute them (regardless of the self-care component) and to add a copy to the file of each person who had participated in the workshop.

There was a fairly standard answer to my question about coping, when I interviewed each worker: “I don't take it home.” It was standard – however untestable and potentially untrue. Many, if not all of them had learned somehow that whatever happens at the Gateway (at least in theory) is supposed to get checked at the door at the end of the day – for your own protection and sustainability. You last longer if you don't take it home. This was easier for some than others, they told me. But as an ideal posture, it was a particularly curious one to me since, as ethnographer, “taking it home” was precisely what I was trying to do: trap everything that happened at the Gateway in my mind, hold on to it until I could get it down in my field journal (and until I could make some sense of it), rather than let it wash off me on the way out the door.

* * * * *

This glimpse of a Gateway nighttime animates, to some extent, the paradox Jacques Derrida finds at the heart of hospitality. In certain interesting ways – mainly to do with the scale of the problem, in this case occurring in an emergency hostel/homeless shelter rather than in somebody's home, an inn, or a nation-state – the inherent contradictions and impossibilities Derrida finds in the posture of *welcome* toward the proverbial *stranger*, are played out here every evening. On the one hand, Derrida argues, there is the desire to be hospitable, a wishful, well-intentioned and unconditional invitation to whoever arrives. But on the other hand, he supposes, we can hardly help but place limits or conditions on that

openness. According to Derrida, a *pure* hospitality ideally “consists in welcoming whoever arrives before imposing on him, before knowing and asking anything at all.”¹⁵ This might be as simple as asking the person's name or requiring the guest to deal in the host's own language. Such things are for Derrida already “a violence”: the marking off of boundaries, the imposition of rules for conduct or tests of acceptability, the setting of expectations. Implicitly or explicitly, these are things upon which a guest's stay depends. And they are no doubt (felt as) necessary for the protection of the home or property or territory – for to be unconditionally open is to incur a risk to the self and to that which belongs to the self. But according to Derrida, they also attest to the *impossibility* of hospitality in the first place: “we do not know what 'welcome' means and perhaps no one welcomed is ever completely welcome in a welcome which is not justifiably hypocritical or conditional,” he reasons.¹⁶

One does not know the stranger who comes, why she comes, and how she will behave when she gets there. And so there is an insecurity in the waiting and, too, the temptation towards self-protection instead of absolute welcome. In both the inherent danger of hospitable openness as much as in the very act of *waiting* to receive the guest, the host is not just master of the house but ultimately a *hostage* held within it; the hospitable inhabitant has not only the power of his property and his invitation “to come” but also the weakness of being at the mercy of the guest.¹⁷ And this is equally the case before she arrives, at the moment she finally appears on the threshold, and for however long she stays. For Derrida,

It is *as if* the stranger or foreigner held the keys...It's *as if*...the stranger could save the master and liberate the power of his host; it's *as if* the master, *qua* master, were prisoner of his place and his power...it is indeed the master, the one who invites, the inviting host who becomes the hostage – and who really always has been...[T]he guest...becomes....the master of the host.¹⁸

The slippage of the host/guest is particularly evident for Derrida in his native French where the word for guest and host are the same – *hôte*.¹⁹ And since host also shares a root with *hostility* we have what Derrida calls “a troubling analogy.”²⁰ The possibility for openness and welcome is matched by the

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality,” *Angelaki* 5, no. 3 (2000): 3–18; Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Jacques Derrida, “The Principle of Hospitality” *Parallax*, 11, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 6–9.

¹⁶ Derrida, “Hostipitality,” p. 6.

¹⁷ Derrida refers also to Levinas' hostage in the ethical encounter, more generally, “the subjugated, substitutable subject, the other's hostage” *Ibid*, p. 9.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 123–4. (Emphasis in the original)

¹⁹ See also Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p.31: “The ethical agency of the host-friend relies precisely on her capacity to leave herself open, in Blanshot's terms, to the risk of radical insufficiency. Poised in a relation where an irreducible and asymmetrical other always calls her being into question, she is ever willing to risk becoming strange or guestlike in her own domain, whether this be home, nation, community, race, gender, sex, skin, or species. So too, the open house of hospitality or the open heart of friendship can never know guests-friends in advance, as one might a fellow citizen, sister, or comrade...Always unfinished, yet-to-come...”

²⁰ Derrida, “Hostipitality.”

possibility for cagey suspicion, standoffishness, even abuse, on both sides of the equation. Derrida adopts the term “hostipitality” in order to preserve this irony.

The French writer Pierre Klossowski is one of Derrida's chosen interlocutors in making such a point – according to Derrida, Klossowski's novel *Roberte ce soir* precedes him in trying to pinpoint the “difficulties” in hospitality – specifically its temporal contradiction. Hospitality is more intention than reality, Klossowski's novel supposes; it exists, on the threshold, in the *about-to-happen*, more so than its actual happening, in the act of crossing the threshold and entering the house. As such, one of the Klossowski fragments Derrida employs is, to my mind, especially reminiscent of what happens at the Gateway:

The master of the house, having no greater nor more pressing concern than to shed the warmth of his joy at evening upon whomever comes to dine at his table and to rest under his roof from a day's wearying travel, waits anxiously on the threshold for the stranger he will see appear like a liberator upon the horizon. And catching a first glimpse of him in the distance, though he be still far off, the master will call out to him, “come quickly, my happiness is at stake.”²¹

In response, Derrida observes of the captive master: “He waits without waiting. He waits without knowing whom he awaits. He waits for the Messiah. He waits for anyone who might come. And he will have him eat at his table.”

The night-shift workers at the Gateway bear the brunt of such heavy waiting – albeit as slightly abstracted/displaced hosts. They are not owners or occupiers of a home but employees whose job it is to keep the shelter doors open and the place lit all night long. They are responsible for extending the conditions of a certain kind of *home* to someone else. And they do so arguably out of obligation, or habit, or according to their contract with The Salvation Army and the city of Toronto – all of these are more pre-arranged than spontaneous, all of them exist more purely in the intention than the act of acceptance itself. (Perhaps they are somewhat akin to the innkeeper in The Parable of the Good Samaritan who gets stuck looking after the man-in-need for however long he needs the innkeeper's help). They keep the doors to the Gateway always unlocked and metaphorically ajar, specifically while everyone else sleeps; they keep themselves awake and ready to welcome whoever comes. They can't know in advance who will walk through the door, what they want, what they're *on*, what they're mad about or sad about or thrilled about *this time*, and what the Gateway can do to help. When the time comes, they may or may not have beds available, may or may not still have bag lunches leftover, may or may not have a random collection of cigarettes left by someone on the counter for giving away, may or may not have water in the dispenser by the door or cups to put it in. Those workers who pray at the beginning of their shift seem to be steeling themselves against the inherent riskiness of such a posture;

²¹ *ibid*, p. 8.

they are behaving, in a way, like hostages, held powerless by the circumstances of their hospitality. Over time, I observed, a further frozenness in their demeanour (and in myself), a numbness, a breaking down of their ability to warmly relate to the stranger or guest. It could be burnout or a staunch politeness, but both seemed to be a kind of shutting off on the inside what they had little control over on the outside.

Even though the workers sometimes downplay or skirt the preconditions of acceptance at the shelter (fudging the answers to the requisite intake questions for instance), the power of restricting residents and the language with which they do so (“belligerence” and “disrespect to staff”) denote the stipulations ultimately attached to staying there: you must stay calm and somewhat obedient, and you must follow the rules, such as they are. Ever inviting and always open, their hospitality was, as per Derrida, perpetually tricky and incomplete, and this likely can't be any other way. They continue to wait.

a suckling pig

(a common human material)

They say you can't starve in Toronto; they say you'd really have to try. To be homeless in this city is to be the guest of many a shelter, drop-in centre, meal program or food bank. Christians and city workers among myriad others are liable to feed you, any time of the day if not also the night. To go hungry here for any length of time, you'd really have to want it...or, I suppose, *not want* whatever was on offer. In this rather mundane, passing phrase – part of a social-service worker's colloquial understanding of the system they work in – lies a puzzling juxtaposition: a simultaneous scarcity and excess. Attention to food practices at the Gateway helps us to see that there is a lot of generosity going one way but not necessarily the other.

Before Derrida, ethnographer Julian Pitt-Rivers was concerned with another kind of antagonism inherent in the posture of hospitality: the potential for asymmetry (even resentment) opening up between the guest and the host. Instead of mutuality and reciprocity, Pitt-Rivers reasoned, hospitality is necessarily stilted: it is the guest who is always at the mercy of the host. According to the law of hospitality, the guest is ever the beggar at the door and the host ever the giver of gifts.²² The following notes on Gateway food habits portray a similar incongruity at the shelter – and not only in the offering of food to shelter residents or community members, but also the way food is used to reward the workers for their hard work (of which the frontline workers undoubtedly bear the brunt). By way of meals and eating and we can see that gifts tend to flow in one direction and not the other and that the downward trajectory of such generosity is held in place rather than levelled out or looped around with practices of solidarity and reciprocation.

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The shelter workers' annual three-day retreat was coming up when I found myself on its food committee. A few months earlier, the departure of the staff member who was usually the “retreat cook” had left a hole in the planning and a couple of other unsuspecting workers and I were thrust into the void.

The director of the shelter dropped in on the planning meeting to tell us his ideas for the menu: “I want the staff to feel lavished in love,” Neil said. “The meals are the biggest part of that, so they should feel like banquets.”²³

²² Pitt-Rivers essay is largely overlooked and difficult to come by, but is helpfully reviewed in Matei Candea and Giovanni Da Col, “The Return to Hospitality,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18, no. Issue Supplement (2012): S1–19. See especially p. S4–5.

²³ There's a long theological history to the idea that food is a gift from God, although according to Grumett and Muers it is mainly unclear how that gifting actually works. David Grumett and Rachel Muers, *Theology on the Menu: Asceticism, Meat and*

Later, at the retreat, he further elaborated on this word “lavish” drawing on a single New Testament verse: “See what love the Father has lavished upon us” (1 John 3:1). Both at the food committee meeting and in his first talk at the retreat, Neil seemed to be setting up this word “lavish” as a buzzword for the retreat. It sort of swelled and swam around the room and in my head each time he said it. Saying “lavish” out loud tempted my jaw to drop open and my eyes to widen: drama is built into this word.

But Neil's fuller understanding of the lavishness of love became more refined as he continued to talk about his intention that this retreat be *all about God's lavish love* – how “three days off with pay” (not exactly “off” but at least *away*) all together at this sparse but scenic lodge were a way of communicating God's desire to bestow *lavish* love on the Gateway workers. “God loves you so much,” he said, “with his whole heart. God *is* love and His whole being lavishes love.”²⁴ “God doesn't want to squeeze the life out of you,” Neil said, wringing his hands together as if twisting a wet cloth – acknowledging the often trying conditions of shelter life. Instead, “God wants to lavish you,” he assured them. Echoing then the way the scripture fragment casts God as Father and alluding to the rough edges of social work, Neil narratively placed himself in the role: “I love you. I want to lavish you with love. When you grieve, when you are suffering, I hurt too. When you're stressed out, when you're burdened, I feel that. I grieve for you because I love you.”

By the time Neil gave this speech to the group on the opening night of the retreat, the food committee's understanding of “food as lavish love” had already materialized itself into a full, roasted, suckling pig. Buck had happened to walk by the door of the committee meeting precisely as these ideas were first being discussed. He had immediately offered a suggestion: “I know a guy...” he said. And the idea was no sooner mentioned than adopted, the suckling pig a seemingly obvious choice for such an occasion, equally elaborate and rare in their collective imagination.

Buck immediately got in touch with his sister who knew the butcher. Wes was dispatched to the northern edge of the city in order taste-test the thing, and then again to collect “our pig” on the day the retreat would begin.

Once the pig arrived at the lodge, someone other than Wes unloaded it from the van. Wrapped as it was in layers of plastic and foil, whoever moved it didn't necessarily know what they were carrying inside or that it was for that evening's meal. The suckling pig was rather unceremoniously shoved – even crammed – in the fridge alongside an otherwise excessive amount of food.²⁵ Come suppertime, the suckling pig was cold instead of room temperature as it should have been, having come straight from

Christian Diet (London/New York: Routledge, 2010).

²⁴ Male pronouns were used in the original reading.

²⁵ At the end of the retreat eager staff members vie for the leftovers, filling grocery bags with surplus food items – some of them entirely unopened, unnecessary as they were. Condiments of a wide variety are bought full-size and new, the bulk of each bottle's contents consumed at home by whoever was lucky enough to score themselves the ketchup, the pickles, the hot sauce and save themselves a trip to store.

the butcher that day. The staff members who had unsuspectingly signed up to take their turn preparing and serving that night's meal had no idea what to do with the thing – especially now that they also needed to heat it up a bit. When it wouldn't fit inside the oven, they briskly (if sloppily) cut off its head. Before placing it at the centre of the long, wooden dining table, they re-arranged the head on top of the body where it ought to have been.

After supper, still other staff members were responsible for cleaning up. They did their best to wrap up the pig, once again in foil but so much of the pig remained. Many workers had been too “grossed out” by at the sight of the thing to eat it. Others would have had more, but were unsure how to get into it in order to get out some good meat to eat. Some sections of skin had been peeled back and the meat quite literally scraped out onto people's plates with a fork, rather than being carved (carefully or otherwise). A good amount of it leftover, the ceremonial suckling pig was wrapped up again finally but was somehow never placed back in the fridge. It was discovered the next morning by whoever got up early to fix the breakfast. Having spent the night on the counter it was now essentially ruined and mostly wasted.

Set against the high drama of the director's description of love, the workers' experience of eating the loving meal seemed all the more lacklustre. Perhaps the more elaborate the intention, the emptier the material practice of serving and eating it; like Derrida's hospitality, the elaborate gift of the meal existed more easily in the wishful forethought than the real. At the table, the suckling pig was passed around from person to person – no one knowing quite what to do with it. Meanwhile, the director himself, the self-described “lover” had never had an actual hand in buying, preparing, serving, or cleaning up from the meal. Lavishness was certainly accomplished in the excess of this meal, but excess here conversely belies the sheer *waste* of having too much of a good thing. Thoughts toward the practicality of such a banquet were entirely overlooked. And that it would be poorly received by the people it was most intended to impress, was unanticipated.

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The Gateway staff retreat was always book-ended with another kind of ceremonial meal at the very end: a kind of pseudo-communion.

The whole thing seemed to me a little clumsy. It involved a random collection of glasses, large and small, each filled half full no matter their size, sometimes with an impossible amount of Welch's grape juice.²⁶ And also these big fistfuls of Italian bread, all the fluffier for the apparent disregard of the usual practice of taking only unleavened bread in communion.

²⁶ Grape juice instead of wine because The Salvation Army (not unlike some other evangelical groups) is firmly abstinent about alcohol.

Wes, the Gateway's chaplain, gave a casual sermon about the staff of the Gateway as a kind of family while two helpers passed around the elements from the tops of wildly colourful, decorative kitchen trays, whispering around: does everyone have some? Wes kept talking about a passage in 1 Corinthians which speaks metaphorically about the Church as the 'Body of Christ,' made up of many parts but all connected and integral to the whole. Echoing the way the Pauline writer says "The eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you! And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" (and so on) Wes reached the climax of his talk:

Frontline cannot say I am not the director so I'm not a part of the body. And Outreach can't say, because I'm not Case Management, I'm not part of the body...The Chaplain can't say to the Volunteer Coordinator, I can live without you. And the Laundry guy can't say to the Facilities guy, I don't need you.

Meanwhile, the workers held a Eucharistic element in each hand not knowing quite what to do with them. Some people ate their bread and drank their juice right away before looking around to see that others hadn't done so yet and then grew sheepish as they realized they had nothing left for the right moment. Others looked around first, trying to figure out what they were supposed to do but it didn't immediately become clear. Wes was still talking – about community, about how families are meant to love and enjoy each other, about how coming away together on this retreat was an act of unity – but he hadn't actually invited his congregation to eat or drink the body and blood of Christ yet. I was anxious too: would there be a prayer? Would someone bless the food? How would we know when it was time to take in the meal? Unmoored as we were from any liturgical pattern, it was hard to know what was coming.

There was a prayer finally, purposefully short and informal, and then a sort of relieved collective swallowing: everyone who had bread and juice left in hand took it in. Many couldn't finish all that they'd been given and so again were unsure exactly what they should do. But the session was effectively over and staff members quickly began to abandon the space. Pieces of bread and quarter cups of juice were left on tables, armrests, and on the floor for whoever had drawn the responsibility for cleaning up that room before they all headed home. I happened to be one of those people delegated to clean up. I winced a little as I poured this leftover sacramental stuff into a big black garbage bag.

For the people in attendance, this scene was likely awkward for a few different reasons: some of them have grown up in Christian evangelical traditions where the grape juice is familiar, but not necessarily so much of either juice or bread. Some may or may not be in the habit of waiting until everyone has the elements in hand before taking them, together. Others still have grown up in the Salvation Army and are thoroughly out of the habit of taking communion at all since the Army shuns the practice. Finally, there are some who have belonged (or newly belong) to mainline Christian traditions where things like the giving and receiving of the sacramental gifts would have been much more formally ordered.

Perhaps more importantly, the elements themselves once blessed are never wasted, they cannot be thrown away but must be taken in by someone. One lapsed Catholic was routinely offended by the whole thing.

I've shown how the Gateway bears with it (consciously or not) some historical marks of The Salvation Army, its tradition of soup kitchens and shelters and its posture toward those in need. Here, I would add another incidental connection: the Gateway has carried on its parent organization's non-sacred attitude toward the sacraments. As we've seen, early leaders in The Salvation Army were arguably pragmatic. Their commonsense realization that "you can't preach to an empty stomach" is said to have neatly necessitated their offer of food to the hungry.²⁷ Similarly, their reticence to perform the Eucharist arose practically from the fact that Salvationist preachers weren't actually ordained by the church. But more critically, it is said to have developed from the felt sense they nurtured that the poor were not welcome in churches in order to receive communion, dirty as they were – both physically and ritually unwashed (Salvationists are likewise indifferent to baptism). In time, such an idea grew into a full-blown theological position and Salvationists today generally refuse to participate in communion.²⁸ It is for them both a non-necessity and a clear indication of their uniqueness and exceptionalism among the Christian denominations (which I argued in Part II was perhaps a more powerful motivation for Booth and his Army than their so-called pragmatism). But while Salvationists today largely avoid communion (claiming that all meals are sacred or that there are much more important acts of faithfulness in which to be readily engaged), others somewhat secretly or subversively try to restore the practice. Such antinomianism is, I would argue, a kind of Salvationist stance in itself. By the same logic with which the Army rejected communion it is now acceptable for some within the Army to re-employ it. Communion becomes an attempt to defy expectations, to exercise their freedom and be different. The Gateway's communion-like ritual comes off as it does both because they don't have an ordained celebrant and because they don't really know how to do it properly in the first place.

In Army settings, communion-like exercises are often called "love feasts," a name given to play up the idea of love and "community" among Jesus and his disciples at their last supper, and simultaneously to downplay the actual connection to *communion*, as officially practiced by the Church writ large. Attention to *love* as the most important message in the ritual makes the precise performance of its liturgical intricacies somewhat besides the point. And yet, I would argue, something else gets lost along the way. What came about at the end of the Gateway staff retreat each year might be best described as a kind of ritualized anti-ritual – the regular enactment of a ludic, mocking version of the original which draws at least some of its meaning from turning the ritual upside-down.²⁹ Wes is not an ordained celebrant and

²⁷ See Part II, above.

²⁸ See excursus on The Salvation Army and the sacraments in James Edwin Pedlar, "A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army" (Thesis, University of Toronto, 2013), <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/43425>.

²⁹ See for example the studies in Sally Falk Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, eds., *Secular Ritual* (Uitgeverij Van Gorcum,

he does not follow a liturgy. The elements were unusual in substance and size. But as with the over-the-top meal of the suckling pig, the meaning of it seemed to fail or fall flat with disharmony and confusion. Read together, the two meals bring an odd disjunction into sharper relief.

What's most interesting to me about these two signifying meals is the discrepancy we might tease out between *community* and *communion*. Or, put differently, the tension between the generosity of “lavish love” and more equitable kinds of relationality, of mutuality, of camaraderie which the communion ritual is usually meant to represent and enact. “Love is beset by many potentially pathological corruptions,” observed the political philosopher Eric Gregory. And I think that's quite true – especially where it becomes over-articulated and over-determined as in the case of the Gateway's staff retreats. As I'll attempt to show here, one of (lavish) love's problems is its tendency to undermine or preclude acts/attitudes of solidarity.

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While the workers were picking at that suckling pig, back at the shelter residents and relief workers were eating the usual Tuesday ham – this weird jellied, honey-curry ham – the mere sight of which I came to loathe over the course of my time there. I tried to avoid it, any which way; it was gross. On the menu at the Gateway, there are fully 9 different weekly meals that include pork, likely because it's so cheap. And there tends to be no shortage of hassle between kitchen staff and residents about this – an increasing number of residents do not eat pork. The menu was designed when the shelter first opened and has not be adapted to the changing demographics in the homeless population which now includes an increasing number of men who are vegetarian, observing Halal, and otherwise caring for their health (the kind of pork products served there tend to be less lean than other cuts of meat – sausages, breaded schnitzel, chops smothered in sauce). The kitchen workers (although themselves mainly Ethiopian immigrants) expect that all residents will eat according a “conventional” North American diet, consisting primarily of meat and potatoes.

The instance of food is one of the most clearly articulated power differences between workers and residents.³⁰ They can't get very far in a day without some question of the timing and availability of food – meals, meal tickets, vegetarian options, extra snacks, bag lunches, saved suppers, random food donations, leftovers. The same question of power and food also troubles a mark of the Gateway's uniqueness. Second only to no-glass (which I discussed in Part III) is another special claim, included in the Gateway's promotional material, from the very beginning: “*We all sit at the same tables to eat. We all stand in the same lunch line. We all use the same cups and utensils.*” Much like Wes' talk about the integral

1977); Engelke and Tomlinson, *The Limits of Meaning*.

³⁰ On how food figures into the questioning of power relations and access to material goods, see Claudia Barcellos Rezende, “Building Affinity through Friendship,” in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, ed. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999), 79–98. On how food rituals and taboos often simultaneously critique and reinforce power relationships, see Sidney W. Mintz, “The Anthropology of Food and Eating,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31, no. 1 (October 1, 2002): 99–119.

wholeness of the body above, we have this language of commonality – we *all* have this shared necessity in eating and we can't get away from each other in order to do it; we're *all* as good as each other.

Ten years ago when the menu was fresh and everything felt new, maybe workers always sat down to eat with residents. But by now mainly tired of the same two-week rotation of meals or tired of the same old conversations around those tables, some workers don't sit down next to residents anymore, as an everyday habit. And if they are sitting there, they may or may not be eating different food: something healthier they have brought from home, perhaps. Some workers will wait to purchase outside food on their breaks instead of eating at scheduled shelter mealtimes; especially when the menu calls for something they don't like. Not everyone, but certain workers. Second-floor staffers especially (case managers, housing workers, and the like) are more likely to eat in their offices than downstairs with residents at mealtime. Workers have options and ways around the worn-out menu.

It's worth harkening back now to Wes' comments about staff unity in order to note how his was a fairly classed estimation of togetherness. Most of the Gateway's organizational echelons are left fairly in tact: the chaplain and the volunteer coordinator are roughly on par, as are the Outreach and Case Management teams. They are all second-floor staff, fairly autonomous in their roles, some of them also semi-professional and/or managerial. The “laundry guys” and “facilities guys” are a kind of sub-proletariat – and their mention here is provocative since those workers are not traditionally invited to staff retreats and are not present when this speech is given. Interestingly though, the initial pairing links the Frontline and the Director and (perhaps for dramatic rhetorical effect) performs a kind of inversion between the Gateway's proletariat and its (singular member of the) bourgeoisie – the boss. In his own way, Wes was making a partial critique of the way things are at the Gateway and the top-down way in which love and generosity tend to flow. But I would go even further and suggest that such a hierarchy tends to mitigate some of the commonality and mutuality he is trying to invoke.

All told, I attended three staff retreats. This was the only time there was a suckling pig on the menu, but an overabundance of steak and other rich meats made a consistent appearance. Meat was always the focal point of the meal, crowded around by sidedishes of a not insignificant number or serving size, especially on the first night. (There was even a vegetarian worker, a woman, for whom a respectable alternative was never quite deliberately secured. One year there was piece of fish purchased for her, but no one had bothered to cook it up by the time came to eat dinner).³¹ Meat was also the main event at

³¹ As a vegetarian, (and potentially also because she was a woman) she was derided and nicknamed for her dietary choice. On Wednesdays at the Gateway, the lunchtime pizza was served with only a very limited number of vegetarian slices – the rest with pepperoni. An increasing number of people who abstain from pork or meat in general would vie for the precious meatless pieces, haggling or trying to trick servers into giving them one without meat. The kitchen workers would sometimes counter that residents should be grateful for whatever they got. (For a similar sort of confrontation and a eventual shift in attitude see Bender, *Heaven's Kitchen*.)

I suppose a conceptual link could also be made between meat and manliness or virility – the symbolic meaning of meat deemed necessary to mentally and physically health men, in particular. Historically, and especially during war it was a “psychologically essential food. See Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Chicago:

the staff's annual spring visit to The Keg – a steakhouse located in a heritage mansion, up the street from the Gateway. The dinner usually cost the Gateway more than \$1000 per year.³² Their summer BBQs and Christmas parties were not as well attended (as were the mandatory, paid retreat and the Keg Dinner), but food was still the primary draw/expense at both. Any compulsory staff meeting was always accompanied by a meal: if upstairs workers had to stay past the usual quitting time of 4:00pm in order to attend Residents' Meetings which were held after supper, they took themselves to a pub across the street to eat supper and submitted the bill to the Gateway for reimbursement, despite the fact that supper was also being served at the Gateway and there would undoubtedly be enough to go around. Supervisory meetings often took place in the local diner, also paid for by the Gateway.³³ When Neil and Carolyn (the administrator) felt badly that the Gateway could not afford to dole out a cost-of-living raise one year, they handed out \$500 grocery store gift cards to each worker instead, as a kind of consolation.³⁴ Food, lots of food, and food as “lavish love” seemed to be the preferred way of rewarding staff members for their work at the shelter.

But this kind of love and generosity was also meant to discourage the workers from forming a union, of organizing themselves in order to gain enough collective power to bargain for things they sorely needed:

- fair wages – the starting salary for a frontline worker is between \$14-15/hour for 12 hour shifts in city where the estimated living wage is \$18.52 each, by two earners per household³⁵
- steady annual cost-of-living raises – these were sometimes withheld (along with raises relative to years of service) depending on other budget considerations during that fiscal year

University of Illinois Press, 1998). Leela Gandhi makes a similar argument about Imperial England – it's cold there and eating meat is a must. She shows how even in the colonies, meat was demanded, considered an extension of their lifestyle and their power. For Gandhi's anti-imperialists, to be a vegetarian was to be unconquered, to resist the “self-identical, self-confirming sociality” of Colonialism. Vegetarianism was defiance, while conversely the insistence on meat was an inhospitality. See Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, especially p.67-114.

Finally, it's interesting to note that the Gateway does not follow Salvation Army founder William Booth who, in his day, heralded the benefits of vegetarianism. In Grumett and Muers' treatment of Christians and food, they unpack Booth's position at great length, but fail to realize however that in the rank and file of the Salvation Army today, Booth's position on vegetarianism is often playfully dismissed right alongside his fervent commitment to a kind of hydro-therapy that was gaining momentum at the time, the benefits of which have since been solidly disproven. Grumett and Muers also fail to account for the fact that these positions on health and wellness were largely developed by and insisted upon by Catherine Booth, William's wife and this may be yet another reason why later in life, well after her death, William went back to eating meat. Grumett and Muers, *Theology on the Menu*.

³² Although staff members were required to cover the cost of their own alcoholic drinks, should they desire them – because of the Army's policy on alcohol.

³³ Or comped by the owner of the diner in exchange for The Gateway Linens doing her laundry.

³⁴ As far as I'm told, this wasn't the only year The Gateway couldn't afford 2% wage increases, but it was the only year they placated and dissent with \$500 gift cards.

³⁵ See Tim Maguire and Trish Hennessy, “The City of Toronto Could Take a Leadership Role in Creating Good, Stable Jobs for All Torontonians,” *Toronto Star*, April 16, 2015. [Accessed May 11, 2015].

<http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/04/16/toronto-should-pay-every-city-worker-a-living-wage.html>.

See also Living Wage Ontario website [Accessed May 11, 2015]:

<http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/04/16/toronto-should-pay-every-city-worker-a-living-wage.html>

[http://livingwageontario.ca/;](http://livingwageontario.ca/)

- timely and adequate health insurance – sometimes it would be many months into their employment and well after the probationary period ended before they were registered with the health and dental plan
- added vacation and sick days relative to years of service, as well as reasonable, equitable medical/bereavement/stress-related leaves of absence – reportedly, all of these tended to be assigned almost *ad hoc*. Albeit within certain broad and vague parameters requests were often declined or approved according to the generosity of the immediate supervisor or director, on any given day

The Gateway is, I'm told, the only non-unionized shelter in the Greater Toronto Area; it is certainly the only non-unionized Salvation Army shelter in the GTA. In other Army shelters, the conditions are certainly different – there are fewer elaborate meals or community-building retreats, perhaps not so keen a sense of family/friendship among the staff, but there are also shorter shifts, higher wages, and regulated benefits.

No-union at the Gateway is a point of pride with Neil. He has (more than once) been heard telling the staff: “The minute I hear even a hint about a union coming in here, it'll take me about 15 minutes after that to write my resignation letter. Another 3 or 4 hours after that to pack up my office and erase my hard drive. I'll be gone.” Some workers responded with their own kind of loyalty to such an idea. Shawn: “If Neil leaves, only then will we form a union.” But Neil didn't only have to come right out and say that he doesn't like unions; it seems to me that “lavish love” in the form of well-timed food gifts is a way of undermining the solidarity more implicitly. With token benefits like these – combined with this felt sense that I've been describing all along that the Gateway is special or unique and the people who work there are engaged in a higher calling to befriend the poor – it might seem greedy and or petty to complain about not making enough money or not getting enough days off.

At the risk of over-dramatizing my point here, I would note that Barbara Ehrenreich found something similar in her stint as a low-wage employee at Walmart, described compellingly in her exposé *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. Talk of being part of the “Walmart family” combined with the meager provision of donuts and pastries in the breakroom at breakfast was, she argued, a way of pacifying the workers, of making them feel just special enough – included enough – to not rock the boat.³⁶ In her afternoons re-hanging women's clothes at a Walmart in Minnesota, Ehrenreich daydreams about the difference a union would make:

Someone has to puncture the prevailing fiction that we're a 'family,' here, we 'associates' and our 'servant leaders,' held

³⁶ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (New York: Macmillan, 2010). See especially Chapter 3, “Selling in Minnesota,” pp. 121-191.

together solely by our commitment to the 'guests.' After all, you'd need a lot stronger word than *dysfunctional* to describe a family where a few people get to eat at the table while the rest – the 'associates' and all the dark-skinned seamstresses and factory workers worldwide who make the things we sell – lick up the drippings from the floor: *psychotic* would be closer to the mark.³⁷

The Gateway is by no means on the same scale as Walmart. But Ehrenreich's point is worth observing here, on a smaller plane. With the way (the Father's) lavish love and community building (the Body of Christ) are set over and against the work of solidarity and union-building, the Gateway workers have only an awkward example for their own relationships with shelter residents. The workers themselves tend to operate according to a logic of generosity which flows down from above in the form of unreciprocated gifts. Like Neil's relationship to the staff, the workers primarily act as generous, gracious lovers of the poor, assuming a posture which keeps at bay the formation of union(s) – both in the organizational and the interpersonal sense.

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“Do you like Timmie's Coffee?” Alan asked George across the front desk. George prefers tea, drinks it almost by the pint from a tall mug, stained with layers and layers of his strong brew. Even without getting the answer he was looking for, Alan placed a toonie on the counter and with one finger slid it to the inner edge, closer to George. “I want you to have this,” he said, “get yourself a drink, on me.”

An hour or so before, minutes after 5:30 when the kitchen window closed and supper service was over, Alan had arrived in the Drop-In. An earnest man, red in the face and short of breath, he was crestfallen at the site of the clock but willing to accept his fate: he was too late for dinner. But George had cut in on the supper volunteers who were putting away leftovers and made up a plate for Alan anyway.

Alan was back at the desk now to say 'thank you' some more; this time with his two-dollar offering. But George was disinclined to take it. He got up from his seat at the desk to get closer and looked Alan in the eye. “Thank you, Alan” George said warmly, then sheepishly, “but I don't want to take your money.” Almost without missing a beat, Alan was resolved: “I'm going to give you a gift of words instead.” Quoting the Old Testament passage Proverbs 19:17, word for word he said: 'He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward him for what he has done.’’ “That verse is about you,” Alan finished.

When George turned around from the counter as Alan went on his way, he had tears in his eyes. “The Lord sent him to help me, just now,” George interpreted it to me.

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³⁷ *ibid*, p.185.

At the beginning of their employment at the Gateway, all workers must sign the shelter's Non-Fraternization policy. As a rule, it tends to apply most expressly in the giving and receiving of gifts between workers and residents. Workers are not supposed to receive anything from residents. Offers of food, hot or sugary drinks, smokes, requests to meet up outside the shelter for coffee, a movie, a sporting event are the most commonly attempted, refused, and clandestinely accepted. The logic of the policy is that if too much in the way of goods or sentiment passes between workers and residents at the Gateway things might get messy and confused. (The policy seems to suggest that the residents are the more likely of the two to get tripped up by this, susceptible to misunderstanding kindness as something else.)

Workers are instead supposed to understand themselves more purely as administering gifts on behalf of the ultimate giver – the City or God, however you want to see it – or as the givers, themselves. They provide shelter, bed, food, clothes etc., these bare, essential, subsistence items. And they're to make sure that such giving only goes one way. Like the lavishness of love, the gifts passed down at the Gateway are things so big and so basic as to render them impossible to pay back. Both gifts are predicated on Christian notions of *grace* – a giving so extravagant that it cannot ever be reciprocated or returned. Grace is what Ruth Marshall has called “an irreducible excess.” Grace, she argues, tends not to be the “foundation for exchange and social obligations” but instead “makes for their interruption.” Grace opens up an aporia: in its sheer gratuitousness, it dispels the possibilities for equal exchange.³⁸ Such is the nature of generosity and hospitality at the Gateway; it knows no equalizing effort.

In the anecdote above, Alan, the resident, is in a position to give a spiritual gift when his material gift is rejected. And George, the worker, is especially inclined to receive it – primed even. That same day he had been telling me how he had prayed that God would help him not to swear so much and that residents were helping him stick to it – reminding him to add money to his swear jar whenever he slipped up. He was on the lookout for encouragement and support from others. The rule makes it clear that staff may not accept material gifts from residents but “spiritual” gifts like this one – affirmation, wisdom, kindness seem to be fair game. They are simultaneously *more significant* than material gifts (bringing tears to George's eyes or helping the workers to feel good about what they're doing there more generally) and *more insignificant* in that there is no rule against them. While help and friendship might be handed out by the workers in material ways, they can only be returned via the immaterial. Material generousities are only allowed to go one way – down. And in order to keep flowing in such a direction, someone has to stay up high and someone else, below.

³⁸ Marshall, *Political Spiritualities*. Her discussion of grace however refers specifically to miracles, how they seem to work as exchanges rather than gifts, a return on faith and good works, but still arguably an excess that stunts reciprocity. See p. 191-192ff.

The director and the frontline staff can't actually trade places. And perhaps the director can't join in with the actual preparations of the suckling pig. The Father has to remain separate from the object of his love, the two always in their respective roles in order for love to keep being so "lavish," unreciprocated and excessive. So too, the offer of shelter and friendship to the residents of the Gateway has to keep being exceptional, out-of-the-ordinary. The workers are set up to think they are being given something which cannot be paid back, only gratefully received. And they are simultaneously prompted to repeat that non-reciprocal relationship with residents. They are hemmed in as weak (non-unionized) workers. They are precluded in complex ways from forging solidarities with each other or with residents.

And that's why I find the contrast between the suckling pig and the clumsy communion so interesting. According to the prevailing Christian doctrine on the Eucharist, communion is required of all parts of the Church (all members of the Body of Christ, incidentally), and part of its function within the liturgy is to knit Christians together as *one* – one with each other and one with Christ. Hence the term 'communion.' In shirking their place among other Christians and sidestepping the ritual of communion, the Salvation Army (itself replete, literally, with *ranked* hierarchies like any martial order) shows itself to be rather anti-solidarity, anti-union on a very basic level. And whatever other divergences the Gateway can claim from its overseer, this is not one of them. Its offer of friendship to the poor (discussed in more optimistic detail in Parts III and IV) only ever co-exists uneasily with its top-down understanding of what it means to love.

of housing kits and homefulness

(paradox)

Two last (ironic) ethnographic sketches:

On a Wednesday in the middle of the month, I got to the Gateway just in time to see Barry leapfrogging his four duffle bags out of the elevator, one at a time over the other three, all the way across the foyer, out the front door and up the ramp and into the Gateway's van. People stood smoking and watching his giddy performance – nimble and elf-like. Alex, who would drive Barry to the train station, stood quietly by the front desk, smiling over Barry, proud it seemed, twirling the car keys in his hands. Erin and Corey sat on the other side of the counter, watching too, with rather satisfied gazes. Nobody moved to help him – perhaps he was too quick and they might only get in his way. Or maybe, like me, they were in awe of this display: someone leaving the Gateway, maybe for good. I was watching, thinking about what it would be like around here now, without Barry. His oddly lucid insights one minute usually gave way to strange fantasies the next, all in his broken Acadian chatter. He was always eager to sweep and mop the floor, his feet almost dancing as he did it. Today Barry is on his way home to New Brunswick. It's been two months since his mother passed away and he's been saying ever since that he would go.

His bags in the van, Barry comes back in order to follow the same path now with handshakes goodbye. He's missing some fingers and so these are a little clumsy and awkward but he's cheerful and practically skips out the door.

That same day, at lunch, I sat at a table with Jesse – he often picks a table in the middle of the room, along the windowed side, and usually has very few people sitting with him. He usually eats late in the lunch hour after most people have been and gone, and so do I. I sometimes sit near him but we rarely talk. Today though, he is chattier than usual; today he is moving out. Henry comes and sits with him, asking Jesse questions about his place – where is it? What's it like? When Jesse tells him it's “In the Beaches...well, the Upper Beaches anyway,” Henry says that he knows a good butcher out that-a-way. Jesse figures that finding a good butcher was pretty high on his list of things to do one day on a long walk in his new neighbourhood.

After that day, I often saw Jesse on those long solitary walks, back down near the Gateway, sometimes stopping in for coffee in the Drop-In, still not saying too much. But one day, seeing me on the sidewalk on his way there he stopped to tell me that he was going there to turn in a job application – the Gateway was hiring frontline workers and he wanted to be one of them. I wished him well and followed up later with the Frontline Supervisor – they wouldn't be calling Jesse in for an interview. That he had lived there seemed to render him ineligible.

The afternoon of Jesse's last lunch as resident and Barry's train for home, I realized I couldn't find my usual euchre partner either. Ray, who often came looking for me to ask if I was busy and when would I have time for a game, had disappeared without much fanfare. He'd had a calm quiet way and a cheerful face; and now I was going to have to rustle up the players all by myself.

I crossed paths with Tom that day too, another resident, who was looking to blow off some steam: he had just come from a meeting with his housing worker: "Shawn has given me a deadline," he told me, miffed at his Housing Worker. "What a prick!" he blurted. But in fairness, Shawn doesn't act alone. Tom has been here almost a year now, and that's about when the pressure picks up to get out of here. It's Shawn's job to throw the Gateway's weight around a little and encourage Tom to move on, one way or another. When I try to soften the blow a little by telling him it's not unique to him, it happens to lots of long-term guys, he makes a face like that's absurd: he hasn't been there *so* long. Tom thinks the real reason is that he wasn't filling out the forms Shawn had given him, forms that would get him on lists for housing. And that may very well be part of the problem.

Tom has been unlucky enough to get flagged after a Case Management meeting, the week before which Neil attended unexpectedly with the express purpose of inciting the 2nd Floor workers to "crack down" on their long list of active cases and get quicker about moving people out. Knowing that there were some residents they couldn't do much about, he encouraged them at least to "do something about the ones they can." There had definitely been some dissension in the group – some workers definitely didn't want to operate this way – Alex and Jill and Julia, in particular. How you go about it "couldn't be more irrelevant to me," he said before leaving them to their deliberations. Which is likely the sort of thing someone above him – from The Salvation Army or the city's shelter administration – had said to him about the Gateway's low housing statistics to begin with: another downloaded precarity, via Neil, stuck in the middle.

Shawn had seemed eager to get going on this and sure enough, here I was with Tom, within a few days of that meeting. And Tom's predicament, I think, is compounded by the fact that he actually wants to be at the Gateway. He claims that he chooses to be here. And has come, in some ways, to like it. If Tom doesn't follow through with finding his own apartment or room by the deadline, Shawn will put a 3-month restriction in his file and the frontline workers will enforce it. Residents like Tom, who prefer the Gateway, sometimes go and wait out those 3 months in another shelter and eventually work their way back in – at which point they've potentially bought themselves another year, happily under the radar.

There are, as I saw that day, many different ways of moving out of the Gateway – but the degrees of voluntariness in such a decision, I would suggest, are hard to pin down. There are overt and covert ways of making a person feel like their time is up at the shelter. The impetus and goading to live

somewhere-other-than-here is something that exists both beyond the Gateway and within it. But the pressure *by* the Gateway to get out of the Gateway is always a little fickle and in flux.

* * * * *

It was a damp and cold Saturday in October when I met a few Gateway staff and residents at the shelter, early in the morning. We piled into one of the program vans and headed to a warehouse in one of Toronto's outer boroughs. It was a Salvation Army distribution facility – a place where they collect all kinds of personal and corporate donations (both second-hand and new) before redirecting them to Salvation Army Thrift Stores across the city. The warehouse itself was just as cold as the weather outside. We didn't take off our coats and scarves before getting to work.

There were long tables set up in a L-shape, all piled with stuff. A warehouse worker gave us a quick tutorial: Take a bin, go along the outside edge of the tables, take one of everything and place it in the bin – as strategically as possible; make it all fit. At the end of the line, put a lid on it, and another warehouse worker will stack it on a skid, wrap the lot in plastic and store them away.

“One of everything,” the lady had said. One fork, one knife, one spoon. One pot and one frying pan each pulled from three-size set: “Don't take a whole set, just one of the three – doesn't matter what size.” One can opener, and just one of the other available cooking utensils – it might be a spoon or a flipper or a spatula, whichever. One towel, one pillow, one blanket, one set of single bedsheets. One bottle of dish detergent. One sponge or one pot scrubber – but not both. One bottle of shampoo. One tube of toothpaste, one bar of soap, one roll of paper towel, and one roll of toilet paper.

We got to work quickly – to manage the cold setting into our bones, as much as to get out of there as soon as possible. We soon warmed to the task and to each other, and passed a cheerful morning filling bin after bin, until all the boxes of housewares were empty, the pile of empty bins was gone, and the skids were full of “Housing Kits.” I couldn't help thinking it was strange to be packing big Rubbermaid bins with only enough stuff for one person. Sure, *everyone* who moves out of the Gateway will get a bin. But will they necessarily live alone?

Pictures were posted on Facebook after that Saturday, as they were every other year I was looking for them. The caption under a picture of the finished product read: “skids of completed bins, ready to be distributed to men who are starting their new life in their new place.” But the hopefulness of a line like that falls a little flat with me now.

Is it altogether exciting and new when there is now 1 where there used to be 108?

At the shelter, residents eat from 108 matching white plates and mugs; the same forks, knives and spoons; all on plastic trays. The dorms have 54 matching beds and are almost devoid of personal touches. But then again, there's not much that is personal or unique about life outside the shelter either. "Housing" for the homeless consists mainly of lonely rooms in dingy rooming houses, or better yet, the elusive and impossibly expensive bachelor apartment. Both seem rather lonely places – especially when 'Bachelor' does not necessarily mean pre-married; moving in with another person later, as a next step, is not a foregone conclusion. Along with the housing-kit-for-one, the Gateway also provides a single (twin) mattress and box spring, but no frame. The first order of business on many a mind when moving out is, I'm told, to get a TV – something to do. As far as I can tell, the move-in scene is often fairly consistent: you get a bedroom with a makeshift bed and whatever piece(s) of furniture might have been left there by a previous tenant. You've got some housemates you don't know but with whom you will now share a kitchen and bathroom. There's the old (semi-functional) TV you've managed to procure, the bin full of stuff you got from the Gateway (which still matches all of the other hundred or so Housing Kits they packed that year), and your few duffle bags (or garbage bags) full of clothes.

The packing and distributing of housing kits, as well as the other ways the Gateway facilitates *moving out* of the shelter, might be critically read as helping to re-inscribe the apparent singleness of homelessness: it's individual people who are homeless, who lack the bare essentials, whom the shelter is prepared to help, and whom it is interested in "getting housed." It's individual – single or otherwise disconnected people and more precisely *men* – who are targeted/served/constructed here. Aloneness is incumbent in the notion of homelessness as much as in the services provided for the so-called homeless. And yet I would argue that "home," properly understood, has so little to do with owning your own anything, much less being *alone* in "your own place." Housing kits and move-outs are these strange, almost oxymoronic ideas that are twisted up with common impressions of what it means to have or lack a home, in the first place.

* * * * *

Some scholars go so far as to call home – and, for that matter, homelessness too – "ideological constructions."³⁹ But the invocation of ideas in this way strikes me as far too negative: *fabrication* figures in too heavily when classifying something as 'ideological'. Ideologies are best understood as schemes which ought to be seen through and subverted. *Imaginariness*, meanwhile, take into account the construction of ideas – the creativity involved – while also keeping them somewhat open and workable. Home as *social imaginary* would be a more useful way of thinking about it – neither too relative and individualistic, nor entirely locked down and unusable. The *ideology* of home, as it stands now, tends to suffer from both of these traps. It exists as something both too subjective (home is wherever *I feel* at

³⁹Peter Somerville, "Homelessness and the Meaning of Home: Rooflessness and Rootlessness?" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16, no. 4 (1992): 529–39.

home) or too definitive (home is a structure I pay for and live in) to be helpful in discussions of its apparent lack. To make a break with the problems inherent in such discourses of home, I opt instead for a social imaginary of *homefulness*. *Homefulness* is, to my mind, a better measure of what is and isn't missing at the Gateway. It delineates a further *undecideability* the Gateway workers contend with everyday. And it's arguably a better collective ritual worth striving for than the cookie-cutter housing/own home model that seems so often to rule the roost.

So then, what do I mean by *homeful*? And what might access to such a thing entail?

I might just start with the basics: food, warmth, some form of dry shelter, some measure of safety. But almost immediately I know I'm after something much more – to feel warmth takes so much more than actual heat, requires so much more than a certain reading on a thermometer. And to feel safe means so much more than sound construction and a lock on the door. Food, also, is too scant a term, for of course I mean not just the stuff of eating but the entire meal – food of some balance and variety, offered up repeatedly, matching certain expectations of timing and amount and nourishment; food of sufficient freshness and wholeness and cleanliness, food that is cooked,⁴⁰ as needed – for of course one can imagine the opposite of all of these and not want to sit down to dinner; also food that is shared. Even to list dryness so matter-of-factly shows the cracks in my theory – I can imagine some places where a leak in the roof would be not so unwelcome as it is here, in a four-seasoned Canada. Homefulness seems rather contingent then on particular localities, climates, seasons, if nothing else.

It's tempting to think that homeful means private, but then, if people are living together one can only be so private for so long.⁴¹ Homeful cannot mean a total, complete privacy, nor even a selective privacy – the free choice to hole up in some solitary place for a time. To be homeful might not provide this at all. And yet, I admit that a measure of hiddenness from certain exterior gazes does get implicated here, is even desirable.

A home is a place of habits and routines, the expectation that some things will happen and go on happening.⁴² Meals, I've already mentioned, but also a night's sleep (one would expect/need quiet, among other things, maybe darkness), some baths, the laundry, (both require water) a little lamplight in the evening (by virtue of electricity or some other power, and some steady channel of it).

⁴⁰ For Rykwert, Cooking as essential to home, following on his assertion that a fire, a hearth “may well be the one thing that nobody can quite do without...” His concern for the fireplace is not just its warming and cooking capabilities but its function as a focal point.” “After all,” he reasons, “if a home had no focus, you could not start from it.” This sentiment bears with it the notion of growing up, of learning, of maturity that I want to build on in this chapter, but I remain unconvinced that there is any one focal point in the notion of homefulness I'm developing here, and that the source of heat in a house is decidedly it. Thanks to the age of central heating, individuals are not confined to the room where the fireplace is, nor do they have to gather themselves or build their rooms around the chimney. Something far more individualized is going on now in individually heated rooms and our notion of homefulness needs to take account of it. Rykwert, “House and Home.”

⁴¹ For Mary Douglas: “The home protects a person's body from voyeurism and intrusive scatology” but within the home there is but little privacy from other members of the household. Mary Douglas, “The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space,” *Social Research* 58, no. 1 (1991), p.305.

⁴² *ibid.* See also her discussion of “regularity.”

Homefulness would imply familiarity – not just a mental or nostalgic familiarity, but also a material one: in terms of bodily movement, for instance, knowing where things are, how one's body fits among them or can move around them. There would be, too, some stability, the safe(ish) bet that homefulness will go on being homeful. There may very well be tensions and surprises, interventions both welcome and hostile, but there would also be some patterns to fall back on.⁴³

Homefulness is also intricately tangled up with time – home is a place where considerable amounts of time are spent – wasted, even. And homefulness seems to mean that time not only *is* wasted there, but *can* be wasted there in the first place. Surely time can be wasted elsewhere too; but what seems clear to me is not only that the homeful are free to be industrious at home – to do necessary chores (to mow the lawn, to vacuum, to dust, for instance), but are also free to let time pass without much productivity or payment.⁴⁴ This kind of (guiltless?) repose might be especially the province of the homeful; wasting time is possible at home. If *wasting* is too negative a word then *spending* has too efficient and economic a connotation, for it's something more basic than that. Time passes, and is *allowed* to pass there, at home. And it accumulates too, fostering memory and familiarity.

Homeful must undoubtedly mean enmeshment – with other people, in communities both larger and smaller than the (coveted?) nuclear family.⁴⁵ In the best possible scenario, it would also signal enmeshment with the earth that grounds and sustains it.⁴⁶ Modern mobility should not necessarily undermine this, for one is always tangled up with people and places and things, move around as we might.

As such, homefulness might not exactly be comfortable. Comfort might even be somewhat antithetical to homefulness since individual comfort so often bumps up against someone else's, other people's needs and their ideas about comfort. It's possible that comfort is necessarily sacrificed in living together – whether it be in shelters or suburbs. In expecting comfort, in employing such a buzzword in our ordinary discussions of home, I wonder if we don't perpetuate a far more serious myth: that home necessarily means homogeneity, that the members of a household are/ought to be sufficiently alike. Political philosophers Hardt and Negri have argued that love of the *same*, love that loves only that which is similar is not *real* love, that such love is thin and rather vacuous.⁴⁷ And I would argue that a

⁴³ *ibid*, p.292.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p.298: "A home is characterized by massive redundancies. As institution compared with others, a home is definitely not-for-profit and like other nonprofit institutions there are characteristic difficulties about justifying its operations...[it has multiple purposes and undefined goals. A home may be putting resources aside for saving, certainly; and over and above the schedules saving it may make a profit, but it is unusual for it to recognize an annual profit, because of the very vagueness of its objectives." I think, however, that Douglas' definition of home is still too tied up in ownership. Her definition is unique to be sure, among other definitions of home; equal parts intimate and ironic, romantic and cynical.

⁴⁵ I think this word is stronger than "attachment" which many theorists of home seem satisfied to employ. Mary Douglas has called this a "mystic solidarity," which I appreciate because of the concreteness of her metaphor: it is not easily susceptible to fissure, she says. *Ibid*.

⁴⁶ About being at home in the cosmos, see Bouma-Prediger and Walsh, *Beyond Homelessness*.

⁴⁷ See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, "Of Love Possessed," in *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p.179-188.

home made up only of sameness – and for that matter only certain kinds of sameness – is similarly wanting. Families are not carbon copies of each other, nor strictly delineated units. There are many different kinds of families (living together in many different kinds of places); and so, the nuclear unit who share DNA and a last-name is not a stable base around which to build an adequate notion of 'home.' Privacy, freedom, ease and peacefulness at home have a similar kind of assumed naturalness. By believing that all of these are the foregone conclusions of home-life, even ideals toward which to strive, we purify and pacify the notion of “home.” And such a move creates startling externalities: people who disrupt the supposed quiet and comfort are cast out, sent to live in places we don't so readily consider “home” (i.e. shelters, institutions, hospitals, camps).⁴⁸

To say, “This is my home” has a kind of dual meaning. It denotes a kind of *feeling at home* (I belong here, I belong in/to my home), but simultaneously implicated is the idea of ownership or power (my home belongs to me).⁴⁹ I stop well short of thinking that homefulness equates to the “self-exploiting” practice of owning a home in today's real estate bubble – such an option is not realistically available to many and yet has woefully become the norm. Instead, I would like to take the latter half of this dual meaning to denote the home as a field for choices – a home is a place where we make certain choices over what happens, where things go, how things will be done. And not just any old choices, I would argue, but good choices; choices made at and about home are decisions made in the direction of wellbeing – toward the *fullness* of home I'm so concerned about. I hesitate to use words like “control” or “power” to describe the space of decision-making that I take the homeful place to be, since a home necessarily involves the presence of other people. Homeful cannot simply mean powerful because more often than not it requires the sharing of power, or even its abdication, the ritual deference of power in the direction of some other: a loved one, a relative, an elder, a guest, whoever.⁵⁰ Such plays of power are juggled according to a commitment to the common, collective good of the household.⁵¹ Open access, communication, equity among members: such things are the “rules of the game” on the home-field. The ability to make good choices in pursuit of these is a kind of homeful *habitus* – something learned, internalized and lived collectively over time.⁵² Home is not only the site of certain significant decisions but the place where the capacity for good decision-making is developed.

So far, I have said little about money. I wish I didn't have to. Mary Douglas once argued, astutely, that homes are “not-for-profit” institutions, but in a real estate market like Toronto's this can hardly be the

⁴⁸ See Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter*.

⁴⁹ I get this idea from a presentation made by Ghassan Hage at the workshop *Belonging Differently* (Sponsored by CIFAR, Banff Alberta, August 2012).

⁵⁰ Rykwert notes that in English the word for house is “heavily coloured by a notion embedded in case law by Jacobean judge Sir Edward Cooke, famous for saying: “The house of everyman is to him his castle and fortresse, as well as his defence against injury and violence, as for his repose.” Not only a feminist critique would divest this sentiment of some of its power-laden connotation. Repose, however, is something I'll return to, below. Rykwert, “House and Home,” p.53.

⁵¹ Douglas, “The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space,” p.296ff.

⁵² If habitat is an instinct (as with other animals) then it's possible that homefulness is habitus – a structuring structure, as per Pierre Bourdieu. See Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*. See also the Appendix in certain editions of this work: “The Kabyle House or The World Reversed.”

case anymore. At the very least though, homes often operate according to budgets of one kind or another.⁵³ Homefulness might require that the household's resources be managed well. As I've said now many times, homefulness does not depend on ownership. Nor is homefulness bare structure and naked housing. It's not the popular practice of "staging" a home so that it fetches the highest possible price. It's not the "packaging of a lifestyle," as with the well-appointed rooms splashed across the pages of design magazines like *House & Home*. Homefulness ought to stand in direct contrast to whatever reduces the home to floor plans, knickknacks, just-the-right toss pillows, and stainless steel appliances chosen more for their flair than their functionality. I might go so far as to say that 'home' becomes bastardized by home shows and design blogs; that shopping for a home and shopping to fill a home (re)makes the home as a product and a container merely for holding other consumer products. That all of this has come to stand-in for home-making has serious social and political consequences, not the least of which is the notion that people who don't have or have access to these things are 'homeless.'

It must also be said that home is not always happy, home is not always nurturing, home is not always safe, home does not always stay in the same place. It is especially for reasons like these that we need another word going forward; a word that maintains a hopefulness that something better, something fuller is possible – but without resorting to the slogans, or, for that matter, to feelings. It might not always "feel" good to be at home. Home might not always exist as a feeling. When Ian told me he didn't feel quite so at home at the Gateway anymore, that didn't mean he stopped home-making or practicing homefulness anyway.

Given an infinite supply of time and space here, I could not exhaust the notion of home, nor list all of its many (often overly subjective) meanings. But what I have tried to propose here is some of its vectors. To be useable, homefulness would take into account the home's materiality (physical structures, stabilities and sustenances), as well as its myriad relationships and enmeshments. Homefulness would account for the way home is tangled up with notions of time and even maturity. And it would attend to the ironic excesses and gaps that have developed in our casual social imaginaries of home, the way these have become thin, narrow and presumptive, delegitimizing many alternative types of dwelling and ways of *being at home*. Strictly speaking, the so-called homeless are not necessarily lacking all of the things that make up a home, but they may not necessarily have full, unmitigated access to homefulness either; they exist somewhere in the precarious in-between.

So too do the workers, who both strive to extend certain conditions of homefulness to their residents – for a time anyway, and over and over – but also contend with strange bouts of eagerness to push people out the door. The Gateway is a place of many home-like practices and problems. There are comforts and competing needs and desires. There are plays of power and generosity. There are chores and meals and various other home-making activities. There are lessons in good habits and good decisions. There

⁵³ Douglas, "The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space," p.298, as above.

are enmeshments and entanglements and familiarities among people who have known each other and cared for each other a long time. There are efforts in the direction of the common good. The workers actively participate in all of these things. And yet, somewhere on the horizon, hovers this idea that the shelter isn't exactly home, that no one should stay there too long, that they should go somewhere else and live by themselves. The Gateway seems to draw people in and push them out, always negotiating the space between sheer housing and the dream of homefulness.

solution(s) to homelessness?

(wavering)

At the end of most interviews with Gateway workers, I asked them: Do you think there's a solution to homelessness? Below, I quote twenty answers in full, since it seems only right to let the workers' own voices speak (insofar as this medium allows).⁵⁴ While I can't quite bring myself to let them have the last word, they should at least be allowed their *own words*, here near the end. Their answers range almost from the sublime to the ridiculous: there were hints at apocalyptic and metaphysical solutions from some of the evangelical Christians, there were extreme suggestions that are more jokes than possibilities. There was often a discomfort in having to answer such a question; and even more often some visible regret that their answers were, overwhelmingly, “no”. Some of them got quiet, demure as they tried to answer, something that seemed to me a conspicuous contrast to the liveliness and enthusiasm they had for earlier portions of the interview. As we'll see, many of them meandered around the question for a while trying to talk themselves both in and out of their initial reactions. On the whole, what they tell me about the possibilities for solving homelessness are funny, blunt, and often tragic – humour seems to help them cope with the truth, as they see it, and their own helplessness in the face of it.

Corey: Oh wow...I don't know...whenever Jesus comes back I guess [*Although, he seems to say this in a kind of doubtful, even sarcastic tone. Followed up with a little laugh...*] I mean, it's hard ... because you'd have to work on such an individual basis. There's no mass band-aid to say: Oh, well, if we just teach everyone in Grade 1, then they'll all stay in school. Because the issue might not have been school, the issues might have been parents. Ok, well, let's teach every parent to be a parent. Well, what if you were raped? What if you were adopted? Or you know...what about high school pregnancy? Or whatever...OK...then let's....you could never deal with it. Because it's each individual person. Each person has her own gift or talent or passion, but you've got so much mental health [trouble]...

If you want to solve homelessness, if you want to get people off the streets, if you want to get people off drugs, [*He sighs*]...I don't know...You'd have to have someone who's a billionaire come in and have a whole development – that's monitored, and has social workers and mental health [experts] 24/7. [A place] where they all have their own house and they all have their own worker! [*He laughs, the more fantastical this gets, as it escalates in his mind*]. And they all have their person that they can play basketball with when they're losing it, or give them their meds or whatever....I don't think you could ever get rid of it. It'll always be a battle.

⁵⁴ For easy reference, they are listed in the same order as they appear on the table in Part I: ritual keepers of the in-between. There is one more answer to this question, from Lou, included in Part II: “we give a shit.”

And on top of everything -- I mean that's best case scenario, I would say -- On top of that, the system makes money off of them. I mean, you've got a million kids a year graduating from social work or psychology or counselling or you know...shelter development or third world country development...all this stuff. And it's all based on trying to get rid of the system that's paying you.

I mean, after you get jaded 5 years in, or 5 minutes in or whatever, it's just a job. You know? If it's World Vision or Salvation Army, the government, or The Gap, or whatever, you make money off of it.

And at the end of the day, your bubble kind of bursts a little bit and you say, this is just the system, and it is what it is...And, it's hard to change the world...

I don't know...I mean...you'd have to change the big wigs, you'd have to change the government, and say these people, if you want to care about these people, which is a whole other issue -- to get them to care about people when really they care about boats or money. You'd have to develop a whole other system that doesn't look anything like Gateway or any other shelter, and work with that.

Daniel: Ugh. [*he pauses to think for a while, and makes a few false starts before committing to answer*] I think ideally, yes, there is a solution. Practically, we will never reach it. We will never eliminate all homelessness. Obviously, the scripture that comes to mind is "the poor you will always have with you." That's just the reality of life. Does that just mean we don't do anything about it then? No. I think...you know...that's something we need to do.

Me: What do you need to do?

Daniel: Oh, ah...attempt to help the poor out of their situations. Yeah, I don't know...

Erin: [*She starts to speak but pauses*] No. [*She pauses some more*]. I think people want there to be a quick fix. They started the Streets to Homes program, trying to get people housed. But the thing is you can house as many people as you want, but you're not addressing the stem root of, like, how someone got so broken that they're out on the streets. If some people don't care that they're out there, you're not going to fix anything.

And I think...people are going to continue to have mental health issues and there isn't the proper care in place. And so as a result of that we'll always have people coming into the shelter with mental health issues because they don't have a proper place to go and get help, or there's not the proper medication. There's nothing that can be done. And I think with addictions you're going to have that, too. We live in a broken world, right? Unfortunately people try to deal with traumas that they've

suffered or current stuff that they're living with, using stuff to help make them feel better and I don't think that can go away just easy.

And there's so many other things about why people are homeless: the employment, economic stuff happening. You know, there are so many other reasons. It's not like, one quick fix. Like do this and it'll be gone. I feel like if there was more invested into Gateway or similar places like Gateway that there might be a chance of helping more people...but I don't know if it's ever possible to be rid of that. Maybe that's kind of negative of me, but, I think that's realistic, just from what I've seen the last few years.

Felix: No. The Gateway will always need to exist. For reasons I know and you know... and for reasons I don't know...It's unfortunate but [*and he says this very matter-of-factly*] there can't be rich without the poor, right?

Holden: I think I *have* to say yes, right? [*He laughs.*]

Me: No, you would be the first.

Holden: Well, it depends on what scale we want to talk about this question. [*He takes some more time to think about it, then speaks slowly, thoughtfully, with intermittent pauses*] Yeah. It's huge and it's very all-encompassing... and possibly unattainable...probably unattainable with...human selfishness and that type of thing in the equation...which is in all of us.

Like, is there a solution in Toronto, right now? Is there something we could do in Toronto right now? What kind of policy changes? I don't think so, no...Because it's not just that people don't have money and therefore can't afford a place. It's everything from people being mentally ill and not being able to provide for themselves and not even knowing...like RH [*a guy who doesn't stay at The Gateway but lives outside and visits everyday*]: he doesn't know how to get money for himself, even though he deserves that money. He doesn't even know that he wants that money. So, it's only over a period of 3 years when he finally gets comfortable with somebody that he can start tapping into that. And, for other folks, you know, it's just, like, homelessness is definitely more than not having the means to put a roof over your head. So, I don't think...it doesn't seem to me like there are any policy solutions. Unless you could somehow make it a law that everybody has to have really good parents. You know, a really great childhood. Or never get picked on or never get put in situations where drugs are there, you know...whose parents never die...

A: And on and on...

H: Yeah, so... [*His voice trails off and into a slight laugh, seemingly*

at the thought of the sheer impossibility of it].

Charlie: *[At this point, Charlie hasn't worked at The Gateway very long so he's reluctant to answer]* Uh...well, I'm still just kind of grasping who people are, and I'm still a little overwhelmed by how there are – even in a small shelter like Gateway – so, so many different demographics of people who have various issues so...I'm gonna say, No. That's very pessimistic, I know. But I'm gonna say No....I don't think it's something you're ever going to solve 100%. I guess that doesn't really help you...

Evan: Aw geez...a solution to homelessness? Ugh, that's such a big question, such a big topic, uh...Jesus coming back? *[He laughs, as with the others who cite such an idea, it's almost a question – maybe just a question about whether or not that answer will get them off the hook with me and they won't have to keep trying to find an answer and the interview can be over. But I wait for more...]* That could be the only solution I see actually happening.

I think just the general state of the world is so messed up that there are going to be things like sickness, homelessness and mental health, and that's kind of why we're there...I think we're working towards a perfect world where there isn't any homelessness, but I don't think that gets accomplished until the world ends and Jesus comes back...as corny as it sounds.

Jordan: No. Unfortunately, I don't. I wish there was. But I don't think there is. With the way our city keeps cutting social services, how are we ever going to have a solution? Their solution is to ship people off to GTA areas and let them deal with it, right? Like, I don't know how many times I've had guys come in here and be like, The Jail gave me enough money to get on the bus and come here. And I'm like: 'Where are you coming from? Kingston. OK. Why? Did you want to come here? No – they told me I had to come to Toronto.' You know what I mean? They just force these people; they just buy the tickets for them and say 'Here you go! That's it. You're out!'

Seth: No. I don't. I used to think there was...*[My wife's]* grandparents always used to ask me 'How's work?' And I was like, 'Well, business is booming!' It's funny, right? It's sad – but it's true...There are *so* many aspects to it; there's not a quick fix. People can put Band-Aids on it, but there's no fix to it. And everybody, especially nowadays, unless you're working for the banks or something, and even then...everyone is inches from being homeless. And that's one of the big things this job has helped me realize, that I myself could be that close to it...I know I'm not trying to fix anything. I draw a paycheck from doing this kind of work – which is nice. But we're just the same people. I could be this. Like, honestly, I can be. This is the Kool-Aid that I've sipped from Neil and the Gateway.

Zack: Uh...scriptures talk specifically about the poor, and Jesus flat out said that the poor will always be with you. And you know, how can you argue with that? Basically, there isn't necessarily a solution to homelessness or poverty or what not. The only thing we can do is just be there with these guys and support them through what they're going through and show them that there's more to life than living on the streets...A lot of guys don't want to change and the don't want to get off the streets. And the Bible says that they'll always be amongst you, so all you can do is just love 'em. The key to the scriptures is to show love to people and stuff."

Joe: Ha! I don't know. I've got no clue. Nobody does. What kind of question is that?! No one has an idea how to solve homelessness.

A: I came to the Gateway on the premise that all of you had some idea. I had heard Neil say 'Love is the solution to homelessness...'

Joe: Really? What kind of bullshit is that? I defy him to go down to the Drop-In and say: Love is the answer to all your problems. Love isn't going to solve your crack addiction or your alcoholism or your mental illness or your family leaving you when you were young. I think that's the kind of idea that happens in a bubble. And I would be shocked if he even believed that. I think that's what other people might like to hear, and it definitely has a role. Compassion is a huge part of helping people. But there are so many...there's like a million, trillion other things that go into [homelessness]. And that's just a dumb thing to say...I'm sorry. But do I have a solution? I don't think anyone does. There's no end. What we do is cyclical. It's just rinse repeat, rinse, repeat; we do it over and over and over again. I mean, everyone, they come in and come out, come in and come out. How many people have you seen who made it? I think in my lifetime, I've only seen one.

Justin: [*He speaks quietly now, which is different than the loud liveliness with which he's answered my other questions*] No. There's no solution to homelessness. You give someone affordable housing, you give someone their own room somewhere, you give someone this, you give someone that, a lot of these guys don't have enough respect for self to keep even that up. Make affordable housing available? Yeah. But what's so wrong with a guy living in a shelter? What's so wrong with a guy living in a tent? The guy sleeping on the corner in the bank machine [vestibule]? That sucks. He can get a bed – he doesn't *want* to. I don't know how to tell him he can't do what he wants. Work camps! That would be the only solution to homelessness! [*He laughs loudly now, at his own hyperbole.*]

Mickey: No. No, I don't...Yes. There is, Death. When we're all

dead. There, [that's it]. [*Mickey is always fairly jovial, and he laughs intermittently throughout his answer*]. No, it's never gonna go away. And I remember having a debate with Neil once about this and I said, You know? You're never going to end homelessness. That was basically my question to him. And he was like: But have to try, dontcha? And I was like, you know, you're right. We do. We should try...in vain! So, I don't think there is. But we should try. There isn't a thing. But we need to try. I'm a Calvinist...but c'mon!⁵⁵

Adam: No. I don't believe there's *a* solution. If there was more money, I do believe that getting people into housing would be easier. But I don't believe there is *a* solution [*Every time he says this, he puts emphasis on the 'a' – as if interpreting my question only in the singular.*] Or like a *formula* to end homelessness. I do believe that it is going to get worse.

[...]If there is a solution, I believe easier access to identification would be really, really good. But I understand with the paranoia in today's society that getting ID easily is difficult, right? And people not having ID: stumbling block. People having bad credit: nobody wants to take them. That's very difficult. Social agencies like Toronto Community Housing, if you owe any money to a subsidized housing provider in the city, they won't give you housing until you start a payment plan. People on Ontario Works who get less money than they did in the 90s -- how the hell are you supposed to pay that back? Never, it's never gonna happen. You barely have enough money to survive. Man, it's an uphill battle.

Alex: Well, ummmmmm, that's a good question...Uh...yeah, the idealistic view is that yes, there is. And I think, when you look at it, there shouldn't be homelessness. And I think the fact that homelessness exists to the extent that it does shows that something is broken in our society. And the reality is that several things are broken. Um, if you look at other cultures that don't have Western values imposed upon them, you don't see the level of homelessness you have here. So, some of the traditional things, like families sticking together or communities looking out for one another, those kind of things that are maybe more a thing of the past for us, are things that would sort of prevent people from ending up in a place like this. Also, the individuality that we have in our society sort of leads people to make the decisions that sort of put them disconnected from others and by themselves. So, fixing those things would greatly reduce homelessness if not eliminate it. But also, you have to look at how realistic...I mean, those are big things to change.

I've always looked at shelters as an imperfect solution. And

⁵⁵ I take this to mean Mickey subscribes to the idea that things are pretty much predestined, pre-determined in advance, specifically who will and will not be saved/received in Heaven. I understand this comment to mean that even though theologically, maybe there's nothing they can do to change the mind of God about who is and is not righteous, they could still try to redeem the lost, just in case.

really, there's a whole lot of things about sheltering that works and so that's what we do with homeless people. So, I've never been (even though I've worked at a shelter all this time) I've never really seen [a way around it]...we're here because it's necessary. I don't know if this sort of institutional approach, I don't necessarily feel like it's the best response to homelessness, but it is the response that we have in our society. And so as a Christian who wants to connect and develop relationships with people who are experiencing homelessness, this is a logical place to embed myself and to be.

But if you were starting from scratch...like, I have friends who have worked here or have seen shelters and said 'That's not in line with the way I want to address homelessness' and so they do other things. And I appreciate that. But the reason I've been here is that, I feel like, this is the system that the guys have to go through and so if you're gonna connect and build relationships with guys and try to make a difference it's as good a place as any, even though it's not a perfect system.

Now, it does come back to something that's preached here a lot. You know, Neil's three solutions to homelessness: relationships, relationships, relationships.⁵⁶ And when you hear guys' stories, you really do find out that actually it's broken relationships that led them to this situation. So, that relationship bullshit approach, I think, is what it really takes. To really end homelessness it takes a willingness to make those hard choices to get to know a person, to stick with them when they're messing up...um...you know, to always be there for them, which isn't easy with difficult people who are making bad choices. And even in my own life, outside of here, I find that hard sometimes. And we see it here – we get them a place [a room or apartment] and it doesn't always help them. It's when they have support and they're getting relationships in their lives that you see the change.

So, when you look at the whole system, all the systems in place trying to solve homelessness, the real solutions are messy, they involve time, they involve investment of your own life, and they're things you can't see – it doesn't show up on a ledger. If you're looking at provincial or city systems you see that the only real way to help people is if you actually pay people for their time to do it, and that would be very expensive!

So yeah, it's unquantifiable, what it would actually take. So for me, to invest part of my life in just being amongst people who are experiencing that and just trying to be a friend to them, use whatever expertise or life experience I have that could help them, I just come back to: I need a place where I'm there, simply. And so this has been a good place for that – as far as how I would do that and be able to have a life for myself, and kind of support

⁵⁶ This is not quite what Neil says – I quote it in Part 1 “we give a shit.” Neil often says that the secret to good shelter work is 5 things: Relationships, Relationships, Relationships, Relationships, Relationships.” And he is also fond of saying that everyone just needs 3 things: a home, a job, and a friend.” Alex seems to be conflating these two repertoires here, but the result is interesting.

myself. Being in a position where I get paid to do it is beneficial for me, even though it's not the reason I do it. Before when I said shelters were imperfect, at the same time, it's almost perfect to allow me to do what I'm doing. So, I'm thankful for that.

Cameron: Probably. I don't...I mean...yes and no...I don't think it's going to happen from here [The Gateway]...I think Neil talks about it a lot, you know how Christians lost it, back in the day; we're supposed to be the people bringing people into our homes and helping them and that's just not a reality anymore. So, no, there's not like a...No. I mean, if everyone was loved and cared for the way you were supposed to by Christians specifically, then you could possibly end homelessness. But I just don't think in today's society that's realistic. So, technically, I guess there could be...but...Maybe Jesus returning?? [Laughing, almost winking.] That could be an end of homelessness. Or, maybe then we'll just all lose our homes and then there'll just be more homelessness! Or maybe we wouldn't need homes.⁵⁷

Jill: [She shakes her head quietly for a few moments after I ask her this, her face seems to express sadness]. No...regrettably...'cause there is always brokenness. Because the issue, in Toronto, isn't lack of money – well, maybe lack of housing, lack of affordable housing. But the issues are so much deeper than that. Some of the issues present in some guys' lives started generations before them...and you don't fix that in one person in five months, you just can't. I wish there was...and I don't think that stops us from being there.

Rich: Better answer this one carefully, eh?! Not likely. For the simple...no, not simple reason...[Realizing he can't follow that idea all the way through, he starts again]: I don't think there's a solution to homelessness. I know we'd all like to think this, and [...] this is not an answer you want to bring up just anywhere! But no, I think you're always going to have homelessness. Regardless of any state of life or whatever government we get in. Because addictions are going to take people down. Situations are going to take people down. There could be a lot *less* homelessness. There's a lot of *unnecessary* homelessness and that could end – with a stronger government or better social programs in place. But if you're talking about overcoming people's pride and addictions? [He laughs at the thought of this] Good luck to you! The reality is that I think you're always going to have some form of homelessness. You could reduce it dramatically but I think you're always going to have some form of homelessness.

Rory: Pffff. Is there a solution to homelessness? [He seems incredulous at the very idea supposed in my question] Yeah, get rid of all drugs! [He laughs] Um. Yeah, as long as there's...and this is a

⁵⁷ This seems to refer to the Rapture or some version of the apocalypse where everything we know now will be veritably wiped out upon Christ' return and all Christians taken up to Heaven.

lame Christian answer, but as long as there is sin in the world, I think we're going to have stuff like homelessness because...until there's a perfect world, there's always going to be people who put other people down, there's always going to be stuff out there that fucks up people's lives. So, until all that is gone, then, you know...

Wes: Yes. Well...Love is the answer...Let me say this: there *is* a solution. But it's not simple. It's a multifaceted solution. Because there are...I don't want to say infinite, because I like to be specific, but there are a *plethora* of reasons for people, and each person is individual and unique. And there are some specific themes as to why people are homeless but a solution to homelessness would have to address all of these things. One of the biggest things, in my opinion, is that there are more people who *have* resources and space and time to care for people than there are people who are homeless. So I think that's the answer. The solution is opening up our homes and our lives to people who are in need so that there isn't a need for a shelter. The solution is not a shelter: it's a stopgap, it's a Band-Aid, it's a net – whatever you want to call it. But we've left that to be the solution. And it's not. Building, making more housing available, it's not a solution. Because there's a reason people can't keep their housing. A lot of it comes down to poor decision-making. So people need education, they need training. Where are they gonna get it? They can't afford it. Even if they get those things, they have limitations, other things that effect their decision-making, things like addictions, mental health issues, circumstances, so...there is a solution, but it is a multifaceted, widespread solution. It's not about throwing money at it. You give the guys at the shelter enough money and they'll be back here when the money runs out. It's not just about education and training because there are capacity issues. So, I think, it's about people being willing to sacrifice their own needs, their own – well, maybe not needs but their own desires, their own comforts, their own aspirations, their entitlement, the need for more – that's the solution to homelessness, everyone laying down their life for someone else.

Of the twenty answers included here, only one, this last one from Wes, offers an outright 'yes' to the question of a solution to homelessness. Others who began their answers hopefully were wistful or uncertain by the end. Other answers that sat sort of on the line between 'yes' and 'no' offered up the second-coming of Jesus as the only possible solution – that Christian myth which suggests Jesus will come back to earth, upend the way things are and finally set things right.⁵⁸ But even some of those who did refer to Jesus or the End of Days were almost sheepish in these suggestions: one admitted it was 'corny;' others laughed it off – perhaps in a wouldn't-it-be-nice, sort of way – or, as I mentioned above, in a bid to get out of answering my question. Along these same lines, there were a handful of uncomfortable jokes: The solution is work camps! Get rid of all the drugs! Only when we're all dead!

⁵⁸ See the New Testament writings attributed to John – both the gospel and his apocalypse, “Revelation,” where Jesus is often portrayed promising to return. I didn't hear them ever talk about this in detail. And The Salvation Army more broadly is often reticent to talk about it in specifics.

And these answers are not alone in being rather dark; more often than not, the Gateway workers admitted their pessimism, their cynicism, their jadedness, their original naivety and their basic regret. Almost all of them alluded to the size, scale, complexity, and depth of the problem: it involves more factors than they often cared to name. “For reasons you know and I know...” Felix thought it sufficed to say. “Brokenness,” “messed up” and “sin” were other sweeping terms for the many dimensions and valences of homelessness. While big, unwieldy ideas like “human selfishness,” “Western values,” “entitlement,” were listed among its causes. Still, some offered piecemeal suggestions: maybe it would take more money, more housing, more Christians, better access to help, or at least to identification. A notable few saw themselves caught up in the system and implicated in the problem – at least by drawing a paycheque from the (ongoing) existence of homelessness. A handful, meanwhile, rather gamely saw themselves as *making do in the meantime*, doing what they could at the Gateway, in spite of the fact that they couldn't really stem the tide of people coming through the door or stall the steady return of guys they knew well. At least three, it seemed to me, were hinting at the possibility that the Gateway was even a good thing; a necessary space in the midst of “the battle,” “the system,” the “reality of life”: it's “as good a place as any,” Alex summed things up.

Some of these answers draw on, refer or respond to things the workers have heard Neil say about homelessness or the shelter, specifically – but not always in such a way as to fall in line with him. Here, at the end of this dissertation, I want to marshal the responses above in order to trouble the notion set out at the beginning that “this place should not exist.” Some of the workers come right out and say, for one reason or another, that there is something necessary and good happening at the Gateway. And if they rather collectively agree that there is no solution to homelessness and that the prospect of the shelter *not* existing is at best implausible from their vantage point at the Gateway everyday, then perhaps the repeated phrase “this place should not exist” enacts a kind of disavowal to which they do not all adhere. At best, it's an irony the workers shoulder and mostly bear up under. Some people – on both sides of the front desk – *need* the Gateway, it seems. And so it stays open – even in spite of itself.

CODA:

“stays with us”

I was around the corner from the shelter at the Gateway's weekly baseball game when I heard myself use for the first time a phrase I'd been hearing workers use for months now. “Does that guy stay with us?” I asked Daniel about a guy who had, for the time being, donned the jersey of the opposing team.

“Yeah,” Daniel confirmed: that guy “stays with us.” But today he was playing against “us.”

“Stays with us” is a phrase you'll hear from time to time, particularly outside the Gateway, when workers spot someone they know, someone who has been at the Gateway often enough to be familiar to them, maybe even in a way to *belong* to them. Indeed, “stays with us” has a kind of possessive connotation – much as I employed it at the baseball game: Hey! If he's ours, how comes he's batting runs for the other team?! It's a way for workers to say (at least to one another) that guy is “in” with us. But we might read the emphasis differently too, from “stays with us” to “*stays* with us.” To merit the moniker, it seems the guy has to have stayed long enough or often enough to be familiar, to belong. The word “stays” seems just as important as the 'us,' and maybe more so. And that's to yet say nothing about the “with.”

By way of conclusion, I want to draw together some of the threads I've been discussing all along and connect them to this stays-with-us idea. It seems to me that the strands of the liminal I've been teasing out – subjunctivity, stuckedness, immaturity and irony – are, in one way or another, all implicated here.

We began with this idea that maybe the Gateway shouldn't exist, and throughout I've been hinting at this sense I have that maybe it should. Now, I'm not likely to succeed in (or even to try) making a moral argument that, all other things being equal, the shelter system is well and good and the way things are *supposed* to be. As much as the next person (and maybe more) I wish that there wasn't an abject state of loss of the kind we call homelessness; I wish no one had to feel or be unhomed. And perhaps that's part of why I think the shelter should exist...that is, as long as we did this sheltering thing a whole lot better. What if we didn't treat the homeless shelter like a place that “should not exist?” What if denying the necessity and validity of a shelter means that we shelter people poorly? What if “that guy stays with us” wasn't a mark of something he was missing but something that he had: a kind of community and a kind of home? What if the shelter was just another kind of dwelling in a world that is actually made up of many different kinds of dwellings, all of which get to count as *home*. It's a decidedly *subjunctive* idea: wishful, hopeful, speculative, and yet-to-be. It would take a reversal of irony to even begin to make it so: we'd have to stop talking about a place that “should not exist” and get about *homemaking* a real and existing place instead. We'd have to stop undermining the measures of homefulness which are possible at the Gateway by consistently reassigning the shelter to a space of

sheer homelessness and woeful lack. We'd have to *decide* and *act-as-if* the shelter was not an out-of-the-way place to put people who don't fit, and start thinking of it as just one of many possible ways of living, of caring and being cared for, being *at home*.

The more I think about home, the more I think it depends on some stuckedness. We seem to have this fascination with mobility, with being able to travel or move, and some of us change addresses rather a lot. But as I said in the above discussion of homefulness, being at home takes time, much as home itself is a place where time passes and accumulates. These are other ways of talking about being stuck; of being connected to places and persons, and of developing a necessary familiarity with both. To get stuck isn't always a bad thing; it can be quite a good thing. And it can mean you're at home. That's the idea I find in the indefiniteness of *stays* with us. If a guy "stays" at the Gateway it can mean he does so for a year or more, or on and off for years on end. It's possible he stays at the Gateway a long time and that the Gateway stays with him too. It's also possible that Toronto is his home, that he's rooted to this place but cannot afford to live here "on his own" and so the Gateway is the closest he can come to being at home in his hometown. Some of the guys who have turned up in my stories here – Riley, Peter, Marty, Wayne, Karl, Sam – are indeed these kind of guys, among *many* others. In the absence of anywhere else to get stuck, they get stuck-in here.

This brings me around to the *with* and the *us*. For the shelter to be homeful, we would need to radically rethink our obligation to and provision of care. We would need a new *ethic*. Drawing on Husserl's conception of all intersubjectivity as encounter between the *homeworld* and the *alienworld*, the philosopher Anthony Steinbock puts it perhaps better than I ever could:

...the homeless cannot adequately be responded to from an external perspective. Being ethically responsible...would mean responding in an encounter situation from who we are as home, and not from the position of a spuriously neutral or impartial organization. To be responsive to the homeless means responding from the home towards those who have a meaning independently of us...Their lifestyle, mannerisms, typical habits may 'rupture' our normal systems or expectations. Usually, our response through the homeless movement has been to make the movements of the homeless predictable, controllable, rendering them *heimlich* [both meanings of the word in German: familiar and secret], making them familiar to us and a secret to us by putting them in shelters, keeping them off the streets.

We should consider, however, whether putting the 'homeless' into shelters may just be another way of institutionalizing and controlling the 'poorest of the poor,' alcoholics, the so-called 'mentally ill,' etc. without having *to co-participate with them actively in forming a *home**. Such actions do not even entertain the possibility that the homeless are also co-constitutive of a home....

The contemporary homeless movement can change from being the 'heimlich' maneuver,' reducing the alien to the home, to such a responsive approach. Encountering the alien in various modalities means being responsive to a meaning or a life that cannot be anticipated in advance. This may entail inviting the homeless in from the cold when temperatures are freezing, making our home an 'open house,' so to speak; it may entail *direct* financial intervention, sleeping bags, blankets, food, gloves, not only once a year at Thanksgiving, and not by mediating our contact with the homeless through external federal organizations which tend to be patronizing and ineffective. Why not take this opportunity to come "face-to-face" with these aliens of an alienworld, or an alien normativity, as co-participants in a generative structure of intersubjectivity?¹

Steinbock is referring, of course, to all kinds of encounter and not just to interactions between the so-called homeless and the homed. For him, homelessness is a key to understanding intersubjectivity more generally, and an incitement to practice *ethical* encounters with our fellow citizens wherever we find them. But there's a profound critique of shelters here and a radical solution to homelessness (albeit a long-shot): that we don't cast away those who don't tend to fit in our homes but instead find creative and generative ways to make home with them.

According to Judith Butler's understanding of Lévinas, we need "a conception of ethical obligation that is grounded in our mutual precarity." The precarious life is "our common non-foundation." The narrowing notion of home and the rising cost of having one (especially in Canadian cities) is a slowly spreading and increasingly shared instability. Butler notes how:

every political effort to manage populations involves the tactical distribution of precarity, one that depends on dominant norms regarding whose life is grievable, and worth protecting, and whose life is ungrievable, or marginally or episodically grievable and so, in that sense, already lost in part or in whole, and thus less worthy of protection and sustenance.²

While Butler is certainly talking about genocide and global displacement rather than the somewhat more circumscribed kinds of urban homelessness I've been discussing here, there's something in this for us too: the need to think about the other in more open and egalitarian terms.

¹ Steinbock, "Homelessness and the Homeless Movement." Please see the following who make similar important arguments: Andrea Muehlebach, "On Precariousness and the Ethical Imagination: The Year 2012 in Sociocultural Anthropology," *American Anthropologist* 115, no. 2 (2013): 297–311; John Ralston Saul, "How We Will Make Canada Ours Again," *The Globe and Mail*, March 24, 2000, A16; Andrew F. Smith, "In Defense of Homelessness," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 48, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 33; Jeremy Waldron, "Homelessness and Community," *University of Toronto Law Journal* 50, no. 4 (2000): 371. (emphasis added)

² Butler, "Precarious Life and the Obligations of Cohabitation," Speech Given at the Nobel Museum, Stockholm, May, 2011. http://www.nobelmuseum.se/sites/nobelmuseet.se/files/page_file/Judith_Butler_NWW2011.pdf Retrieved May 20, 2014.

Elsewhere, Butler has discussed the things that prevent ethical, face-to-face encounter with the other: things like *self-preservation*, *dehumanization* and *dis-identification*, as well as the *framing* and *representation* of certain ideas/norms that help to legitimate the strategic distribution of precarity to the benefit of some and the detriment of others.³ Over the course of this dissertation, I think we've seen some of these thwarts. We've seen how a charitable organization's sense of its own perpetual necessity prevents it from relating to people on more human terms. We've seen how a sense of oneself as generous and compassionate and lavishly loving has a similar effect. We've seen how the homeless are dehumanized in various ways – by the media or in (re)constructions of what it means to do-good or be a Samaritan. We've seen how at the Gateway, no-glass can invite encounter and co-habitation, but it can also remain a barrier to such things too, being more importantly about a sense of self than a concern for the other. Finally, we've seen how certain ways of framing the home and what it means to be at home both help to shape our collective sense of whose lives are grievable and whose are not.

But we've seen other provocative things too. What happens at the Gateway everyday, these nascent, immature and incomplete ways of being open, of coming face-to-face instead of turning (or being turned) away, of being compelled to care, of trying to co-habit a certain version of home are, I think, things to keep working on, keep trying at together. We definitely need a more expansive sense of "home" and of "us." And we certainly need to forge a kind of alternative relationality like the one being formed among the occupants of the Gateway. Like them, with them, and beyond them, we need to co-participate in the vital work of homemaking.

³ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (Verso, 2004), p. 128-151

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